KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
VOICES OF THE CHURCH

To a systematic theologian, the theme of this assembly, "Voices of the Church," is probably intended to connote an all-encompassing harmony—polyphonic to be sure, and sometimes even dissonant, but coming together into a major chord, with, of course, an occasional grace note. But to a historian of doctrine, "Voices of the Church" must, at first in any case, seem to be a cacophony, more like the Tower of Babel than like Pentecost. For how, without falling into the tautology of "I believe what the Church believes, which believes what I believe," can one speak of the "Voices of the Church" and make any kind of sense? One can, I suppose, impose on this theme a normative criterion a posteriori, equating the authentic voices of the authentic Church with the latest edition of Denzinger, but only at the cost of the history. Alternatively, one can declare the normative issue out of order and proceed to treat the voices as individual solos in the history of Christianity, some being sung earlier and some later and many being sung simultaneously and on the basis of the same libretto yet somehow coming out quite differently; but then they will be "voices of the Church" only in the sense that this happens to be the place where they have become audible.

It should not come as a surprise to hear that in this keynote address I intend to deal with the theme "Voices of the Church" on the basis of the development of doctrine. Now development of doctrine, at least as I intend to speak of it here, is not a euphemistic way of describing historical relativism, as though every opposition between orthodoxy and heresy could be disposed of by showing that the two positions at issue simply represented different stages of development. It should be noted, however, that this has frequently been the case, and, moreover, that heresy often (though by no means always) represented an earlier stage of a particular doctrine than orthodoxy did. But the idea of development of doctrine, I would submit, is the best available context for treating the history of the "voices of the Church" responsibly, especially if, as I would insist, the dialectical method of coping with it is, despite the eminence of its medieval practicioners, no longer a possibility for us. To carry out this task, I want to organize this address according to the major divisions of the workshops and seminars at this conference: "Voices of Doctrine and Devotion," "Voices in Dialogue," and "Voices of Continuity." I shall, however, treat "The Voice of Doctrine" and "The Voice of Devotion" separately. I know very well that they are not separable, but after all they are not separable from dialogue and from continuity either. Under each of these headings I shall discuss the development of one doctrine that is the topic of a workshop or seminar.

THE VOICE OF DOCTRINE

There is probably no doctrine on which the voices of the Church have spoken more persistently, if not always consistently, than the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. As I shall have occasion to note again later, doctrines, like books, have their special destinies, and a question that is regarded as "that upon which the Church stands or falls" in one age may, in previous ages, have been largely ignored; I am referring, as some of you may have guessed, to the doctrine of justification, for which it is impossible to write a connected history through the centuries. But Christology does have a connected history, in fact, a history more connected and more continuous than even the history of the doctrine of the person of Christ as recited in the standard accounts would suggest. For in such accounts it is natural, in fact unavoidable, to reserve a full-length narrative of the development of the doctrine of Christ until after the trinitarian doctrine represented by the Councils of Nicea of 325 and Constantinople of 381; then it is possible to proceed through Ephesus of 431—and, of course, Ephesus of 449—to Chalcedon of 451, and perhaps beyond.

Although there is much to be said for this treatment, since the vocabulary developed for the trinitarian dogma did help to shape the Christological, such a sequential account may easily overlook the important, indeed decisive, role that Christology played in the Arian controversy. In fact, when the fourth century is viewed from the perspective of the third century or from that of the fifth and sixth, it is quite plausible to propose that the dogma of the Trinity came into being as the answer to a question that was basically Christological, even though the answer itself was far more than this. The fundamental question of the Arian controversy has perhaps never been formulated more succinctly than by Adolf von Harnack: "Is the divine that has appeared on earth and reunited man with God identical with the supreme divine, which rules heaven and earth, or is it a demigod?" That was a question about Christ and the history of salvation, what Greek theology calls "economy," but the answer unavoidably had to be one not only of this history, but of divine ontology, what Greek theology calls "theology." Nicea I and Constantinople I addressed themselves to the clarification of this divine ontology, and in a form which, except for the *Filioque*, was to remain unchallenged and normative for all of Christendom, whether Greek or Latin or Syriac.

As that catalogue of Greek, Latin and Syriac suggests, the consensus on the faith of the 318 fathers of the Council of Nicea melted away as soon as the discussion turned—or, as I would want to say in the present analysis, returned—to the issue of Christology. I shall not recount here the various parties during the fifth century, nor the solutions, resolutions, and dissolutions of Christological doctrine during the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. Rather I would point out that the history of Christology continues not only through the controversies surrounding the Council of Chalcedon that are explicitly labeled "Christological,"

but well beyond them. This is more obvious in the East, where the disputes over the wills and actions of Christ went on for centuries and where the so-called "non-Chalcedonian" churches had their own distinguished, if now largely unknown, theological history. But it is interesting that when, after a hiatus of about two centuries, theological discussion became lively in the West as well, it was a Christological question—whether the humanity of Christ should be called "Son of God" by adoption—that provoked the discussion at the beginning of the Carolingian era. In both East and West, then, Christology was the dominant issue, perhaps the only issue, from the end of the fourth century into the eighth.

Yet just as it is possible to read the controversy during the century preceding the first Christological councils, those of Ephesus and Chalcedon, as itself Christological and not only trinitarian, so it is possible to see the century or two following the final Christological council, Constantinople III in 681, as likewise still dominated by Christology. A study of such writers as John of Damascus, Theodore of Studios, and Nicephorus of Constantinople, as they defended the use of icons in worship, indicates that they were employing Christological terms and analogies for their iconodule theology not merely because Christology had a vocabulary sophisticated enough to handle the nuances of their case, but because they perceived that a specifically Christological point was at stake: has the union of divine and human confessed in the Christological dogma rendered obsolete the prohibition of visible images of the divine, now that God himself has overridden that prohibition in the incarnation of the Logos? Meanwhile, in the West the images were not the same sort of problem, and, except for the unfortunate effort of the *Libri Carolini*, the issue was largely unnoticed. But the eucharistic controversy of the Carolingian period (and, for that matter, the predestinarian controversy) likewise exhibited the dominance of Christology. For the problem in the eucharistic controversy between Radbertus and Ratramnus, and then again in that between Berengar and opponents such as Lanfranc and Guitmond, was the relation of the "body" in the Eucharist to what was called "the body born of Mary," and it was the Christological resolution of this problem represented by Ambrose that won the day over the symbolic theories of the Augustinian tradition.

The point of this capsule history of Christology is that there have been many "voices of the Church" speaking about it. They have not always been harmonious; in fact, the divisions occasioned by Christology have lasted three times as long as the divisions occasioned by the Reformation. Yet the neo-Chalcedonianism of Maximus Confessor and the so-called Monophysitism of Severus of Antioch and the Nestorianism of Babai the Great all had in common an unqualified loyalty to the Nicene dogma and the insistence that Christology must proceed from that foundation. Similarly, the disputants in the Monenergist and Monotheletist controversies all laid claim to the patrimony of Chalcedon and professed to be deriving their views from it, and the defenders of the

icons and of the real presence both faced what must be called a brand-
new chapter of theology by drawing out the corollaries of orthodox
Christology for images and for the Eucharist. Everyone knows that it
was politically and intellectually impossible for these theologians to
admit to the reality of change in the teachings of the Church, but it is the
rankest historicism to dismiss the orthodox attitude toward tradition as
nothing more than a cloak under which theologians invented their new
and private theories. Acceptance of the authority of Nicea, and then of
Chalcedon, did not inhibit the development, but nourished it. What did
inhibit development was the repeated effort to move to some *status quo
ante*, to roll the issue back behind the development instead of starting
from it in addressing new questions. When "the Jesus of history" is
pitted against "the Christ of dogma" and Chalcedon is regarded as "the
grave-clothes of the historical Jesus," as in much of Protestant theology
during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in some parts of
Roman Catholic theology today, the result is not development, but
grandiose and erudite impoverishment.

THE VOICE OF DEVOTION

As I have already indicated, I intend to accord separate but equal
time to "The Voice of Doctrine" and "The Voice of Devotion." For
although every church doctrine worthy of the name also belongs to the
body of Christian devotion and liturgy, not all doctrines may be said to
be grounded in worship; for example, Christological doctrine certainly
has strong ties to Christocentric piety, but I think it would have to be said
that biblical exegesis has been more prominent in shaping Christology
than devotion has. When we turn to Mariology, on the other hand, the
amount of biblical material that speaks explicitly about her is meager
indeed. It is only with the flowering of the spiritual sense and of typol-
ogy, in which the exposition of the biblical text is intertwined with
devotion, that we see the maturing of Mariological exegesis. Marian
devotion, meanwhile, had provided the *topoi* that enabled exegetes to
read large portions of the Old Testament as hymns to the Virgin. It was
also out of devotion and liturgy that Marian doctrine sprang. Together
with the monastic spirituality that was its seedbed, this translation of
Marian devotion into Mariological doctrine represents the most striking
illustration of the principle formulated by Origen and elaborated by
monastic writers: "Practice is the basis of theory."

Historically, the rise of devotion and doctrine attaching to the
person of Mary is closely connected with the adoption of the Creed of
Nicea. The first instance of the term *Theotokos* is in the writings of
Alexander of Alexandria, and the emperor Julian, writing in 363, chided
Christians for incessantly speaking about the *Theotokos*. It was only a
century after Nicea that *Theotokos* became an official dogma, at
Ephesus in 431, climaxing a period during which, in the Greek and
Syriac East (for example, in the hymns of Ephraem Syrus) and even in
the Latin West (notably in Ambrose of Milan), devotion to her experi-

enced a quantum increase, with doctrine, as theory based on practice, following behind—and sometimes even lagging behind. Yet it is important to note that doctrine also seems to have made such devotion possible. There seems to me to be substantial documentation for the bold hypothesis of Newman: that the Nicene dogma, by affirming the essential oneness of the Son with the Father, declared to be illegitimate any Christian devotion that revered the Son of God as the highest among mere creatures; thereby the language of such devotion was set free to identify Mary as chief among creatures, second only to God, that is, to God the Trinity. Thus the development of trinitarian dogma stimulated devotion to Mary, from which in turn Mariological doctrine would come. That is why Mariology is a good example, one of the two best examples (the other being the Eucharist) of how ''the voice of devotion'' may eventually shape theology and creed in decisive ways.

The reference to the Mariology of Ambrose suggests his special place in the history of Mariology in the Latin Church, as a transmitter of Eastern motifs to the devotion and theology of the West. His importance for the development of Western doctrine came to the fore during the Carolingian period, when the doctrine of Mary was placed on the theological agenda by the thought of Paschasius Radbertus and his opponent Ratramnus. The details of their dispute over the parturition of Mary, which seem so bizarre to a modern reader, must not obscure the special place of Radbertus as the first Western theologian who used the voice of devotion to Mary as the basis for developing the doctrine of Mary. This he did not only in the controversy with Ratramnus, but in the remarkable treatise he composed under the name of Jerome, usually identified by its opening words, *Cogitis me*. In the *Cogitis me* the liturgical designation of the day of Mary's nativity as ''happy'' and ''blessed'' provided the grounds for inquiring into the special circumstances of her nativity and conception that would set her apart from all other human beings also in her birth. Even the biblical phrase ''full of grace,'' taken by itself, would not have led to such a development, since, after all, Stephen was also called ''full of grace''; indeed, it was the embodiment of that biblical apostrophe in a devotional formula, the *Ave Maria*, that served to make it a significant force in doctrinal development, but that came some time after Radbertus. Devotional use and spiritual exegesis went together in the evolution of Mariology, but the relation between the two took on some interesting variations in the process.

Those variations become evident in a comparison of the history of the doctrine of the Assumption with that of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is, I suppose, fair to say that the direct exegetical foundation for either of these was quite minimal at best, but the difference between them was a function of their relative place in liturgy and devotion, as well as of their relative connection to other doctrines. As can be seen from the *Cogitis me* of Radbertus, Western theologians were hard pressed to specify the holiness and sinlessness of Mary because of the form that the doctrine of sin had taken in Augustine. If

every child born of the union between a man and a woman was thereby subject to original sin, Christ was exempt but Mary was not. Augustine himself sensed the problem. For when Pelagius listed a number of saints who had been sinless, including Mary, of whom "we are obliged to grant that her piety had no sin in it," Augustine dismissed all the other examples, but declared that he was "not willing even to raise the question of sin as regards the holy Virgin Mary"; yet he did not explain the grounds for her exemption. Those grounds were eventually supplied by Duns Scotus and finally incorporated in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pius IX in 1854. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that even so devoted an adherent of the Virgin as Bernard of Clairvaux resisted this explanation for her special status, citing the absence of a festival of her Conception on the calendar of the universal Church as his reason for not being willing to attribute to her a special mode of being conceived.

On the other hand, Bernard had no difficulty with the doctrine of the Assumption, whose festival was on August 15. He preached sermons for the festival and hailed the event of the Assumption of the Virgin as an elevation for human nature as a whole, by which Mary had followed Christ and preceded us into "the heavenly fatherland." It apparently did not bother him that the arguments for this doctrine from Scripture were somewhat elusive, and that the evidence from early patristic sources was likewise ambiguous. That problem may have been responsible for the long delay in the promulgation of the Assumption, which did not come until 1950, almost a century after the Immaculate Conception—even though, for the medieval development at any rate, there was much stronger testimony for the Assumption. That testimony was, basically, neither exegetical nor speculative, but devotional and liturgical. The reticence of Bernard in the face of Marian piety also raises the question of what restraints, if any, there have been on the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Without giving this issue the treatment in depth that it deserves, I would identify at least three such restraints that have been operative in the history of doctrinal development. The first is the distinction between devotion and liturgy: while devotion has always enjoyed much greater latitude than liturgy, it has carried a correspondingly more restricted normative force, even in such areas as eschatology. A second restraint—and, despite the examples of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, a decisive one—has been the overriding authority of Scripture: *pace* what one often hears, that it is possible to prove anything by quoting the Bible, Scripture has acted as a check on the tendency to draw doctrinal implications from the practice of worship, for example, in the doctrine of the saints. Finally, Mariology illustrates the dangers of treating a devotional or even a liturgical doctrine as a separate tract in its own right, outside the context of the cardinal doctrines of the Catholic faith, in this case the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of the Church. Even when one has said all of this, as one must to do justice to the history, it remains the case that practice has frequently been the basis of theory, and that even the word "theology" has often meant "worship."

THE VOICE OF DIALOGUE

Any period in the history of theology in which the apologetic concern has been dominant—as was the case with the second and third centuries, and again with the thirteenth, and as has been the case with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—is one where "dialogue" as a term and as a theological method will be prominent. It is also a time when certain articles of faith that are taken for granted and are used as theological presuppositions in other periods come to the center of attention. The doctrine of creation is one such article of faith—defined against the Greeks as *creatio ex nihilo* by the early apologists, restated in opposition to the Aristotelian-Averroist notion of the eternity of the world by Thomas Aquinas, and reinterpreted in relation to modern science by theologians in the past one hundred years. Another article of faith in this category would be the doctrine of God, specifically the definition of what Athanasius and others called "a principle of natural philosophy," that the divine nature was absolute, immutable, and impassible. But instead of these let me propose as a candidate for the label "dialogic" the doctrine of the Church. Because of the prominence of ecclesiology today we usually do not think of it as such, but its history makes this designation an apt one, so long as one includes under the heading of "dialogue" not only the discussion between the Church and those whom Anselm called "the impious," but also the discussion among the various parties of those who, in Anselm's phrase, "take delight in the honor of the name 'Christian.' " When such apologetic and polemical issues have subsided, the doctrine of the Church has receded in prominence.

The authority of the Church of Rome was a prominent issue in the earliest exchanges of polemics on ecclesiology. The first of these exchanges, that between Victor of Rome and several other bishops at the end of the second century over the date of Easter, contained *in nuce* many of the differences between Rome and the East that were to recur in later centuries, but the most prominent object of concern on all sides of the paschal controversy was the unity of the Church. The occasion for the controversy was the disunity caused by a difference in the date for the end of the Lenten fast, a problem that appears to have been especially acute at Rome because of the presence there of Christians from all parts of the empire. In reaction to the problem, as Eusebius puts it, Victor "endeavored to cut off by a single stroke the communities of the whole of Asia [Minor], together with the neighboring churches, from the common union, on the grounds of unorthodoxy" and declared them excommunicated. Not only the churches that were cut off, but also those that agreed with Rome on the observance of Easter denounced this action as precipitate and disruptive of "peace, unity, and love." Their spokesman was Irenaeus, "the peacemaker," who wrote to Victor to urge that differences in the observance of the Lenten fast did not disrupt, but confirmed and enhanced, the unity of the Church and the agreement in the one faith. Whatever the merits of the various sides in the con-

troversy itself may have been, it does seem clear that throughout history
the uniformity of ritual observance has quite generally been equated
with the unity of the Church until a controversy has arisen to to clarify
the distinction between the two.

The unity of the Church was also an issue of the next major debate in
which Rome was involved, that with Carthage over the baptism of
heretics, as is evident also from Cyprian's treatise *De unitate*; but an
additional element introduced into it was the definition of the apostolic-
ity of the Church. Thus Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, in
his letter to Cyprian, charged that Stephen of Rome was using his
"succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were
laid," as a pretext for "introducing many other rocks and establishing
new buildings of many churches." Cyprian similarly objected to the
supposition that Rome, as the see of Peter, was entitled to dictate to
those who had been established more recently. The apostolicity of the
Church, therefore, was not simply a function of the apostolic foundation
of particular churches, in spite of the special eminence that such founda-
tion did bestow on them, but consisted in fidelity to the apostolic
Scriptures (which likewise did not contain only those books that could
claim an individual apostle as their author) and in the preservation of the
apostolic doctrine. That tripartite definition of "apostolic" had, of
course, received its classic formulation a few decades earlier in
Irenaeus's treatise *Against Heresies*, which is further evidence that
apostolicity, like unity, has achieved its most precise definition as a
consequence of dialogue.

One feature of the settlement between Cyprian and Rome became a
factor itself in a later conflict. Cyprian had come to the conclusion that
those who had lapsed from the faith could eventually be readmitted to
the fellowship of the Church without jeopardizing its holiness, because
holiness was guaranteed by the integrity of priests and bishops, but that
"all who have been contaminated by the sacrifice of a profane and
unrighteous priest are absolutely bound to [his] sin." Donatism rep-
resented the effort of the indigenous rigorism of North African Christian-
ity to apply this principle consistently and even retroactively and thus to
charge Catholicism with having forfeited true holiness and therefore
with having lost the authority to consecrate valid sacraments. Augus-
tine's answer to the charge was to define the holiness of the Church as an
eschatological rather than an empirical reality, to ground it in the objec-
tivity of the sacraments rather than in the subjective state of the bishop
or priest, and to make the institutional unity of the Church the matrix
that fostered the process of striving toward holiness, as distinguished
from the achievement of perfection under the conditions of historical
existence. This Augustinian schema of objectivity—originally applied to
baptism by Augustine and then extended to the Eucharist by Radbertus
in the ninth century and to ordination by Alger of Liège during the
controversies over simony early in the twelfth century—has remained
the basic feature of the Catholic specification of what made the Church
"holy," and it was shared by Luther and other Protestant reformers.

But late medieval reformers like Wycliffe and Hus, together with many of the Protestant reformers, expressed the lingering sense among believers that such a theory severed the moral nerve and vitiated the holiness of the Church. Augustine's brilliant statement against Donatism was pastorally sound and speculatively irrefutable, but it required dialogue for its creation and has continued to require dialogue for its preservation.

While the catholicity of the Church was also at stake in the controversy with Donatism (as is evident from Augustine's epigram, so important to Newman, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*), the gravest crisis in the understanding of the Church as catholic was undoubtedly the schism between East and West; even the Reformation was a schism within an already existing schism, and a separation of Protestant Christianity from a Catholic Christendom that made catholicity coterminous with the Latin Church and its affiliates. Eastern ecclesiology laid special emphasis on the ecumenical councils as the expression of the catholicity of the Church. Far more than in the West, Eastern local and national churches have their own histories of discipline and liturgy, even of theology, being dominated by no single cultic language and by no single form of theological expression. As we can see in the ecclesiology of Maximus Confessor, the consensus of the orthodox fathers with the ecumenical councils transcended these local histories and held them together in the one catholic faith and the one catholic Church. Maximus, who died in 662, still spoke of Rome as the wielder of the keys and the guardian of orthodox catholicity, but when Rome and Constantinople came into conflict his doctrine of the councils became a point of division between them. Rome argued, against the Eastern view, that a council became ecumenical and catholic when it was "convoked by the authority of the apostolic see," which did not need a council to act unilaterally in the name of the Church catholic. The response of spokesmen for Constantinople to this argument was a rejection of such monarchical ideas, combined with a restatement of the authority of the councils as the mark of catholicity. And in its most profound articulation, the ecclesiology of Alexej Chomjakov, this view of catholicity saw in the councils, not in any single bishop, the voice of the church as *sobornaja*, which meant both "catholic" and "conciliar."

All four of the standard *notae ecclesiae*, therefore, have in significant measure acquired their normative form in the setting of the apologetic and polemical dialogue. Conversely, when the current dialogue has not concentrated on the doctrine of the Church, formal ecclesiology has declined and sometimes almost disappeared among theologians. It is, for example, difficult, though by no means impossible, to reconstruct the ecclesiology of Thomas Aquinas. There is no separate unit of the *Summa* on the Church, and one must look for the use of the doctrine of the Church in his treatment of other doctrines. Theologically, I am sure that this dialogic setting of the doctrine of the Church has been a hindrance as well as a benefit, and that the Western tendency to resort to juridical categories for ecclesiology has been, at least in part, one of its

deleterious consequences. But if we forget that this is how ecclesiology has in fact developed, we may not be able to cope with the received categories in attempting to affirm and confess for our time that the Church, the people of God, is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

THE VOICE OF CONTINUITY

Each of the doctrines with which I have been dealing could, with considerable justification, be called a voice of continuity. The doctrine of the person of Christ deserves this title not only because of the continuous history of its own development through several centuries, but because of its function as the key to the understanding of other doctrines that developed later. The doctrine of Mary, if interpreted comprehensively, is a voice of continuity; for, beginning with the Epistle to the Galatians, continuing with the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, and climaxing in the dogmatic decrees of the Council of Ephesus, Mary was the continuous point of reference for the confession of the Church's faith about the Incarnation. The doctrine of the Church is a voice of continuity in a special sense, for continuity is a theme of each of the *notae ecclesiae* and of the confession of the Church as such. Yet by the term "voice of continuity" I would refer here to that by which continuity is fostered and preserved as well as expressed, and therefore it is to the doctrine of the sacraments that I want to turn. The sacraments are the appropriate subject for this theme also because the continuity of which they have been an expression and a source has been characterized by striking changes in theory, meaning, and explanation; and since continuity-with-change is a fairly good working definition of "development," the doctrine of the sacraments may serve to illustrate my general topic as well.

In the light of the doctrinal development and of the catechetical usage of the Church, the remarkable fact with which we must begin is that there is little or no basis in the New Testament for a doctrine of the sacraments as such, what came to be called *de sacramentis in genere*. It is, I trust, no longer necessary to prove that the *mysteria* of which the New Testament speaks, even in Ephesians-Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles, are not, despite the Latin translation *sacramenta*, the seven sacraments or even two or three of the seven. (The designation of marriage by this term in Ephesians 5:32 is not an exception to this, but rather a means by which, once the definition of "sacrament" has been established, marriage came to qualify as belonging to the category.) In some ways even more noteworthy than the absence of a technical term for "sacrament" is the almost complete absence of a connection between the various actions that were eventually covered by the term. Baptism, the Eucharist, absolution, anointing, marriage, the laying on of hands—and, for that matter, the washing of feet, exorcism, and the Lord's Prayer—are all treated discretely. Only in occasional and largely typological references—as in the spiritual water and spiritual food of 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 or perhaps in the water and blood that flowed from the wounded side of Christ according to the Johannine writings (John

19:34; 1 John 5:6-8)—are even baptism and the Eucharist spoken of together.

Otherwise they appear separately, and they have also developed separately. Actually, the doctrine of baptism has undergone comparatively little development. There has been much debate over some of its implications, as in the disputes mentioned earlier between Rome and Carthage and between Augustine and the Donatists. But if one reads the first treatise in Latin on the doctrine of baptism, written at the end of the second century by the first significant theologian to use Latin, Tertullian, most of what the Christian tradition was to identify as the meaning and content of baptism (with the exception of the idea of infant baptism) is already present there, and in language that Western theologians from Cyprian to Aquinas to Luther would have been able to appropriate. This is, in itself, an impressive instance of continuity, one that is made all the more massive by the contrast between the doctrine of baptism and the doctrine of the Eucharist. On this doctrine the first treatise in Latin did not appear until the ninth century, after the Eucharist had been celebrated daily, or weekly in any case, for more than eight hundred years. Once Radbertus and Ratramnus had raised the question, it would not subside, and every century since the ninth has seen the literature on the nature of the eucharistic presence grow.

Without rehearsing that entire development, let me only suggest in the present context that the relation between the doctrine of baptism and the doctrine of the Eucharist may also be used to divide the history of the development of the doctrine of the sacraments into two periods. For it is characteristic of the patristic and early medieval period in the West (and, I think, even of later periods in the East) that baptism was seen as the key to understanding of the sacraments *in genere*, and sometimes with fateful consequences, as in Augustine, while for the later Middle Ages and for scholastic theology the definition of what constituted a sacrament came from a consideration of the Eucharist (for example, the insistence on dominical institution). I have elaborated this periodization of the history of the doctrine of the sacraments at greater length elsewhere. I mention it here to point out that as the voice of continuity the sacraments provided a primary way, and sometimes the only way, of depicting the mystery of salvation and granting participation in it—baptism when the Church faced primarily *ad extra*, the Eucharist when it was dealing chiefly *ad intra*. Categories such as illumination and change, symbol and substance, were adopted and then adapted, as means of describing the grace of the sacraments, with greater or lesser success. The relation of the sacraments to one another, and the relation of the sacramental system to the preached and written word of God, would engage theologians until the present day. Thus the voice of continuity in the sacraments has not been a monotone. The continuity lay in the observance, the change in the explanations of the observance, the continuity-with-change, or if you prefer the change-within-continuity, was the development of doctrine.

The voices of the Church have been many, although the silence of the many more who never wrote anything is even more deafening. The

weight of the tradition can become a burden, and the historical examination of its development can lead to a *crise de foi*. Indeed, for any theologian who still thinks of doctrine as a proposition whose full meaning has been given once and for all, of devotion as a practice whose dogmatic presupposition has been specified in unambiguous formulae, of dialogue as a one-way street of correcting others but not learning in the process, and of continuity as *stasis*—for any such theologian, the voices of the Church, as history makes them available to us, can lead not only to a *crise de foi*, but to a fundamental reconsideration of theology and of its mission. But if, as the greatest theologians of the East have reminded us, the first thing and the last thing that we know about God is that we can speak of him only negatively; and if, as the greatest theologians of the West have reminded us, we speak of such mysteries as the Trinity not in order to say something, but in order not to remain completely silent, then we can listen to the voices of the Church, in all their variety, with open ears, with a thankful heart, and with the ancient prayer: *Veni Creator Spiritus!*

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JAROSLAV PELIKAN
Yale University

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