

SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND THE WORLD CHURCH

In the last decade or two of his life, Karl Rahner detected the emergent reality of a new era in the history of the Church and, whether consequently or antecedently, in the history of the world.¹ His idea of an incipient "world Church" was prompted by the specifically Catholic experience of the Second Vatican Council, which brought together in Rome some two thousand bishops from all six continents. Rahner was a European, and more particularly a German-speaking European. His active ecumenism bloomed late: it was practically limited to contacts with Germanic Lutheranism, and it remained to the end rather bookish. For good or ill, my own cultural and ecclesial perspectives differ considerably from Rahner's. I am a minister of the British Methodist Church, with whose maternal milk I took in a commitment to ecumenism in its classical Faith and Order form, including the goal of organic unity such as has been achieved or attempted among local and regional churches of different denominations in many parts of the British Commonwealth. I worked for six years as a missionary in French-speaking Equatorial Africa, and for the past five years I have lived in the U.S.A. These differences need to be kept in mind as I seek to interact with Rahner's concept of a world Church, and more particularly from the angle of sacramental theology.

The world Church appears first in Rahner's eyes as an historico-geographical phenomenon. But even then it is not merely a matter of extension in time and space. Diachronic and synchronic questions of *culture* arise concerning the Church's relation to a developing universal civilisation and to regional and provincial particularities. Rahner also knew that the worldwide spread of Christianity was not simply a matter of arithmetic. A presence in diaspora raises *soteriological* questions concerning the Church's place and role in the prosecution of God's plan for the world, the attainment of God's kingdom.² We shall, then, concentrate on the cultural and soteriological aspects, themselves partly overlapping, of the notion and reality of a world Church as they come to significant expression in the major sacraments of baptism and eucharist.³

¹Note particularly K. Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," and "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," *Theological Investigations XX* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 77-89, 90-102.

²See "On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council," *Theological Investigations X* (New York: Seabury, 1973), pp. 84-102.

³For the privileged position of baptism and eucharist, see Y. Congar, "The Notion of 'Major' or 'Principal' Sacraments," *The Sacraments in General*, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx and Boniface Willems (*Concilium* 31; New York: Paulist, 1968), pp. 21-32.

In Rahner's later years, his conception of the sacraments underwent, according to his own avowal, "a copernican revolution."⁴ In his little book on *Kirche und Sakramente* (1960), Rahner's thought substantially followed the sequence of God, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, the life of Christians in the world.⁵ In a couple of essays written after Vatican II, however, his argument moved rather from God's presence in secular human life to the sacraments and to the Church itself.⁶ My contention is that both procedures are valuable, if not indeed necessary; and I will suggest that the first movement is in fact a baptismal movement, and the second a eucharistic. The two principal sacraments and the two movements embody the dialectical relationship between church and world that obtains both soteriologically and culturally.

Since Vatican II marked a turning-point for Rahner, it will be good to begin there. My concrete examples will, however, be taken largely from another process in which the world Church has been anticipated and striven for. I refer to the sixty-year movement of Faith and Order, in which Roman Catholic theologians have participated fully and officially since Vatican II, and which has reached a provisional climax in the Lima text of 1982 on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.⁷

I. THE CHURCH AS SACRAMENT

The dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* began by saying that the Church is "like a sacrament" (*veluti sacramentum*) of the world's salvation.⁸ St. Augustine, in line with the New Testament's linguistic use of *mysterium Dei*, had declared that "the sacrament of God is none other than Christ" (*Ep. 187.34; PL 33, 846*). In his book *Catholicisme* (1938), Henri de Lubac concluded that "if Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ."⁹ This basic insight was followed out Christologically and ecclesiologically by Edward Schillebeeckx and Otto Semmelroth in their respective books, *Christus, sacrament van de Godsontmoeting* (1957) and *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (1953).¹⁰ Rahner's small book on *Church and Sacraments* adopted this perspective, though he would later safeguard the Christological priority

⁴See "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," *Theological Investigations XIV* (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp. 161-84.

⁵K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg: Herder, 1960); ET *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder, 1963). (But see below, note 11.)

⁶In addition to the article mentioned in note 4, see "Zur Theologie des Gottesdienstes," *Schriften zur Theologie XIV* (Zurich: Benziger, 1980), pp. 227-237.

⁷*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). In what follows, the three parts are abbreviated respectively as B, E, and M.

⁸*Lumen gentium*, 1; also 9, 48 and 59. See already *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 5 and 26, and further *Gaudium et spes*, 42 and 45, and *Ad gentes*, 1 and 5.

⁹H. de Lubac, *Catholicisme* (4th ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1947), p. 50 (abridged ET *Catholicism* (New York: Longmans, 1950), p. 29).

¹⁰E. Schillebeeckx, *Christus, Sacrament van de Godsontmoeting* (Bilthoven: Nelissen, 1957); ET *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1953).

by distinguishing between Christ as *Ursakrament* and the Church as *Grundsakrament*, just as Leo Scheffczyk much later would distinguish between Christ as *Ursakrament* and, looking forward to the septenary of sacraments, the Church as *Ganzsakrament*.¹¹ By Vatican II, the Benelux and the German experts were able to introduce the sacramentality of the Church as a main ecclesiological category, though only after a struggle, and the apparent novelty had to be explained on its first occurrence in *Lumen gentium*.¹²

It was there stated that "the Church in Christ is, as it were, the sacrament, that is, the *sign* and *instrument*, of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind." Sacramentally the Church appears as both a present *anticipation* of salvation and also a *tool* for its realization on a universal scale. In a recent study, W. Beinert has suggested that the Church's instrumental role was a characteristic emphasis of O. Semmelroth, whereas for Rahner the weight lay already on the less active sign-character of the Church.¹³ Despite such possible differences of accent, it will be remembered that a sacrament is traditionally an *efficacious* sign, and that, conversely, the *witness* of the Church to the world operates at the level of signs which are not simply identical with the reality of God's kingdom which they proclaim.

It would not be too far from the thought of *Lumen gentium* to say that the whole fallen world stands under the saving love of God, and that the believing Church is given the cooperative task of evangelization: Repent, and believe the gospel! In broad terms, that had been also the missionary perspective in which that world Church had come into being, whose first official epiphany had been for Karl Rahner the Second Vatican Council with its bishops from every corner of the earth. By world mission was understood the institutional "expansion of Christianity," which was more or less identified with the Roman Catholic Church. The Church was a *Heilsanstalt* into which one entered by getting oneself baptized in response to the evangelical proclamation.

That vision was not strange, *mutatis mutandis*, to Protestantism either, as its reflection in the very titles of historical works by A. Harnack and

¹¹The English translation of *Kirche und Sakramente* (see note 5) does not make it apparent that Rahner in the original had used *Ursakrament* of the Church. For his later preference of *Grundsakrament* as an ecclesiological term, see K. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), pp. 396-398; ET *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), pp. 411-413. For Scheffczyk, see H. Luthe (ed.), *Christusbegegnung in den Sakramenten* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), pp. 9-61 ("Jesus Christus - Ursakrament der Erlösung"), pp. 63-120 ("Die Kirche - das Ganzsakrament Jesu Christi").

¹²See, briefly, J. Ratzinger, "Die Kirche als Heilssakrament," *Theologische Prinzipienlehre* (Munich:ewel, 1982), pp. 45-57.

¹³W. Beinert, "Die Sakramentalität der Kirche im theologischen Gespräch," *Theologische Berichte IX: Kirche und Sakrament*, eds. J. Pfammatter and F. Furger (Zurich: Benziger, 1980), pp. 13-66. Beinert himself locates the (re)discovery of the sacramentality of the Church in the history of ideas and of culture as a response to the problems and opportunities of secularization. At the end of his survey of the literature, he offers his own convincing systematic exposition of the theological value of the notion.

K. Latourette shows.¹⁴ True, the Lutheran Peter Brunner had criticized Rahner for "inserting" the Church between Christ and the sacraments directly instituted by him; but even if classical Protestantism liked to think of the Church as *creatura Verbi* and therefore also, albeit less explicitly, the "creature of the sacraments," yet Brunner had to admit that Protestants too know the Church as the *bearer* of the word and the sacraments.¹⁵ Moreover, the German Lutheran ritual of baptism still reads from the false ending of Mark:

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

That is perhaps not altogether different in principle from Pope Boniface VIII's bull of 1302, *Unam sanctam*:

There is one holy catholic and apostolic church, and outside this church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins. . . . It is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.

Now I am not about to defend Boniface VIII, or even the false ending of Mark; but I do want to hold on to their positive thrust. They affirm that salvation is given in Christ, and that Christ has a visible people in the world, namely his Church with the sacraments he has given it. The Lima document makes that claim:

Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people. . . . (B§2)

Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. . . . (B§6)

The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. . . . (E§2)

If these passages were taken on their own, they might seem to confirm the worst fears of Protestants concerning the *opus operatum*. But in fact the Lima text on baptism goes on to say:

Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. It looks towards a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches. . . . (B§8)

¹⁴A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (2nd ed.; New York: Putnam, 1908 [first German edition 1902]). K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 volumes (New York: Harper, 1937-1945).

¹⁵P. Brunner, "Zur katholischen Sakramenten- und Eucharistielehre," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 88 (1963), 169-186, in particular 175f. Among Protestants, vigorous opposition to "ecumenical" usage is maintained by E. Käsemann, *Kirchliche Konflikte I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), pp. 46-61 ("Zur ekklesiologischen Verwendung der Stichworte 'Sakrament' und 'Zeichen'"). E. Jüngel remains suspicious of an understanding of the Church as "realsymbolische Repräsentation Jesu Christi" to the extent that it endangers the primarily *receptive* character of salvation on the side of the Church: "Die Kirche als Sakrament?" in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 80 (1983), 432-457. Less guarded is W. Pannenberg in his contribution to the article "Kirche," in R. Scherer and others (eds.), *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft*, XXIX (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), especially pp. 126-128.

And the text on the eucharist states:

While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all [churches] agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required. . . . (E§ 13)

That recognition of the human element in fundamental soteriology will eventually have consequences at the cultural level.

But first we need to face the ecumenical question in relation to the sacraments and the world Church. The long years of work leading up to the Lima text revealed that simplistic appeals to baptismal unity were premature. Paragraph 6 of the text on baptism is much more nuanced:

Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is . . . a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world. . . . When baptismal unity is realized in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.

The mordant commentary follows:

The inability of the churches mutually to recognize their various practices of baptism as sharing in the one baptism, and their actual dividedness in spite of mutual baptismal recognition, have given dramatic visibility to the broken witness of the Church. The readiness of the churches in some places and times to allow differences of sex, race, or social status to divide the body of Christ has further called into question genuine baptismal unity of the Christian community (Gal 3:27-28) and has seriously compromised its witness.

The text on the eucharist makes a similar point with regard to compromised witness:

Insofar as Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and the corporate levels. (E§ 26)

Even more boldly, the text on the eucharist declares that *our own salvation* is called into question:

Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity. The eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the world's history. As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition. The eucharist shows that our behaviour is inconsistent in face of the reconciling presence of God in human history: we are placed under *continual judgment* by the persistence of unjust relationships of all kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest and power politics and, above all, the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions within the body of Christ. (E§ 20)

With "unjustifiable confessional oppositions" is raised an issue which had occupied Karl Rahner for at least two decades and which he brought into a specifically ecumenical context in the 1983 manifesto co-authored with Heinrich Fries regarding the substantial possibility of church unity now.¹⁶ Rahner distinguished—with a sharpness I am not sure is

¹⁶H. Fries and K. Rahner, *Einigung der Kirchen - reale Möglichkeit* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983).

practicable—between dogmatic unity and theological pluralism. The former was necessary; the latter was inevitable and indeed welcome. That at least a relative distinction may be possible is suggested by the Lima text regarding the eucharistic presence. The commentary to paragraph 13 reads:

Many churches believe that by the words of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine of the eucharist become, in a real though mysterious manner, the body and blood of the risen Christ, i.e., of the living Christ present in all his fullness. . . . Some other churches, while affirming a real presence of Christ at the eucharist, do not link that presence so definitely with the signs of bread and wine. The decision remains for the churches whether this difference can be accommodated within the convergence formulated in the text itself.

The commentary to paragraph 15 returns to the question of different “explanations” of Christ’s eucharistic presence:

In the history of the Church there have been various attempts to understand the mystery of the real and unique presence of Christ in the eucharist. Some are content merely to affirm this presence without seeking to explain it. Others consider it necessary to assert a change wrought by the Holy Spirit and Christ’s words, in consequence of which there is no longer just ordinary bread and wine but the body and blood of Christ. Others again have developed an explanation of the real presence which, though not claiming to exhaust the significance of the mystery, seeks to protect it from damaging interpretations.

The issue being addressed here is chiefly that of *confessional* differences, but it is interesting to wonder whether *culturally* different accounts could be accommodated. I am thinking, for instance, of what cultural anthropology has brought to light concerning African philosophies and experiences of personal presence which seem to have much in common with what biblical scholars have taught us about “extended personality” in the Scriptures.¹⁷

Returning to the confessional question, it is obvious that the recovery of church unity is an essential stage in the baptismal and eucharistic “dynamic” whose scope is no less than universal. In paragraph 7 of the Lima text, baptism is presented as “the sign of the kingdom”:

Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life, extends to all nations, and anticipates the day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And in references to the eucharist:

The eucharist . . . signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit. (E §4) The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it. (E §22)

¹⁷See G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), especially pp. 109f, 196.

The exclusionary side of Pope Boniface VIII's *Unam sanctam* and of the false ending of Mark is therefore *conditional*: excluded are those who refuse the offer of salvation. But insofar as it is—at least provisionally—exclusive at the soteriological level, this perspective is likely to place its proponents at the negative extreme of H. Richard Niebuhr's fivefold typology: Christ *against culture*.¹⁸ The world lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19), and little can be expected from the culture of those who remain "without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). With, of course, Alexandrian exceptions, the Fathers of the pre-Constantinian church did not look for contributions from Athens to Jerusalem. Even the Apologist Justin, who held that good Greeks who had lived according to the *logos* were Christians *avant la lettre*, nevertheless attributed any similarities between the Christian sacraments and the mystery religions to diabolical counterfeiting on the part of the pagans.¹⁹ When it is in opposition to the dominant culture, Christianity will produce its own culture which will be ideologically a counter-culture and sociologically a sub-culture. And such a culture, though it may be narrow, will not necessarily be unadorned: pentecostal glossolalia has been likened to great cathedrals of sound.

In a situation in which Christianity has achieved some historical weight, its oppositional thrust gets modified into Niebuhr's fourth type, the dialectical. Christ and culture are found in the kind of tension represented by Luther's doctrine of the *zwei Reiche*. Here the civil institution may play a part-way positive role in the order of preservation, holding the fort against the worst ravages of sin and thus creating a space for the proclamation of the gospel.²⁰ I have just returned from an extended visit to East Germany, where the Lutheran churches on the whole try to see themselves in "critical solidarity" with the socialist society. A distinctly *post-Constantinian* condition is new to the Church: Karl-Heinrich Bieritz has written on the worship life of the Church in such a "nicht-mehr-Volkskirche" situation.²¹ I spoke with a former chaplain who told me that some university students were committed to the Christian faith but saw no point in undergoing the antiquated rite of baptism. I suspect, however, that the sacraments will eventually be revalued, now that the days of "cheap grace" are over. It is socially and culturally a costly act to receive baptism in the German Democratic Republic; but a healthily mixed practice of baptism for people of all ages is developing. Christian competition with Marxist-Leninist rites of passage could produce interesting liturgical results.

¹⁸H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

¹⁹Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, 46 and 66 respectively.

²⁰See G. Wainwright, "Revolution and Quietism," *The Ecumenical Moment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 150-168.

²¹K. H. Bieritz, "Der Oeffentlichkeitsanspruch des Gottesdienstes in einer 'Nicht-Mehr-Volkskirche'," *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 26 (1982), 67-78.

Let me finish this predominantly baptismal half of my address with an example from the so-called younger churches. A comment on paragraph 21 of the Lima text reads thus:

In some parts of the world, the giving of a name in the baptismal liturgy has led to confusion between baptism and customs surrounding name-giving. This confusion is especially harmful if, in cultures predominantly non-Christian, the baptized are required to assume Christian names not rooted in their cultural tradition. In making regulations for baptism, churches should be careful to keep the emphasis on the true Christian significance of baptism and to avoid unnecessarily alienating the baptized from their local culture through the imposition of foreign names. A name which is inherited from one's culture roots the baptized in that culture, and at the same time manifests the universality of baptism, incorporation into the one Church, holy, catholic and apostolic, which stretches over all the nations of the earth.

I am reminded of spontaneously chosen baptismal names reported from Papua-New Guinea: "The Peace of God," which is Geoffrey, my own Christian name; "Property of the Lord," which is Dominic, my son's Christian name; "Royal Treasure," which is the Pearl of the Kingdom or Margaret, my wife's Christian name.

With that we are coming close to the transformationist character of the Church's move into the world, corresponding to Niebuhr's fifth and final type; but before we end up there, we must now make the opposite journey, from the world to the Church. After looking at the Church as sacrament, let us in the second half consider the world as sacrament; and here the accent will be predominantly eucharistic.

II. THE WORLD AS SACRAMENT

Karl Rahner does not, so far as I remember, speak of the world as sacrament, though he does daringly call the world "God's body" in one of the later articles in which he describes the copernican revolution in his conception of the sacraments.²² That shift of Rahner's may be summarized as follows:

Rahner no longer wants to think primarily from the mental and spiritual reality of the sacramental event towards its "secular" effect; rather he wishes to make a spiritual movement which leads from the world to the sacrament. In this view, sacraments, and therefore finally the Church itself, are no longer punctiliar interventions of God into the world from outside; rather the world, in its innermost root, in the personal center of knowing subjects, is always and permanently grasped by grace, carried and moved by God's self-communication. This inner dynamic of the normal, "profane" life of humanity always and everywhere has found in Jesus Christ its clearest expression. From that point out, the sacraments are epiphanies of the holiness and redemption of the secular character of humankind and the world. They are the manifestation, in the order of signs, of the liturgy of the world. In the sacraments, there occurs nothing that is not otherwise present in the world; rather they bring to conscious expression and cultic celebration what is taking place as God's saving act in the world and in human freedom.²³

²²See the article mentioned in note 4, p. 172.

²³Borrowed from W. Kasper, "Die Kirche als universales Sakrament des Heils" in E. Klinger and K. Wittstadt (eds.), *Glaube im Prozess: Für Karl Rahner* (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), pp. 221-239, in particular p. 236.

Taken alone, that vision poses considerable difficulties. In Rahner's "universalem Heilsoptimismus,"²⁴ sin often appears—even typographically—as a parenthesis. The work of Jesus Christ becomes more exemplary than redemptive; Christology becomes merely successful anthropology, and the hypostatic union forfeits somewhat its uniqueness. The "*non ponentibus obicem*" is interpreted so generously that it becomes very difficult to fail salvation. Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" may have started as a "limit-phenomenon" in his thinking, but it finally threatened to push the Church from the center into the extraordinary, and evangelization risks being reduced to gnoseology, as though baptism did nothing new but simply put a name on something that was already there. Culturally, the consequence of such a soteriology is a swing to the far extremity, the second of Niebuhr's five types and the one with which Niebuhr himself rightly had least sympathy: the Christ of culture. There Christ is absorbed by the culture and, chameleon-like, takes on its coloring. It is nevertheless possible to stop short of that extreme and adopt Niebuhr's third type, the synthetic. Niebuhr's star representative for that type is Thomas Aquinas: grace does not destroy nature or culture but, after a certain purification, perfects it.

Theologians who talk of the world as sacrament usually make the eucharist the dominant analogue. Let us look at two examples, one from an Orthodox theologian and of protological cast, the other from a Methodist theologian and of eschatological cast.

Under the title *The World as Sacrament*²⁵, Alexander Schmemmann (of blessed memory) reinterpreted in a biblical sense Feuerbach's materialist dictum, "Man is what he eats":

[Man] is indeed that which he eats, and the whole world is presented as one all-embracing banquet table for man. . . . In the Bible the food that man eats, the world of which he must partake in order to live, is given to him by God, and it is given as *communion with God*. . . . All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It is divine love made food, made life for man. God *blesses* everything he creates, and, in biblical language, this means that he makes all creation the sign and means of his presence and wisdom, love and revelation. "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is". . . . The unique position of man in the universe is that he alone is to *bless* God for the food and the life he receives from Him. . . . The first, the basic definition of man is that he is the *priest*. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God—and by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion. The world was created as the "matter," the material of one all-embracing sacrament, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament.

In its fallenness, humanity has switched from being the priest of the world to its slave, loving and worshipping the creature instead of the Creator.

²⁴As in note 1, pp. 99ff.

²⁵A. Schmemmann, *The World as Sacrament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965). The book was published in the USA under two other titles, *For the Life of the World* (1963) and *Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: Herder, 1965).

That way lies death. Through the God-Man Jesus Christ the redemptive transformation of humanity and the world has begun. The gates of paradise have been opened again. There the whole of life is praise and thanks to God, and human beings share in the divine life at the table of the Lord.

Among the advantages of this Orthodox vision must be reckoned the concreteness and the personalism which it draws from the liturgy. God is not only the mysterious horizon of human self-transcendence but the addressee of the eucharistic prayer. Conscious intentionality is of the essence. (Each November, I wonder how profane Americans can celebrate Thanksgiving without a dative object.)

At the end of his book, Schmemmann offered a concise formulation of the eschatological perspective:

The Church is the sacrament of the Kingdom—not because it possesses divinely instituted acts called “sacraments,” but because first of all, it is the possibility given to man to see in and through this world the “world to come,” to see and to “live” it in Christ. It is only when, in the darkness of *this world*, we discern that Christ has *already* “filled all things with Himself,” that these *things*, whatever they may be, are revealed and given to us as full of meaning and beauty. A Christian is the one who, wherever he looks, finds everywhere Christ, and rejoices in Him. And this joy *transforms* all his human plans and programs, decisions and moves, makes all his mission the sacraments of the world’s return to Him, who is the life of the world.

For the Methodist theologian Theodore Runyon, the eschaton is the operative beginning of his idea of “the world as original sacrament.”²⁶ He quotes the messianic vision of Isaiah 11:6-9:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The suckling child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.
They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.²⁷

Our author concludes from this passage:

No sharp demarcation is drawn between humanity and the rest of the created order, for their futures intertwine. As St. Paul later was to describe it, the creation itself will benefit from the redemption of humankind through Christ, just as it now suffers from human corruption [cf. Rom 8:19-21].

The turning-point was the work of Jesus Christ as the irruption of the divine kingdom through self-sacrificial love to God and humanity and the victory over the devil. Derivatively, the sacraments of the Church become

²⁶T. Runyon, “The World as the Original Sacrament,” *Worship* 54 (1980), 495-511.

²⁷One of the few occasions when Woody Allen’s theological instincts have let him down was his remark that the lion might lie down with the lamb, but the lamb would not get much sleep.

signs of the critical transformation of the world according to God's original design and the goal God has set for the world:

In the hands of Christ the sacrament is presented to us as *the world in its original and eschatological form*. He takes the bread and wine, which are products of our ordinary world—and therefore related to the complexities of international grain cartels, embargoes, starvation, alcoholism, and all the other ways in which God's good gifts have gone awry—and turns them into signs of his kingdom of justice and love. He does this by identifying them with himself and his mission, just as he did the paschal bread and wine at the Last Supper. Having joined them with his life for the kingdom, he hands the bread and wine back to us to make us participants in that kingdom by sharing its first fruits which nourish us along the way.

The strength of this eschatological perspective lies in its apocalyptic coloration, which is quite lacking in Rahner. Even when he writes, in rather teilhardian fashion, of participation in the turmoil of the world, Rahner remains more or less in the wisdom tradition. But suffering and redemption belong to the conflict with evil. Runyon knows that Christ's kingdom is not of *this* world. For the new order, a radical transformation is needed; and that means, on the human side, conversion.

In protological, soteriological and eschatological perspectives, the Lima text sees the eucharist as the Church's representative act of praise and thanksgiving on behalf of the world:

The eucharist, which always includes both word and sacrament, is a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God. It is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification, for everything accomplished by God now in the Church and in the world in spite of the sins of human beings, for everything that God will accomplish in bringing the Kingdom to fulfillment. . . .

The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation. . . . This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him. The bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human labor, are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit. (E§3-4)

In a sentence which gave trouble at Lima even to the *Universalgeschichtler* Wolfhart Pannenberg, the text acknowledges present signs of salvation even outside the Church:

Signs of [the final] renewal [of creation] are present in the world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love and peace. The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks to God for these signs and joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ. (E§22)

The Church promotes the cause of the kingdom, first, by its *intercession*:

In the memorial of Christ, . . . the Church, united with its great High Priest and Intercessor, prays for the world; (E§23)

The Church, gratefully recalling God's mighty acts of redemption, beseeches God to give the benefits of these acts to every human being; (E§8)

second, by its *witness*:

Reconciled in the eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women, and witnesses of the joy of resurrection; (E§24)

The eucharistic community is nourished and strengthened for confessing by word and action the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the world; (E§ 26) and third, by its *loving service*:

All . . . manifestations of love in the eucharist are directly related to Christ's own testimony as a servant, in whose servanthood Christians themselves participate. As God in Christ has entered into the human situation, so eucharistic liturgy is near to the concrete and particular situations of men and women. In the early Church the ministry of deacons and deaconesses gave expression in a special way to this aspect of the eucharist. The place of such ministry between the table and the needy properly testifies to the redeeming presence of Christ in the world; (E§ 21)

As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the eucharist. (E§ 24)

Karl Rahner mused: Must the eucharist be celebrated even in Alaska with wine from the grape?²⁸ In a carefully nuanced commentary to paragraph 28 on the matter of the eucharist, the Lima text raises the question of what the Church can take up from the culture:

Since New Testament days, the Church has attached the greatest importance to the continued use of the elements of bread and wine which Jesus used at the Last Supper. In certain parts of the world, where bread and wine are not customary or obtainable, it is now sometimes held that local food and drink serve better to anchor the eucharist in everyday life. Further study is required concerning the question of which features of the Lord's Supper were unchangeably instituted by Jesus, and which features remain within the Church's competence to decide.

Perhaps it is indeed ultimately a question of authority, but there is no mistaking the morally charged nature of the situation. In the Roman Catholic Church, Latin was for centuries valued as a sign of the universality of the Church. In the emergent world Church, Rahner hails the liturgical use of vernaculars as an instance of decentralization. At the same time, he speaks of an incipient world civilization, which can be of service to the Christian proclamation and has indeed arisen largely through technical means that originate in "Christian" countries. Yet the beginnings of this exportation are linked with colonialism, and in the Third World the values of the native cultures are being threatened and even replaced by problematic, and even downright evil, products from the North. That is the complex situation in which the world Church must simultaneously attempt the cosmopolitanization and the inculturation of its theology and practice of the sacraments.²⁹

²⁸As in note 1, p. 79.

²⁹K. Rahner, as in note 1, pp. 78f, 80f, 86, 92; also, in the same volume, p. 165, and "Aspekte europäischer Theologie," *Schriften zur Theologie* XV (Zurich: Benziger, 1983), pp. 84-103. See further G. Wainwright, "The Localization of Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 8 (1971-1972), 26-41; "Christian Worship and Western Culture," *Studia Liturgica* 12 (1977), 20-33; *Doxology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 357-398. Also A. Schnijder, "Cosmopolitization of Mankind and Adaptation of the Liturgy," *Studia Liturgica* 8 (1971-1972), 169-184; A. J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show that in both soteriology and culture the two ways are needed: from the Church to the world, and from the world to the Church. The sequence of the dialectic is significant: the first move is baptismal, the second is eucharistic. I want finally to bring to the surface two underlying issues.

The first is the old one concerning the necessity of the sacraments for salvation. The Lima text at least makes no exclusive claims for the Church. Indeed it suggests that the gift of salvation brings with it awesome responsibilities, the failing in which may lead to judgment. Positively put, I would say that the Lima text contemplates the Church and the sacraments as what may be called "non-exclusive promises." I think this rather Indian-style double negative gets the balance about right. Since I have enlarged upon this concept elsewhere,³⁰ I will succumb to the pressure of time and say no more here.

The second, and related, issue I do want to dwell on rather more. Its old-fashioned name is sacramental causality. It should have become clear in the course of this address that, while at least four of Niebuhr's types have certain theological strengths that may vary with the historical circumstances (the exception is the abysmal second type, "the Christ of culture"), it is the *fifth* which has most to commend it: Christ the *transformer of culture*. While maintaining the goodness of creation, it recognizes the radical character of the change or conversion which is needed for the salvation of a fallen race and world. It is the transformationist view which is most characteristic of the Lima document. With regard to baptism, BEM regrettably omitted to borrow Alexander Schmemmann's insistence on the exorcisms and the renunciation of Satan in the rites of initiation;³¹ but the following at least found its way into a commentary:

As seen in some theological traditions, the use of water, with all its positive associations with life and blessing, signifies the continuity between the old and the new creation, thus revealing the significance of baptism not only for human beings but also for the whole cosmos. At the same time, the use of water represents a purification of creation, a dying to that which is negative and destructive in the world: those who are baptized into the body of Christ are made partakers of a renewed existence. (B§18)

The main text is quite explicit about the transformative effect of baptism:

By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the "old Adam" is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken. Thus those baptized are no longer slaves to sin, but free. Fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his (Rom 6:3-11; Col 2:13; 3:1; Eph 2:5-6); (B§3)

³⁰See especially *Doxology* (as in note 29), pp. 143-146.

³¹A. Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (Crestwood, N. Y.: St. Vladimir's 1974), pp. 20-30.

Those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ, and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (B§4)

In the eucharist, Christ is anamnetically and epiclestically present in the Holy Spirit,³² in order to transform believers and the wider world:

Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are transfigured and their prayers accepted; (E§4)

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion; (E§15)

The Holy Spirit through the eucharist gives a foretaste of the Kingdom of God: the Church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord's return; (E§18)

The world, to which renewal is promised, is present in the whole eucharistic celebration. The world is present in the thanksgiving to the Father, when the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation; in the memorial of Christ, where the Church, united with its great High Priest and Intercessor, prays for the world; in the prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, where the Church asks for sanctification and new creation; (E§23)

As it is entirely the gift of God, the eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ. . . . (E§26)

Now with regard to sacramental causality, the question is this: does all this really happen? In baptism and the eucharist, more is taking place than meets the senses: God is present and active. However, the sign is not simply identical with the signified but rather tends towards it; in old-fashioned terms, the *sacramentum* tends towards its *res*. On the human side, a lack of intention can hinder the effect which God wills. Without becoming a cultural Donatist, one may affirm that, in its ministrations, the Church must aim really to reach those to whom it offers the evangelical sacraments; celebrations will therefore be sensitive to questions of expressive form. On the side of the recipients, a believing openness is required, which for its part also surrenders itself to divine transformation. Whether the fault lie in the administration or in the reception, the celebration of a sacrament may in different ways fail to express the divine mystery or to produce fruit. Insofar as the sacrament remains inexpressive or unfruitful, it falls short of transparency.³³ The Church, and indeed the

³²Out of the vast literature on anamnesis and epiclesis, see M. Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial*, 2 volumes (Richmond: Knox, 1960-1961) and J. H. McKenna, *Eucharist and Holy Spirit* (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1975).

³³For the notion of transparency, see L. Boff, *Die Kirche als Sakrament im Horizont der Weiterfahrung* (Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1972), in particular pp. 125-130. The Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 and 49, had underlined the importance of the expressive form of the signs at least at the level of *pastoral* efficacy: see F. Eisenbach, *Die Gegenwart Jesu Christi im Gottesdienst - Systematische Studien zur Liturgiekonstitution des II. Vatikanischen Konzils* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1982), pp. 281, 305-316, 363f.

world, are sacramental *insofar* as in and from them the philanthropy of God radiates and God's kingdom makes its way among people. And with that thought, both encouraging and sobering, I come to a (provisional) end.

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