

**God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire:  
The Liturgy of the Eucharist in Louis-Marie Chauvet's 'Symbolic Exchange'  
with Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenology of Givenness  
and René Girard's Mimetic Theory**

A Dissertation  
in partial fulfillment of the  
Doctor in Sacred Theology

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## Abstract

Traditionally, Church teaching has examined the Eucharist in metaphysical terms ('what is it?': substance, presence, and causality) and its liturgical celebration as a sacrifice (a re-presentation of Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross). Prompted by Vatican II's exhortation to the faithful for 'full, conscious, active participation' in the liturgy (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14, 27, 30), this dissertation re-interprets the Eucharistic liturgy and participants' role in it through the root metaphor of gift: a gift of desire, which impacts participants' desires, relationships, and selfhood. It proposes a 'relational approach' to the Eucharist by asking: What is going on 'relationally' in the Eucharistic celebration? How might the Eucharist impact our desire, relations, identity? How does or ought the liturgy of the Eucharist concern relationships between the participants and others? What specifically does the Church celebrate in its liturgy of the Eucharist?

Louis-Marie Chauvet's 'symbolic exchange' model of the Eucharistic Prayer, when put in conversation with both Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of gift and René Girard's mimetic theory, yields an understanding of the Eucharist as God's gracious and scandalous gift of divine desire. The gift is gracious as an embodied expression of divine love, and also scandalous as it challenges recipients' autonomy with a radical call to charity demanding an existential response.

This dissertation upholds Christ's self-gift as the ultimate decision to love in a perfect *reversal* of sacrificial violence, which Christians are called to imitate. It emphasizes the liturgy's structure as a dynamic event of being encountered by God's gift of himself and reception of this gift through particular responses. This understanding aims to re-appropriate traditional Catholic teaching on the Eucharist in more contemporary terms. It aims to explain how 'fully conscious and active participation' in the sacred mysteries occurs, that liturgy and life may be more richly interrelated.

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## Gratitude and Dedication

A dissertation on the Eucharist without an expression of due gratitude would, it seem, miss the point; furthermore, as the liturgy teaches us, “It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks Lord God.” It is a privilege to disabuse anyone of the notion that any dissertation reaches completion through solitary grit, effort, and determination. I only finished this dissertation by living off the borrowed investment, hope, patience, and perseverance of several others when it had finished me. Without the help of God and support from the following people, this dissertation would remain unfinished:

- my Dad, Nelson Disco; my sisters Michele and Marilyn; brother-in-law Michael and nephew Miles;
- Abbot Matthew Leavy, Abbot Mark Cooper, and my monastic community;
- the professionals and strangers who saved my life on Sunday, November 4, 2012:
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  - the cardiac rehabilitation staff at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts;
- my dissertation committee (John Baldovin, Andrew Prevot, Brian Robinette) and reader (Crina Gschwandtner);
- Jennifer L. Bader, Ph.D., Assistant Dean of the School of Theology and Ministry;
- Dan Foley, Psy.D.;
- my extended family at the Assumption Center in Brighton, Massachusetts, especially Fr. Claude Grenache, A.A., may he rest in peace.

This dissertation is dedicated to two people who played essential roles in this dissertation’s completion. First, to Robert Daly, whose enthusiasm at my use of Girard and encouragement that I “Take that ball and run with it!” with my licentiate thesis remain favorite memories of my academic career. To him I express my great thanks for his contributions to theology and to me personally.

My mother Carolyn B. Disco was my first theologian and source of endless encouragement in my religious vocation, academic career, and personal endeavors. Her advocacy for survivors of clergy sexual abuse was heroic, inspiring, and prophetic. May this project honor the memory of her love and concern for so many.

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## **I. Seeking a More Relational Focus in Eucharistic Theology**

### **1.1. Eucharistic Theology in a Postmodern Context**

From its beginnings the Church has very clearly emphasized the importance of the Eucharistic celebration. The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* described this importance in emblematic fashion when it declared the Eucharist is the "fount and apex" (or 'source and summit' -- *fontem et culmen*) "of the whole Christian life."<sup>1</sup> Church teaching repeatedly emphasizes the profound importance of the Eucharist as the highest expression of worship that the Church can offer:

***General Instruction on the Roman Missal (2003)***

**Chapter I: The Importance and Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration**

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit. In it, moreover, during the course of the year, the mysteries of redemption are celebrated so as to be in some way made present. As to the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life, these are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it.<sup>2</sup>

As faithfully, however, as the Church has celebrated the Eucharist across millennia and declared its importance, a clear account of *why* and *how* the Eucharist is the source of Christian living remains underdeveloped. How the Eucharist 'causes' or communicates grace is typically explained by Church teaching in language many people today find somewhat foreign: efficacious signs of grace, causality, and presence according to medieval metaphysics. The Church's teaching on how the Eucharist is the source of Christian living -- how it sanctifies human beings and expresses worship of God -- remains archaic in both its terminology (failing to provide

<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], November 21, 1964, sec. 11, accessed May 17, 2016, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) Cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium* 10, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1324, *Ecclesia de eucharistia* 1.

<sup>2</sup> *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 16. Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41, 10, 102; *Lumen Gentium* 11; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2, 5, 6; *Christus Dominus* 30; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 15; *Eucharisticum Mysterium* 3e, 6.

genuine understanding for its hearers) and concerns (neglecting genuine existential concerns). Its terms, concepts, and analogies have become foreign and lack meaning for many; they no longer communicate effectively to people of our contemporary era. Steady declines in mass attendance in recent decades may well indicate the inability of many faithful to articulate for themselves why the Eucharist is the source of Christian living. Insofar as the Church expects assent to these teachings which are incoherent or irrelevant for many, it exacerbates a difficult situation. Explanation of just *how* the Eucharist accomplishes transformation -- beyond 'as a means of communion,' or, as a localized presence of the divine -- remains implied, unexplained, and assumed.

The saving 'logic' that the Eucharist presents through its liturgical celebration seems not to be self-evident. Yet insofar as the Church cannot articulate well for its own faithful what it celebrates, why it celebrates, and how the celebration is meant to transform recipients themselves -- i.e., the Eucharist as 'source' of the Christian life -- it fails its own sanctifying mission. Insofar as the Church cannot articulate these things well for the world -- i.e., the Eucharist as 'source and summit' of the Christian life -- it fails as a witness to the glory of God and as a sacrament for the world. The 'mystery of Christ' which people are meant to encounter and participate in through the Eucharist has become too mysterious -- but not in the complimentary way the Church speaks of 'mystery.' Rather, it has become inaccessible, even to the faithful.

Several factors have converged against a lived, meaningful, existential understanding of the Eucharist. This chapter will first give a very brief overview of how the terms of Eucharistic doctrine took shape. Next, it will highlight some 'external' cultural challenges to traditional Church doctrine which have undermined the deposit of faith concerning the Eucharist. Subsequent sections will address developments leading to Vatican II's theological warrant for a



new approach, some attempts to address these challenges in the decades that followed, and a proposal of the Eucharist as a gracious and scandalous gift.

### **1.1.1. Cultural Challenges to Traditional Church Doctrine**

*I lived in a time when a huge change in the contents of the human imagination was occurring. In my lifetime Heaven and Hell disappeared, the belief in life after death was considerably weakened [and so on]... After two thousand years in which a huge edifice of creeds and dogmas has been erected, from Origen and Saint Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Newman, when every work of the human mind and of human hands was created within a system of reference, the age of homelessness has dawned.*

-- Czesław Miłosz<sup>3</sup>  
(1911-2004)

Reasons why the Church's teaching became inaccessible run wide and deep. The scope of cultural change within the past 50 years -- not to mention the 450 years since the Council of Trent -- is difficult to overstate. Even while the Church's answers to questions of Eucharistic doctrine remained constant, the meaning and importance of the questions and concerns have changed. This section will trace some reasons how and why that situation emerged.

#### **1.1.1.1. Magisterial Teaching on the Eucharist Before Vatican II**

For its first several centuries in existence, the Church had rather little internal controversy concerning the nature of Eucharistic practice and teaching -- something of a miracle in its own right. In the absence of sustained debate or controversy, Eucharistic theology lacked the catalysts driving the development of trinitarian and Christological theology. Only with the controversies surrounding Paschasius and Ratramnus in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and Berengarius in the 11<sup>th</sup> century was the precise nature of the change in Eucharistic elements even brought into

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<sup>3</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *Road-side Dog*, trans. Czesław Miłosz and Robert Hass, Reprint edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1998), 105. Cited in "A Sophiology Between Scatology and Eschatology," *Lost in the Cosmos* blog, Patheos. The Catholic Imagination. Accessed on May 13, 2016 at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/cosmostheinlost/2016/05/09/the-catholic-imagination-a-sophiology-between-scatology-and-eschatology/>.

sustained question.<sup>4</sup> Even so, these controversies only concerned how -- not whether -- a substantial change *in the elements* occurred. Even so, no papal or conciliar decrees for the universal Church were promulgated at that time.

Not until 1215 did an ecumenical council (Lateran IV) make a doctrinal statement concerning the nature of the Eucharist: “[Christ’s] body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been changed in substance by the divine power (Latin, *transubstantiates pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina*) into his body and blood.”<sup>5</sup> This teaching on transubstantiation was subsequently reaffirmed at the councils of Constance (1415), Florence (1439), and Trent (1545-1563). So even about 1500 years after Jesus walked the earth, the scope and depth of Eucharistic theology remained relatively underdeveloped.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century disputed the nature of the sacraments in general and of the Eucharist in particular. Catholic doctrine found expression in the Declarations of the Council of Trent. These declarations’ concern with Eucharistic consecration, Real Presence, sacrifice, and the priestly power (*potestas*) to consecrate the Eucharist established these issues as the chief categories of Eucharistic doctrine ever since. Furthermore, the Church’s use of hylomorphic terminology (substance/accident, form/matter, act/potency) embedded official Eucharistic doctrine within a particular Thomistic-Aristotelian philosophical vocabulary.

While neither a conciliar document nor directly concerned with Eucharistic doctrine, Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical Letter of 1879 *Aeterni Patris* lauded the writings and thought of

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Edward Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, edited by Robert Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Publications, 1998), 82-102.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Tanner, “The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils,” *Gregorianum* 82:1 (2001), 42.

Thomas Aquinas above those of every other thinker.<sup>6</sup> This testifies to the desire, at the papal level at least, to preserve and express the Church's official teaching in Thomistic/scholastic categories -- even 600 years after Thomas' death.

### 1.1.1.2. Scientific and Philosophical Challenges

Various developments in science and philosophy in recent centuries have created vast challenges to traditional Church teaching which erode both understanding of and belief in God and (more particularly) the Eucharist. A series of scientific and cultural revolutions have gradually rendered the Church's scholastic worldview inaccurate, outdated, or even meaningless. Some examples include:

- Evidence for a heliocentric solar system, mounting across centuries by Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and Isaac Newton (1642-1727), raised questions concerning human beings' place (literally and figuratively) in the universe.
- The rise of scientific empiricism, exemplified in the work of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), and David Hume (1711-76) laid a foundation for science as verifiable only by empirical data. The critique of metaphysics by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) further eroded a worldview founded in Aristotelian-Scholastic hylomorphism and its corresponding metaphysics. The theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) posed challenges to the biblical account of creation and of God as creator.
- Openly atheistic worldviews found stronger expression in Voltaire (1694-1778), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72), and Karl Marx (1818-83). Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote strong critiques of Judeo-Christian morality; Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) likewise considered religion an infantilizing phenomenon attributable to unconscious needs. The burden of proof for theistic faith began shifting from non-believers onto the faithful.
- With the rise of linguistics and semiotics in the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) as a field of study unto itself, a purely instrumental notion of language became less tenable. The formative roles language plays for thought and identity came to clearer light, finding expression as 'the linguistic turn' in

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<sup>6</sup> Paragraph 22: "[The] chief and special glory of Thomas, one which he has shared with none of the Catholic Doctors, is that the Fathers of Trent made it part of the order of conclave to lay upon the altar, together with sacred Scripture and the decrees of the supreme Pontiffs, the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, whence to seek counsel, reason, and inspiration." Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, Encyclical Letter of 4 August 1879, accessed on June 4, 2016 at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_04081879\\_aeterni-patris.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html)

philosophy. The writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) illuminated many difficulties posed by language, particularly for theology (“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”). This ‘linguistic turn’ culminated in the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009), in which language constructs all reality and meaning.

Not least among major challenges to the deposit of faith has been the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Forty-eight years after Pope Leo XIII’s *Aeterni Patris*, Heidegger’s writings posed a withering critique of ‘onto-theology:’ theology (and/or philosophy) which had forgotten ‘the ontological difference’ between entities and ‘Being.’<sup>7</sup> Heidegger’s work posed a unique challenge to the philosophical premises of Christian doctrine, since (at the least) it required reassessment of the metaphysics and ontology upon which the Church had relied so heavily for several centuries. The philosophical reasoning undergirding Church doctrines of God, grace, the Church, the sacraments -- to name a few -- suddenly had large fault lines, not easily remedied.

### 1.1.1.3. Growth of Historical Consciousness

Developments in the field of history impacted Church teaching as well, forcing reassessments of the foundational events of revelation, the effects of historical conditioning, and the direction of history.

After the printing press gave greater access to texts, the Sacred Scriptures were scrutinized critically beyond the bounds set by reverent faith communities. Gradually, skepticism eroded a naïve fundamentalism that (for instance) considered Moses the author of the Pentateuch, the gospels to be unbiased eyewitness accounts, and the New Testament letters to be written by the Twelve apostles themselves. The 19<sup>th</sup> century writings of David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) and Ernest Renan (1823-92) cast doubts on the historical veracity of the gospels. This historical criticism dismissed accounts of miracles, including the resurrection, as heavily biased

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” in *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 42-74.

by believers. Nineteenth and 20<sup>th</sup>-century historical-criticism (particularly ‘demythologization’) of the Bible debunked dominical institution of the sacraments and apostolic succession, important links in Catholic teaching on the sacraments. The burden of proof moved more and more upon those who upheld such matters as historical fact.

This advent of historical consciousness -- that texts, meanings, and even ‘truths’ were subject to biases as well as changes across generations and cultures -- called foundational truths into question even more radically. The possibility that biblical or theological terms could have different meanings in different eras further undermined the presumably unchanging bulwark of truth that was the doctrine of the Church.

Furthermore, in recent times human beings have seen that, contrary to modernist notions of progress, history does not always develop in a benign manner. The 20<sup>th</sup> century’s World Wars I and II and genocides put an end to notions of ‘unbridled progress.’ Technological and scientific advances proved to empower humans’ murderous capacities rather than usher in an era of peace.

#### 1.1.1.4. Existential Concerns in ‘the Age of Anxiety’

Destruction of large populations -- or even the world itself -- used to belong exclusively to the imagination of apocalyptic literature. Detonation of atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and proliferation of nuclear weapons in the ‘Cold War,’ however, demonstrated that destruction ‘on a biblical scale’ is now an all-too-real aspect of the human condition. More currently and vividly, the rise of terrorism throughout the world and the persistence of civil strife (racism, economic and social injustice, etc.) raise urgent questions concerning violence, reconciliation, and peace amid a pluralistic world. Since eucharistic doctrine has been traditionally more concerned with personal sanctification for a future life in

heaven, the Eucharist appears to many to be far removed from and irrelevant for present-world matters of social justice.

All of these cultural challenges -- philosophical, scientific, historical, technological -- have complicated appropriation of a faith that makes sense *in* and *of* the present-day world. If or when the Church dismisses the impact of these cultural challenges -- meanwhile expecting assent to scholastic metaphysics to explain its central act of worship -- it again risks failing its own sanctifying mission, for both its own faithful and people of the world.

### **1.1.2. Pre-Vatican II Liturgical and Eucharistic Theology**

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a development of attention to liturgical theology as its own field, yielding the ‘Liturgical Movement’ of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Through a revival of communal liturgical practice, a papal *motu proprio*, and theological *ressourcement*, a more meaningful relation between ‘liturgy and life’ emerged from aspiration to theology to re-examination of the Church’s liturgical principles and practice. Concern for this relation emerged so strongly that Vatican II incorporated the *necessity* of the assembly’s ‘full, conscious, active participation’ into *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Church’s dogmatic constitution on the liturgy.

The roots of this development reach back into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes, France (re-established 1833), its founder Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875) began writing *The Liturgical Year*, a 15-volume set of reflections on the Church year as celebrations re-presenting the history of salvation; this fostered a stronger understanding of the liturgy as celebration of the *mysteries* of the faith. Solesmes also became a center of revival of liturgical study and Gregorian chant. The massive retrieval of patristic and medieval texts by the Jesuit J.P. Migne (1800-1875) in *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* restored access to theological (and liturgical) texts that enabled a theological *ressourcement* into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Pius X's 1903 *motu proprio* on sacred music ("Tra le sollecitudini") proved pivotal for the concern for liturgical participation when he stated "active participation in the most holy mysteries and ... [the] prayer of the Church" is "the true and indispensable source" for the Christian life.<sup>8</sup> The phrase 'active participation' caught the attention of Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960) of Mont César (Kaizersberg) Abbey in Leuven, Belgium (est. 1888, elevated to abbey in 1899), who presented on that topic at a national Catholic labor conference in 1909 in Malines, Belgium. The journal *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales* followed starting in 1910, advocating full and active participation by all and emphasizing the liturgy as a dialogue. Beauduin published *Liturgy: Life of the Church* in 1914.<sup>9</sup>

Liturgical theology took another important step with the writings of Odo Casel (1886-1948), a Benedictine of Maria Laach Abbey in Germany (founded in 1893). The journal *Ecclesia Orans* (begun 1918) and his exploration of the sacraments as initiation into religious mysteries in Paul and the earliest centuries of the Church moved discussion of the liturgy and sacraments outside of neoscholastic categories.<sup>10</sup> Also published in 1918 was Romano Guardini's (1885-1968) *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, a foundational text of 'the Liturgical Movement' of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> It revived the patristic principle *lex orandi lex credendi*, the

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<sup>8</sup> The original Italian text of Pius X, prepared 10 years earlier in a set of draft comments to Pope Leo XIII on the liturgy, uses the terms "partecipazione attiva." The Latin text mentions only "participation" with no adjective. Cf. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/it/motu-proprio/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_motu-proprio\\_19031122\\_sollecitudini.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/it/motu-proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html) and [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/la/motu-proprio/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_motu-proprio\\_19031122\\_sollecitudini.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/la/motu-proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html)

<sup>9</sup> Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy: Life of the Church*, trans. Virgil Michel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1926). Bernard Botte, a confrere of Beauduin, noted that "The Liturgical Movement, at its beginning, was not a reformist movement. Dom Beauduin .... regarded the Liturgy as a traditional given which we first of all had to try to understand." Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider's View of Liturgical Renewal*, trans. John Sullivan (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, ed. Burkhard Neunheuser, Introduction by Aidan Kavanagh, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1999). Originally published in 1932, English translation 1962 by Darton, Longman, and Todd, London.

<sup>11</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane, introduction by Joanne M. Pierce (New York: Crossroad, 1998). Originally written in 1918, English translation first published by Sheed & Ward in London, 1930.

liturgy as a teacher of faith and prayer, and placed an emphasis on the liturgy as celebrated by the entire assembly, as members of the mystical body of Christ. It called for full and active participation by the assembly, particularly through use of vernacular language. All these themes proved fundamental to the liturgical theology and practice of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice was examined as an *oblation* (gift) by Maurice de la Taille (1872-1933) in *Mysterium Fidei*, unifying the Last Supper, Calvary, and the Church's celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>12</sup> This inquiry examined the notion of sacrifice as something other than an immolation, an important advance for Eucharistic theology. A Thomist/neoscholastic rejoinder (though it never names de la Taille) appears in Dom Anscar Vonier's (1875-1938) 1925 text *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, asserting a strong distinction between the perfect sacrifice upon Calvary and the sacramental *signs* of that sacrifice in the Last Supper and eucharistic liturgy, reviving another important sacramental theme.<sup>13</sup>

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century saw a theological *ressourcement* that prepared a way for Vatican II. In 1944, French Jesuit Henri de Lubac's (1893-1991) historical study *Corpus Mysticum* advocated a "return to the sacramental origins of the 'mystical body'.... The Church and the Eucharist are formed by one another day by day."<sup>14</sup> This study revived the patristic understanding of the 'mystical body of Christ' as referring to the Eucharist rather than the visible Church. Karl Rahner (1904-1984) work on revelation as God's self-communication restored an emphasis on *encounter* with God (rather than revelation of truths 'about' God), and his theology

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<sup>12</sup> Maurice de La Taille, *The Mystery of Faith: Regarding the Most August Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ* (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1940). Originally published in 1921. For a contemporary study of de la Taille's theology, cf. Michon M. Matthiesen, *Sacrifice as Gift: Eucharist, Grace, and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice de la Taille* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, preface by Peter Kreeft, introduction by Aidan Nichols, O.P. (Bethesda, MD: Zacchaeus, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: the Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages : Historical Survey*, trans. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 260. Hereafter *CM*.



of symbol moved discussion of the sacraments outside the category of causality.<sup>15</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx's (1914-2009) *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* had a similar emphasis on personalist categories for proper discussion of the sacraments.<sup>16</sup> These (and several other) thinkers prepared the way for important developments at Vatican II.

### **1.1.3. Theological Shifts at Vatican II**

The need for a newer approach to Eucharistic theology also finds warrant within the Church's own magisterial teaching. Shifts of emphasis in the constitutional documents *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium* signaled the need for a more accessible and relevant account of the Eucharist for a new cultural milieu -- especially as they raise questions for which onto-theology provides irrelevant answers. While these shifts merit their own detailed study, they are simply noted here to indicate the need to expand our understanding of the Eucharist. As a result of these developments in Church teaching, new theological questions arise which traditional teaching fails to address or answer. Aside from 'external' scientific, philosophical, and cultural challenges to the faith, Vatican II's liturgical reforms and new questions for theology expose an internal exigency to update Eucharistic doctrine.

#### **1.1.3.1. Sacrosanctum Concilium: Unpacking the Riches of the Liturgy**

Both as the Council's first document and according to its stated purpose, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) expressed forcefully how the liturgy was and is a central concern:

This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dyck (New York: Crossroad, 1978).

<sup>16</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, trans. Paul Barrett, English text rev. by Mark Schoof and Laurence Bright (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1963).

household of the Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.<sup>17</sup>

It is noteworthy that, in order to address the challenges facing Christians, the Church undertook as its first task reform and promotion of the *liturgy*. Whether consciously or led by inspiration, the Church looks to reinvigorate the integrity of its life through a *ressourcement* of the liturgy: not theology or doctrine *per se*, but the action -- divine and human -- taking place there. In this the Church is being true to its own nature in the best possible way: it looks to the place where human beings seek to listen to and cooperate with God's loving will.

As clearly as the constitution will relate the liturgy and the life of the faithful, it calls for liturgical reform; this is suggestive of weaknesses that crept into Eucharistic doctrine or practice. New questions raised by doctrinal points and reforms in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) suggest the need for a renewed Eucharistic theology.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1.1.3.1.1. Relation of the Liturgy to Apostolic Work

SC situates the relationship of the liturgy to apostolic work, a first for an ecumenical council. SC acknowledges that liturgy is not utterly separate from living in the world; liturgy is

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<sup>17</sup> *Sacrosanctum concilium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], 4 December 1963, Accessed on June 6, 2016 at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html), 1. Hereafter SC. As noted below, the theme of 'font and apex' also appears in *Lumen Gentium* 11, in reference to the Eucharist.

<sup>18</sup> The nature of the liturgical reform for which SC called remains a matter of ongoing articulation and debate. See Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (Instruction on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist), April 23, 2004. Accessed at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20040423\\_redemptionis-sacramentum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html) on April 18, 2017. Also by the same congregation, *Liturgiam Authenticam* (Fifth Instruction for the Right Implementation of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council), May 7, 2001. Accessed at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20010507\\_liturgiam-authenticam\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html) on April 18, 2017. (Paragraph 28 speaks of Sacred Liturgy engages "the whole person, who is the 'subject' of full and conscious participation in the liturgical celebration."). Regarding interpretation of liturgical reform since Vatican II, see Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012); John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 2009).

meant to impel lives of charity and works in and for the world (cf. 9). Such charitable works amid the world, however, have their origin and goal in the liturgy:

[The] liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.<sup>19</sup>

So both the Church's apostolic work *and* its celebration of the sacraments include an orientation *to the world* -- even if in view of an ultimate goal of glorifying God.

The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with 'the paschal sacraments,' to be 'one in holiness'; it prays that 'they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith'; the renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a font, grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way.<sup>20</sup>

So the liturgy is both the source and goal of apostolic work; a relationship of liturgy and work is established. Yet, as beautiful as it may be for believers to hear that the liturgy 'moves the faithful,' 'renews a covenant,' or sets believers 'on fire', such poetic images have limited explanatory value. They do not articulate how liturgy might relate to human desire, identity, and relationships. *SC* clarifies the relationship of liturgy and apostolic work some, but new questions emerge: How can the metaphors of liturgy as 'summit and font' be understood in terms that are neither poetic nor dependent on causality? How ought liturgy redirect human desires, values, or relationships to make one's work and life apostolic or charitable? How is apostolic work an outgrowth of liturgical (and especially Eucharistic) worship? What do people need or receive from the liturgy to do their apostolic work in a properly Christian manner? But as important as

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<sup>19</sup> *SC* 10.

<sup>20</sup> *SC* 10.

these questions are, none of them are answered by the traditional Thomistic metaphysics of presence or causality.

#### 1.1.3.1.2. Paschal Mystery: Broader Emphasis

Across several centuries, the ‘satisfaction atonement theory’ of Saint Anselm acquired major influence as an expression of the Church’s doctrine of redemption.<sup>21</sup> Though never endorsed outright by any ecumenical council or papal encyclical as ‘the official teaching of the Church,’ many expressions of Church doctrine (including the Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*) shared Anselm’s concise reasoning for how the cause of redemption was Christ’s sacrificial and atoning death. Gradually Anselm’s insights -- as they were handed on through Church teaching -- were oversimplified into a reductive understanding of redemption, which to various degrees excluded reference to Christ’s incarnation, life, teachings, healings, resurrection, or ascension. Furthermore, both soteriological thought and Eucharistic theology followed suit, expressing redemption and the purpose of the Eucharist in sacrificial terms without providing a genuinely Christian notion of sacrifice.

Reflecting the influence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century liturgical movement and Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei*, SC bases the liturgy and the life of the Church upon the broader theme of the redemptive work of Christ’s paschal mystery, with reference to Christ’s passion, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>22</sup> It was by means of Christ’s own paschal mystery that redemption was accomplished: Christ’s death has redemptive meaning because he is the incarnation of the divine Word whom the Father raised from the dead. Christ’s ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit are by no means incidental to human beings’ salvation. It is into this broader paschal mystery that we are initiated and incorporated by means of the sacraments.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. SC 5, specifically mentioning the resurrection and ascension; also cf. 6, 10, 47, 61, 104, 106, 107, 109.

This shift prompts the Church to consider anew how Christ's life, teachings, resurrection, and ascension might relate to aspects of Christian living 'in the world.' More specifically for our interests, aspects of the Eucharist 'beyond the sacrificial' deserve attention: in what senses is the Eucharist memorial, meal, or eschatological sign -- and what can or ought they teach us? How might the Eucharist be understood more fully in light of the resurrection of Christ, and his assurance he will drink 'the fruit of the vine' again at the coming of the kingdom? Does the notion of 'sacrifice' reveal or obscure a proper understanding of the atonement and/or the Eucharist?

#### 1.1.3.1.3. Presence of Christ in the Assembly as Such

To accomplish so great a work [of salvation], Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister... but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments.... He is present in His word.... He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Mt. 18:20).<sup>23</sup>

It easily escapes notice that, with *SC*, the magisterium expressed for the *first* time a recognition of the presence of Christ in the whole liturgical assembly in its own right -- and not merely by virtue of the presider or 'his' act of consecrating and offering of the Eucharist. This simple change has profound implications, historical and theological, which merits its own detailed study. For our purposes however, we note the Church's recognition of the assembly among whom Christ is 'already' present 'before' consecration or offering of the Eucharistic elements. The Church thereby recognizes the assembly both as a gathering of praying subjects and as already-graced recipients of God's gifts.

As a result, Eucharistic theology must address anew: If Christ is 'already' present in the assembly, what is going on in the mass? Especially in light of Heidegger's critique of 'onto-

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<sup>23</sup> *SC*, 7.

theology,' is the mere *presence* of Christ -- whether amid the assembly, word, priest, or 'really, truly, substantially' in the Eucharist -- ever meant to be the final word?

#### 1.1.3.1.4. Liturgy as Dialogue Among Active Subjects

While 'already-graced' subjects, members of the assembly must still dispose themselves properly to receive God's gifts well:

[In] order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain.... [The] faithful [must] take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.<sup>24</sup>

As much as the Church has used the motif of causality to interpret the sacraments, human beings are not mere passive recipients. *SC* recognizes the cooperation of recipients' disposition as necessary for a fully fruitful liturgy. This calls greater attention to the participant as a subject who must actively respond to God's word and action. The liturgy is *dialogical* in nature:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active [*plenam illam, consciam atque actuosam*] participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.<sup>25</sup>

The Council recognized the "right *and duty*" (emphasis added) of the faithful for "fully conscious, and active participation" in the liturgy. The faithful are therefore "encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *SC*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *SC* 14. Also cf. *SC* 27, 30.

<sup>26</sup> *SC* 30.

When celebrating the Eucharist, Christ's faithful "should not be there as strangers or silent spectators," removed from either understanding or engaging in the liturgy, such that "offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves."<sup>27</sup> The Council called attention to the dialogical dynamic meant to unfold in the liturgy:

[In] the liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and prayer.... [The] prayers addressed to God by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present....[W]hen the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer Him their rational service and more abundantly receive His grace.<sup>28</sup>

Responses by the congregation are called for to properly express their 'offering of themselves' along with the Victim offered by the priest. The liturgy is permeated by a dialogical encounter between God and human beings, characterized by God's call and the faithful's response.

Ever since the promulgation of SC, the proper nature of this fully conscious and active participation in the liturgy continues to be a topic of magisterial teaching and theological debate.<sup>29</sup> The nature of the Eucharist as a metaphysical cause of grace has been taught consistently for centuries; however SC calls greater attention to the *response* demanded of the

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<sup>27</sup> SC 48. The notion of self-offering by the faithful in celebration of the Eucharist also appears in *Lumen Gentium* 11.

<sup>28</sup> SC 33.

<sup>29</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (On the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*), December 4, 1988. Accessed at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19881204\\_vicesimus-quintus-annus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19881204_vicesimus-quintus-annus.html) on April 18 2017. Pope John Paul II, *Ad Limina* Address to Bishops of the United States On Active Participation in the Liturgy, October 9, 1998. Accessed at <https://adoremus.org/2007/12/31/Active-Participation-in-the-Liturgy/> on April 18, 2017. Also, Pope John Paul II, Address to a group of Bishops from the United States of America on their *Ad limina* visit, 9 October 1998, n. 3: AAS 91 (1999) 353-354. For interpretations of liturgical participation leading up to the Second Vatican Council, see R. Gabriel Pivarnik, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Liturgical Participation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013). For interpretations since the Second Vatican Council, see Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000); Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012); Kevin Irwin, *What We Have Done, What We Have Failed to Do: Assessing the Liturgical Reforms of Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2013); Joris Geldhof, ed., *Mediating Mysteries, Understanding Liturgies: On Bridging the Gap Between Liturgy and Systematic Theology*, Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology IX (Leuven: Peeters, 2015); Alcuin Reid, ed., *Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives* (New York: T&T Clark, 2016).

assembly to divine presence and grace. New questions concerning this participation and response thus arise: How does or ought a dialogical understanding of the liturgy reshape Eucharistic theology? How is ‘fully conscious and active’ participation in the liturgy cooperative with divine grace, and formative for participants? How might the dynamic of God’s speech and gifts to a fully participating assembly -- and their response -- accomplish a transformation?

#### 1.1.3.1.5. Vernacular in the Liturgy

Even if taken for granted by most people today, the liturgical reform with likely the greatest impact throughout the world was permission to use the ‘mother tongue.’<sup>30</sup> One can appreciate this development more deeply in light of the philosophical “linguistic turn” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To celebrate the liturgy in native languages fosters a more natural and direct formation of disciples that would simply not be possible by means of Latin. Liturgy in the vernacular creates new associations and connections with recipients’ daily lives that did not previously exist. Language is an essential part of the process (along with personal decision or conversion) which forms subjects. The importance of language for cultivating *Christian* subjects is vastly facilitated by use of the vernacular in the liturgy. Use of the vernacular heightens understanding of and consent to both the gospel message and the intentions expressed by the praying Church.<sup>31</sup>

As the liturgy becomes more accessible to understanding, new issues once again arise: What can ‘the linguistic turn’ teach us concerning what the Church and/or liturgy of the Eucharist imparts to the faithful? Does the vernacular have a special importance for the

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. SC 36, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Analogously, this is again why Church doctrine needs to explain traditional teaching -- concerned with metaphysics, universals, and causality -- in concepts more conducive to contemporary concerns, which include verifiability, ethics, and existential questions.



relationships involved in the Eucharist? Again, these are questions that traditional Eucharistic theology would neither consider, address, or be able to answer with genuine depth.

#### 1.1.3.1.6. Granting Communion Under Both Species to the Laity

Another important reform implemented by *SC* was to grant communion under both kinds to the laity.<sup>32</sup> The reasons for this change were not given by the text. A traditional Eucharistic theology of metaphysical presence and causality, with its notion of ‘concomitance’ (whereby in each element is found the Body and Blood), struggles to assign a meaningful ‘additional’ value to receiving under both kinds. What is the importance of receiving under both kinds? Why could or does it make any difference? Is bodily experience related to ‘fully conscious and active participation’ in the Eucharist? If so, what is this relation?

#### 1.1.3.2. Lumen Gentium: Sacramental Nature of Christ and the Church

The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church [to unfold its nature and mission] so that all men [sic], joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

Promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church *Lumen Gentium* was its own watershed moment, marking the first declaration by an ecumenical council on the Church as such. As the document itself notes above, a new context demands a clearer teaching. *LG* both reflects changes in worldwide culture and calls for newer articulations of Eucharistic doctrine.

##### 1.1.3.2.1. The Church’s Relation to Christ and the World

In various ways *Lumen Gentium* expresses the nature of the Church as a sacramental sign of Christ. The Church “is in Christ like a sacrament [*veluti sacramentum*] or as a sign and

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. *SC* 55.

<sup>33</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 1. Hereafter *LG*.

instrument” of both union with God and the unity of the human race;<sup>34</sup> it is “the universal sacrament of salvation,” with a universal mission.<sup>35</sup>

God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity.<sup>36</sup>

As it is ‘like a sacrament,’ the Church -- while not ‘of’ the world -- is both present in it and has loving concern for all human beings. The Church is meant to be present to the world (relating liturgy and life), not utterly separated from it. Can the quasi-sacramental nature of the Church teach us more about the Eucharist? How does the Church as ‘like a sacrament’ shed light on relationships between the Church and the world, between liturgy and work?

#### 1.1.3.2.2. The Church as the Ecclesial Body of Christ

*Lumen Gentium* revived a notion of the Church as the (ecclesial) Body of Christ.<sup>37</sup> This shift corrected an imbalance in which the Glorified Body of Christ and Eucharistic Body of Christ were so emphasized as to neglect Christ’s presence in the liturgical assembly.<sup>38</sup> Those assembled, while certainly seeking ever-greater unity with Christ, are those baptized in Christ who have been given the Holy Spirit. The assembly is not a mere passive recipient or witness to Christ’s presence, ‘waiting’ for Christ to become present only upon the consecration of the bread and wine. Because Christ is already present among the assembly, it actively petitions the Father to strengthen the community in unity and peace as a fuller embodiment of the Body of Christ. This creates a need to clarify this relation of the Ecclesial Body of Christ to the Eucharistic Body: what is the ecclesial Body of Christ doing in the liturgy of the Eucharist?

#### 1.1.3.2.3. Missions of Christ and the Church

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<sup>34</sup> *LG* 1.

<sup>35</sup> *LG* 48; cf. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *LG* 9.

<sup>37</sup> *LG* 23, 28, 32, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. De Lubac, *CM*.

*Lumen Gentium* describes the mission of the Church as analogous to Christ's mission in the world:

Christ was sent by the Father "to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart," "to seek and to save what was lost." Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ. While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled knew nothing of sin, but came to expiate only the sins of the people, the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. The Church ... presses forward ... announcing the cross and death of the Lord until He comes".... that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord.<sup>39</sup>

A common thread runs through the missions of Christ and of the Church, providing both similarities and differences. Yet there is also need to understand these missions more clearly. What impact might this analogous relationship of the missions of Christ and the Church have upon an understanding of the Eucharist? Can the Eucharist help clarify this similarity-and-difference in missions?

#### 1.1.3.2.4. The Laity and the Universal Call to Holiness

One of the major contributions of Vatican II and of *Lumen Gentium* was its acknowledgment of the active, extra-liturgical lives of the vast majority of its members, the laity. The document repeatedly specifies a relation between the Eucharist and the laity:

[By] the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the [lay] apostolate is communicated and nourished. Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman [sic], in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself.<sup>40</sup>

Both echoing and refining *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *LG* calls

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<sup>39</sup> LG 8.

<sup>40</sup> LG 33.

the Eucharistic sacrifice ... the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, [which the faithful] offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service.... Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, [the lay faithful] then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament.<sup>41</sup>

The Eucharistic sacrifice itself -- ‘alone,’ as opposed to liturgy as a whole -- is now called the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.

Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread". In this way all of us are made members of His Body, "but severally members one of another".<sup>42</sup>

All these citations raise questions that traditional Eucharistic theology of presence and causality does not truly address: how does the Eucharist bring about unity among its recipients? Also, given the violent and oppressive aspects of sacrifice brought to light by its critique, how else might the Eucharist serve as fount and apex of charity and unity?

#### **1.1.4. Post-Vatican II Liturgical Theology**

With these developments, liturgical theology had several avenues to pursue. Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) engendered a vigorous sense of Christ present in the liturgical assembly, correcting a western tendency to delimit Christ's ‘real presence’ to the consecrated gifts.<sup>43</sup> Benedictine Aidan Kavanagh (1929-2006) wrote of the liturgy as what shapes the theology of the Church, recalling Prosper of Aquitaine's dictum ‘*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> LG 11. Cf. SC 10.

<sup>42</sup> LG 7.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology: The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981* (New York: Pueblo, 1984). The text is dedicated ‘In memory of Alexander Schmemmann.’ In his text *Elements of Rite* he wrote: “The liturgy ... exists not to educate but to seduce people into participating in common activity of the highest order, where one is freed to learn things which cannot be taught.” Cf.

Louis-Marie Chauvet, featured in the next chapter, made a major contribution by recasting sacramental theology that incorporates a Heideggerian perspective on the necessary mediation of language and symbol. Joseph C. Mudd's *Eucharist as Meaning* brings Chauvet's thought into dialogue with Bernard Lonergan, pointing out as a corrective the unavoidable necessity of metaphysics for meaningful discussion of the sacraments.<sup>45</sup> David Farina Turnbloom likewise works to balance the traditional sacramental theology of Aquinas with the attention Chauvet calls toward the roles of the Holy Spirit and the assembly in regard to the Eucharist.<sup>46</sup> David N. Power been a major post-Vatican II sacramental theologian, emphasizing a richer understanding of the liturgy as a symbolic event.<sup>47</sup> From this theological context the following is situated and proposed.

## 1.2. Celebration of the Eucharist as Mediating Relations

*Faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human.*<sup>48</sup>

The preceding section sought to bring to light the questions raised, the challenges posed for Eucharistic theology. Mere repetition of traditional doctrines has failed and will continue to fail to articulate the meaning of the Eucharist for people in the contemporary world. A different analogue, a different approach is required in order to speak to the imagination and understanding of the contemporary People of God. The desired goal is to work toward a Eucharistic theology

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<http://www.saintmeinrad.edu/alumni/obituaries/?show=256> Accessed April 9, 2019. Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (New York: Pueblo, 1982).

<sup>45</sup> Joseph C. Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> David Farina Turnbloom, *Speaking with Aquinas: A Conversation about Grace, Virtue, and the Eucharist*, Kindle Edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> David N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of the Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1984). David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1992). David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]. Vatican Website. December 7, 1965. Accessed May 10, 2016 at [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

which is faithful to scripture and tradition, can dialogue with contemporary philosophy, and addresses existential questions. We seek to articulate a Eucharistic theology that can and ought to illuminate God's design for humans' 'total vocation,' and 'thus direct minds to that which is human.'

To do just this, we propose looking at that which *relates* the divine and the human. We look to how God acts by means of the liturgy of the Eucharist upon human desire, identity, and relationships: we attend to all that God gives through the liturgy.

### **1.2.1. Relational Model and Concerns**

Instead of an 'onto-theology' concerned with metaphysical nature, presence, and objects, we propose exploring the Eucharist by way of the philosophically rich notion of *mediation*. It is by way of mediation that 'things' are related to each other; all the more so are subjects related to each other. Aside from God's own 'mediation of Himself' through the incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist is the mediation *par excellence* between God and human beings.

Since the early Church fathers, the Church has recognized the sacraments as God's chosen mediations between God and human beings. As mentioned above, traditional theology often used 'sign' and/or 'cause' as the chief metaphor with which to speak of the sacraments. At the present time the theme of gift emerges as a more viable option.

#### **1.2.1.1. Relational Theme: Gift**

*[N]othing is as truly powerful as the gift.*

-- Hans Urs von Balthasar<sup>49</sup>

The theme of gift both runs throughout the Bible and, particularly since Marcel Mauss' *Essai sur le don* in 1924, has received special attention in postmodern philosophy and theology. Exploring the implications of '*es gibt*' in the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, thinkers such as

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<sup>49</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama IV: The Action*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 326.

Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, Dominique Janicaud, John Milbank, Jean-Louis Chretien, and Michel Henry have written at length on the possibility (or impossibility) and nature of the gift. This confluence of contemporary philosophy and the biblical notion of gift offers an analogue by which the supernatural gift of the Eucharist might be understood.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the notion of gift is common to every culture and is meaningful for people of all ages.

Phenomenology provides a helpful method to explore ‘gift’ since it takes account of inter-subjectivity and relation as fully real. There is no dichotomy of the-objective-as-real versus the-subjective-as-unreal. A phenomenological approach allows incorporation of existential realities that science and metaphysics have traditionally ignored but are necessary to understand reality as it is *lived*. Matters of mediation, desire, identity, and consciousness require an approach that accounts for such data and experience.

A phenomenological approach toward liturgical theology will be especially helpful to account for nuances and dynamics of the various relationships involved that are typically never addressed in Eucharistic theology. For instance, the scandalous nature of the gospel’s demands upon disciples, since this approach can account for inner conflict and Christian discipleship entails ‘taking up one’s cross.’ As an exploration of liturgical theology it will also allow account for the celebration as an ecclesial or social reality, breaking from a tendency to consider the individual recipient in isolation from fellow members of the congregation.

While gifts have their role, the gift ‘alone’ is not the object of narrow focus which would too closely replicate ‘onto-theology.’ More importantly, there are *persons* who have roles and actions to undertake: the giver and the recipient. The gift ‘is’ a gift because of its relation -- or,

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<sup>50</sup> This motif for Eucharistic theology also has implications for a theology of grace which, while outside the scope of this dissertation, can only be suggested by the current study.

mediation -- between the giver and recipient. The gift is a point of entry or access into the *relationship* of the persons involved.

#### 1.2.1.2. Relational Model and Concerns

So to understand the Eucharist more fully, let us pose the question, “What is going on relationally in the Eucharistic celebration?” This question deliberately moves the emphasis from ontology to relations-between-subjects, for a more vivid sense of the gracious and scandalous gift the Eucharist celebrates. Some auxiliary questions can further guide our study of this fundamental question, which will be revisited in Chapter 5:

- How does or ought the Eucharist concern the relationships between the persons involved?
- Who are the agents, givers, recipients -- and what is given or received?
- How might the Eucharist challenge or transform our desire, identity, relations?
- Does the Eucharist-as-gift communicate any unique kind of participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ?
- What specifically does the Church celebrate in its liturgy of the Eucharist?

Locating this study within the field of liturgical theology establishes a wide array of premises that permit a relational focus. The presence and action of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the liturgy, while acknowledged as faith assertions, may be accepted as givens. It is neither a merely sociological nor psychological study, both of which would exclude or discount the reality of God speaking with human beings. As a study by means of postmodern thinkers it will address several postmodern concerns, which have immediate application for understanding the Eucharist: embodiment, presence and absence, and relation to ‘the other.’ Its focus is upon the relationships, subjects, and gifts involved, and explores how these interact and/or change in the course of the liturgy.

This exploration aims toward ‘practical’ value in that it concerns present-day believers in their historical, relational, and existential experience, rather than as mere observers of elemental



potencies that are transubstantiated *ex opere operato* into the Real Presence of Christ, ‘there’ upon the altar. It speaks in terms which, while more complicated than our usual language, relate directly to the most meaningful realities of our lives: how we relate to God, ourselves, and others.

We explore the Eucharist as a present-day liturgy (*leit-ourgos*), as an *action* of God and the faithful, not in its historical origins, context, or development. This perspective will hopefully allow aspects of the Eucharistic gift to shine forth which are overlooked or neglected by ‘onto-theological’ concerns and questions. It also seeks to engage all the persons present at the liturgy -- not merely what is on the altar or sacred vessels -- that each may fully, consciously, and actively participate as they are capable. This may well offer lessons in discipleship concerning our relationships outside of mass, connecting celebration of the Eucharist to the ‘other 167 hours’ of the week.

### **1.2.2. Relational Thinkers: Chauvet, Marion, Girard**

In order to address our questions we look to a liturgical theologian, a philosopher, and an anthropologist. Approaching their topics from vastly different fields of study, Louis-Marie Chauvet, Jean-Luc Marion, and René Girard each address various aspects of *relationships* at the core of their thought. Employing their thought on the Eucharist (Chauvet), givenness (Marion), and the mediation of desire (Girard), we seek to explain what is going on relationally in the Eucharistic celebration. Their collective contributions will bring to light aspects of the Eucharist often neglected by ontologically-focused accounts of the Eucharist.

Some readers may complain that such analysis does not address the Eucharist ‘as it is in itself’ directly enough -- precisely as traditional metaphysical study would. The Eucharist, however, neither comes about by itself nor exists for itself. It comes about by God’s grace amid

a community of the faithful which, presided over by a priest ordained by the bishop, petitions God for it. It exists precisely for the sake of God's transformative relationship with human beings: the unity of the Church as the ecclesial Body of Christ. How celebration of the Eucharist concerns and/or effects relationships, therefore, unveils the meaning of the Eucharist much more directly than does a metaphysical study, as it is *meant* to transform subjects.

Similarly, this study will not reduce the Eucharist to a sociological reality, in which a self-enclosed community constructs its own meaning. The God of Jesus Christ has established and hosts this community of the faithful, and gives gifts greater than human imagination, understanding, desire, or identity can handle. Among these gifts He imparts a mission, such that if the Church is to be true witnesses of the gifts received, it cannot remain either unchanged or self-enclosed.

### **1.2.3. God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire**

The desired goal, once again, is to work toward a Eucharistic theology which is faithful to scripture and tradition, can dialogue with contemporary philosophy, and addresses existential questions. We aim toward an expression of faith that makes sense *of* the world and *in* the world. We employ the help of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard, to propose a notion of the Eucharist as God's gracious and scandalous gift of divine desire.

As a liturgical ritual the Eucharist has many familiar elements: bread, wine, and their respective vessels; an altar/table; a vested priest; the traditional prayers. The Eucharist's *logic*, however, and how it can transform persons and relationships, is not necessarily clear. God makes use of this liturgy as a mediation of His own self-giving through the Word, Holy Spirit, and the 'matter' of bread and wine. As God's free and loving gift of Himself toward human

beings, the Eucharist is first a gracious gift: a tangible, particular gift enabling intimacy with God. This much is ‘familiar enough’ to many.

Too often lost amid Eucharistic theology, however, is a meaningful notion about how or why the Eucharist is scandalous to us *morally*. Traditionally, the intellectually scandalous aspect of the Eucharist (appearing to sense data as bread and wine, but by faith are received as the Body and Blood of Christ) has received the greater emphasis; this emphasis is deliberately reversed here. God’s implicit claims upon us are not merely demanding but offensive to our natural self-sufficiency, ego defenses, and sense of ethics. As the Eucharist embodies God’s offer of forgiveness to us, we become obligated -- as Jesus reminds his disciples repeatedly in the gospels -- to forgive as we have been forgiven. The Eucharist thereby implicates us in our own social relations: full reception of the gift is meant to transform the way we relate to others. We are called to become Christ-like in our relationships. It makes other claims upon our lives that will be explored in depth later. It is important to begin, however, by simply noting that Eucharist is scandalous to us morally, and not merely or even primarily intellectually. The Eucharist is not merely gracious, but scandalous, and these two go together: God’s grace enables the internal transforming work that is capable of orienting us toward love of God and love of neighbor.

The Eucharist is a gift of desire in two senses. First, the Eucharist expresses God’s own embodied loving desire for us sinners. We receive a tangible expression of God’s loving desire to commune with us. Secondly, the Eucharist bestows a gift of God’s own *loving*, of God’s own desire *to* love. We are called to yield our own desire, our own will to God, and to then give of ourselves accordingly. We are bidden to ‘Do this in memory of’ Jesus, of God. We are *impelled*, not merely commanded, to love (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14) through the Holy Spirit that has been

given to us (cf. Rom. 5:5). We receive a gift of mission into the world, to reorder it according to the loving will of God.

In order to fulfill its intended task, this dissertation must exclude several important theological matters. A larger or broader “theology of gift,” particularly in light of Marion’s phenomenology, merits its own theological investigation; it can only be exemplified here as regards the Eucharist. While historical-critical studies of scripture and liturgy are necessary and valuable foundations, these are secondary to the purposes of a phenomenological analysis. Though the Eucharist is but one of three sacraments of initiation (with Baptism and Confirmation), this dissertation will not explore themes related to this process; neither will it be directly concerned with the relation of the Eucharist to the sacraments of Anointing, Matrimony, or Holy Orders. The relationship of the Eucharistic celebration to the prayer of the Church in the Liturgy of the Hours must also remain outside the scope of this dissertation.

#### 1.2.3.1. Eucharist as Sacramental Mediation Between Persons

We seek the implications of the gift of the liturgy of the Eucharist upon human desire, identity, and relations; the result is a subversion of our common-sense views of desire, identity, and relations. This work of conversion, of repentance (*‘meta-noia’*) that subverts one’s ego, liberates a person to lose one’s life in order to save it (cf. Mk. 8:35). This transformation entails not only a subject’s encounter with God through the Eucharist, but encounters with the rest of the Ecclesial Body of Christ and the world. A person is dependent upon both God and other human beings, but also responsible for the suffering members of Christ’s Body and of the world. With the help of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard, the dynamics of this conversion -- catalyzed by the liturgy of the Eucharist -- can be accounted for in direct and precise terminology.

#### 1.2.3.2. Eucharist as Divine Intervention of Violent Reciprocity and Exchange

The inclusion of Girard enables us to relate Eucharistic theology to a realm traditional theology rarely addresses in much depth: the world of human violence. Girard's analysis of the origins of violence and civilization reveal the Eucharist in a brand new light: as a gift which imparts a share in Jesus redemptive reversal of sacrifice and violence. Just as Jesus, by enduring the cross for our sake, 'loved to the end,' so his gift of the Eucharist empowers us to imitate his complete self-giving, embodying love for others. The Eucharist embodies the truth of grace; we in turn are called to embody *sacramentally* -- fully, consciously, actively -- the gift of loving desire we receive in this 'most august sacrament.'

To work toward this relational account of the Eucharist, we turn to the sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet.

## **II. Chauvet: A Liturgical Theologian**

### **2.1. Chauvet's *Relecture*: A Foundational Theology of Sacramentality**

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## **II. Chauvet: A Liturgical Theologian**

Born in 1941, Louis-Marie Chauvet was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Luçon, France in 1966. He defended his first doctoral dissertation for the University of Paris I-Sorbonne in 1973 on *Jean Calvin: critique theologique et pastorale des doctrines scolastique et tridentine du sacrement de la penitence* [*John Calvin: Theological and Pastoral Critique of Scholastic and Tridentine Doctrines on the Sacrament of Penance*]. In 1974 Chauvet began teaching at the Institut Catholique of Paris, while also doing pastoral ministry. He defended his second doctoral dissertation in 1986, which became *Symbole et sacrement: une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne* [*Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*].<sup>51</sup> Chauvet was elected professor at the Paris Institut Superior de Liturgie in 1989, and retired from teaching in 2007.<sup>52</sup>

Chauvet's relatively few publications have had a great influence upon sacramental theology. Aside from *Symbol and Sacrament* his only books are *Les sacrements, Parole de Dieu au risqué du corps* [*The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*]<sup>53</sup> and *Du Symbolique au Symbol: Essai sur les Sacrements*.<sup>54</sup> Chauvet's other articles, book chapters, and public lectures are currently only available in French.

While a more thorough discussion of the scholarly reception of Chauvet will come later, it may be noted briefly that his thought represents the first sustained effort in liturgical theology to reckon with both Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy

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<sup>51</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995). Hereafter 'SS.'

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Philippe Bordeyne, "Louis-Marie Chauvet: A Short Biography," trans. Michael S. Driscoll, in *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God: Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet*, eds. Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), ix-xiv.

<sup>53</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001). *Les sacrements, parole de Dieu au risqué du corps* (Paris : Ouvrieres, 1997). Hereafter 'Sacraments.'

<sup>54</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Du Symbolique au Symbol: Essai sur les Sacrements*, Coll. Rites et symbols (Paris :Ed. du Cerf, 1979).



on their own terms. While the quantity of Chauvet's scholarly output was likely limited by his concurrent pastoral work, his clear concern for pastoral applicability is uncommon among philosophically-minded sacramental theologians. The core of his contribution is found in *Symbol and Sacrament*, which, while revisited in a lecture given in 2007, remains a reliable expression of the paradigm shift he sought to accomplish. It serves as a primary referent to which his other texts offer refinements or corollaries.

Chauvet's chosen task, begun in *Symbol and Sacrament* and sustained throughout his work, is bold, perhaps (to some) brash. Chauvet was satisfied neither to 'transpose' traditional theology into postmodern terminology or categories, nor proceed in the traditional manner (from God to ontology to revelation to Christology to the sacraments). Chauvet's vision was still greater: he cast the primary elements of Christian *identity* -- Scripture, sacraments, and ethics -- as the foundation of theology; he sought to develop theology from Christians' scriptural, sacramental, and ethical origins. A full review of Chauvet's sacramental theology and its implications is beyond the scope of this dissertation. This chapter aims to provide the premises (2.1) and features (2.2, 2.3) of his sacramental and Eucharistic theology; it will also consider the scholarly reception of his work (2.4). It culls what Chauvet's thought contributes (directly or by implication) toward a relational Eucharistic theology.

## **2.1. Chauvet's *Relecture*: A Foundational Theology of Sacramentality**

This section will present Chauvet's objective, why he considers traditional sacramental theology to be problematic (2.1.1.), and the extensive set of presuppositions (philosophical, psychoanalytic, theological) undergirding his 'symbolic' approach to human subjectivity and sacramentality (2.1.2.). Chauvet thus reframes the questions and approach for sacramental theology in light of 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy.

### **2.1.1. Objective: A 'Relecture'**

Chauvet's paradigm shift is suggested in the full title of his *magnum opus*, *Symbole et Sacrement: Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne* in 1987. The French word *relecture* (translated for the English text as 'reinterpretation') can convey a wide range of meaning, from 'rereading' to 'radical reinterpretation.'<sup>55</sup> That 'radical reinterpretation' appears to be the intended meaning will come to light in the following pages. The ontological category of 'existence' -- for centuries the literal 'be-all-and-end-all' metaphysical foundation for theology -- is itself reinterpreted in light of the sacraments. A sort of subordination of ontology to sacramentality (and eventually, the symbolic) may even be suggested.

Chauvet works toward a "foundational theology of sacramentality"<sup>56</sup> which considers the sacraments "as *symbolic figures allowing us entrance into, and empowerment to live out, the (arch-)sacramentality which is the very essence of Christian existence.*"<sup>57</sup> To change from beginning with 'the seven sacraments' (as Trent did) to the more fundamental categories of symbol and *sacramentality* opens vast horizons previously excluded from sacramental theology. This move awakens us to the uniquely incarnational and cosmic nature of the Christian faith; it also opens far broader possibilities for understanding the mediation of grace between God and human beings.

It is hard to overstate the scope of change for which Chauvet calls. While the fuller scholarly reception of Chauvet's work will be explored later, Lieven Boeve describes part of its achievement thus:

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Lieven Boeve, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture and the Hermeneutical Project of Louis-Marie Chauvet," in *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God: Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet*, eds. Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 5-6.

<sup>56</sup> SS, 1.

<sup>57</sup> SS, 2. Emphasis in the original, unless otherwise noted.

Chauvet's work has resulted in an attempt to reconstruct the fundamental framework of theology itself, with important consequences for the diverse theological disciplines.... Characteristic of this reconstruction is ... it brings together the basic elements of Christian existence -- faith and praxis, sacraments, church, Christ -- and not from a totalizing, systematizing perspective but, rather, an *existential* one. Chauvet's sacramental theology is indeed framed within a *relecture* of Christian existence, a hermeneutics of being a Christian in the contemporary, so-called postmodern context.<sup>58</sup>

Chauvet seeks to build theology upon the lived, *embodied* historical existence of persons with a distinctly Christian identity, who have their identity (in part) by means of the sacraments. In philosophical terms, he is addressing the sacraments and sacramentality from the standpoint of a Christian's *Dasein*. This 'existential' approach in Chauvet's theology offers hope of the more compelling and relational Eucharistic theology we hope to establish. This, rather than the metaphysical concepts of being or causality, will be the starting point for (ultimately) a narrative of the transformative divine *and* human action found in the Eucharist.

For many the term (and/or language of) 'symbol' -- especially in reference to the Eucharist -- evokes a kind of intellectual disdain. For these, any mention of a 'symbolic understanding of the Eucharist' deserves the same reply given by Flannery O'Connor ("Well, if it's only a symbol, to hell with it"<sup>59</sup>), since such language appears to weaken belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a fundamental Eucharistic doctrine. For others, 'symbol' has more to do with subjective feelings than with intellect or objective reality, or suggests a kind of avatar for which plenty of substitutes are available.

Chauvet's understanding of symbol is far more substantial than such reactionary assessments would suggest. With Chauvet's thought firmly established within both a philosophically rigorous notion of language and a patristic notion of symbol (which embodies what is signified), it is important to allow Chauvet to explain what he means by symbol and

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<sup>58</sup> Boeve, "Theology in a Postmodern Context," 6. Emphasis added.

<sup>59</sup> Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being: Letters Edited with an Introduction by Sally Fitzgerald* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 125.

presence -- and absence -- before judging out-of-hand that ‘symbolic’ terminology is insufficient for preserving the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist.

### **2.1.2. New Symbolic Terrain: Subjects of the Implicating ‘Language of the Cross’**

The ‘linguistic turn’ within 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy required theology to reassess its own philosophical premises, its *preambula fidei*. New awareness of the profound implications of language upon thought, relations, and representations of reality opened new horizons, for which theology needed to account to remain in dialogue with contemporary philosophy. Awareness of humankind’s ‘always-already’ involvement with being, culture, and history changed the nature and content of epistemology and scientific knowledge. All the while, great attention must be paid to theological method to avoid replicating the errors of onto-theology.

To respond to these exigencies, Chauvet proposes a multifaceted approach. It aims to resolve the aforementioned dichotomies through a hermeneutical approach that focuses on the conditions and attitudes according to which humans live out their subjectivity. While in one sense it places greater emphasis on the subject, it also requires (to borrow from our introduction) a ‘Copernican’ sort of ‘de-centering’ from our common view of the subject as an autonomous and independent individual.

Having used Heidegger to deconstruct traditional ‘onto-theology,’ Chauvet reorients us with a diverse set of sources. Borrowing from thinkers in philosophy (Heidegger), psychoanalysis (Lacan), and theology (Breton), we might consider Chauvet’s new approach as linguistic, parabolic-implicating, and ‘me-ontological.’ Furthermore, it attends closely to the nature of mediation and the role of the body as a mediation in relationships. Chauvet thus delineates a ‘non-foundational’ theology: we enter upon “a *change of terrain* ... [for] the question here becomes inseparable from the mode of questioning, and the latter in its turn is constituted by

*the questioning subject itself... it is a speaking way.*”<sup>60</sup> Chauvet embarks us on an ever-unfinished process that both attends to Being’s withdrawal and implicates the questioner.

#### 2.1.3.1. From Philosophy: The Inescapable Mediation of the Symbolic Order

The ‘reality’ in which Chauvet is interested is not a ‘purely objective’ set of entities waiting to be discovered and observed. In Chauvet’s perspective, we are not in ‘direct’ contact with ‘the real’:

Reality is never present to us except in a mediated way, which is to say, *constructed* out of the symbolic network of the culture which fashions us. This *symbolic order* designates the system of connections between the different elements and levels of a culture (economic, social, political, ideological -- ethics, philosophy, religion...), a system forming a coherent whole.<sup>61</sup>

Human interaction with and arrangement of the world “allows the social group and individuals to orient themselves in space, find their place in time, and in general situate themselves in the world in a significant way -- in short, to find their identity in a world that makes ‘sense.’”<sup>62</sup> So a certain reciprocal relationship is natural to the human condition, involving both ‘the symbolic network of culture’ and human beings themselves. Like fish kept alive by being in water, human beings are always immersed in and participants of the symbolic order.

##### 2.1.3.1.1. Theology from the Formation of Subjects

In Chauvet’s perspective we need to take account of this ‘formation of subjects’ which takes place in the real *human* world, in both an objective and subjective sense. Humans’ arrangement of the world in culture and language into a ‘symbolic order’ also fashions human beings themselves as subjects. In observing and placing ‘realities’ in their context, we are

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<sup>60</sup> SS, 47.

<sup>61</sup> SS, 84-85.

<sup>62</sup> SS, 84-85.

mutually shaped by the ‘world’ we construct. “There is no emergence of subjects without the *subjugation* of each of them to this *law*, this cultural agreement which is the symbolic order.”<sup>63</sup> Chauvet wants to keep both of these aspects in view: “What if, instead of being obstacles to truth, sensible mediations of language, body, history, desire were the very milieu within which human beings attain their truth and thus correspond to the Truth which calls them?”<sup>64</sup> Since human beings do not ‘exist’ apart from mediation by language, culture, and desire, Chauvet wants to locate theology “at the heart of the lack [*manque*] which this mediation opens in every subject.”<sup>65</sup> Instead of trying to deny or avoid this “human inability to get totally outside of language, culture, and desire.... [we] should think about [this] *before all else*.”<sup>66</sup> This is human beings’ ‘always-already’ immersion within ‘the symbolic order.’

In this symbolic order, from which human beings are ‘born,’ language plays a most essential role. Just as Chauvet relied on Heidegger for a critique of traditional sacramental theology, so Heidegger’s thought on language, being, and human being opens ‘terrain’ for his new, symbolic approach. For Chauvet, *language* -- if anything -- constitutes what is traditionally considered ‘metaphysics.’ More importantly, the dynamics of language, rather than onto-theology’s ‘being,’ co-constitute *human* being.

It is important to note that by ‘language,’ Chauvet means something much richer than a particular set of grammatical rules, syntax, and vocabulary which merely express meanings and gets translated (for instance) from French into English. It includes such a notion,

but also ... ‘quasi-languages:’ ‘supra-language’ made up of gestures, mime, and all artistic endeavor; ‘infra-language’ of the archaic impulses of the unconscious, to the extent that they

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<sup>63</sup> SS, 86.

<sup>64</sup> *Sacraments*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> SS, 41. Cf. French edition, 45.

<sup>66</sup> SS, 40.

are human only if they function ‘continually . . . toward and within language’ without which they would only be instinctual animal reflexes or still-born psychotic experience.<sup>67</sup>

For Chauvet even “every thought is ‘always already language,’”<sup>68</sup> having been shaped (at least in part) by a particular cultural context.

Like the body, language is not an instrument but a *mediation*.... [Humans] do not possess it like an ‘attribute,’ even if of the utmost importance; they are possessed by it. Thus, language does not arise to translate after the fact a human experience that preceded it; it is *constitutive* of any truly *human* experience, that is to say, significant experience.<sup>69</sup>

Chauvet is discussing a far deeper phenomenon, constitutive not merely of an arbitrary form of expression but even of perception and expression themselves.

#### 2.1.3.1.2. Interrelation of Language, Being, Humans

That human beings’ *origin* is bound up with *language* is essential for Chauvet’s understanding: subjects are born from enculturated language, which itself reflects aspects of being. The inherent ambivalence of being and language likewise have critical importance for Chauvet: being and language conceal even as they reveal. Theology, therefore, needs to take account of a peculiar aspect of being’s ‘withdrawal’ or ‘erasure,’ as this finds important parallels in both language and the birth of human subjects as such. Chauvet insists that theology must include Heidegger’s understanding of the interrelation of language, being, and human beings.

#### 2.1.3.1.3. The Persistence of Withdrawal, Erasure, Absence

In order to avoid repeating the mistakes of metaphysics or onto-theology, Chauvet draws upon Heidegger’s diagnosis of the ‘forgetfulness of Being.’ Heidegger says one must consider metaphysics’ confusion of being-as-activity with the-being-of-entities (which is illusory) *as an event* itself, as part of the history of the revelation of being. This kind of consideration opens

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<sup>67</sup> SS, 87, n. 8.

<sup>68</sup> SS, 40. Chauvet is quoting Eberhard Jüngel, *Dieu, mystère du monde : Fondement de la théologie du crucifié dans le débat entre théisme et athéisme* (Paris : Cerf, 1983), 47. Cf. English edition : Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 252-254.

<sup>69</sup> SS, 87.

thinking to the fuller truth of being, its ignored foundation: the withdrawal (or ‘erasure’) of being.<sup>70</sup>

Contrary to metaphysics’ worldview, ‘being’ cannot be thought of as completely immediate, unmediated, or transparent. Whatever is held as ‘present’ to thinking inevitably conceals or withdraws some aspect of itself. More important for Chauvet than pinning down something like ‘the nature of being’ (even as an activity) is the observation that a *withdrawal* always accompanies Being’s arrival; an *absence* always accompanies its presence. Citing J.P. Resweber’s commentary on Heidegger, “Being never ceases to hide within a difference which constitutes it.”<sup>71</sup> Similar to how analogies involve affirmations of similarity and negations of greater dissimilarity, full perception of Being entails affirmation of a revelation *and* acknowledgment of a withdrawal or withholding. It is recognition of what remains unthought, unconscious, otherwise unacknowledged -- the aspect of Being that is “non-available, the non-representable, the ‘Incalculable.’”<sup>72</sup> The fact that Being withdraws as it reveals itself means that “its ‘revelation’ is marked by the very history of its ‘concealment.’ .... [which] ‘belongs to the very essence of being.’”<sup>73</sup> This simultaneous withdrawal-that-occurs-within-arrival, or absence-that-occurs-within-presence, is ‘erasure.’ Recognition of this erasure is required in order to ‘overcome metaphysics,’ to perceive the workings of language, and to understand the birth of the human subject.

#### 2.1.3.1.4. Distance and the Subject

As with being and language, so with human subjects: “It is specifically ‘beginning with this essence of the truth of Being [as erasure]’ that one must re-think the essence of humankind

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. SS, 48.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. J.P. Resweber, *La pensée de M. Heidegger* (Privat, 1971). Cited in Chauvet, SS, 49.

<sup>72</sup> SS, 49.

<sup>73</sup> SS, 52. Cf. Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*, Q 1, 29.



as ‘ecstatic ex-sistence.’”<sup>74</sup> As the subject orients the world into and according to such a cultural order, the subject for him- or herself is also formed.

In order for the subject to reach and retain its status of subject, it must build reality into a ‘world,’ ... a signifying whole in which every element ... is integrated into a system of *knowledge* (of the world and of society), *gratitude* (code of good manners, mythical and ritual code ruling relationships with deities and ancestors), and *ethical behavior* (values serving as norms of conduct).... By these means, the universe and events form a coherent whole which is called ‘the symbolic order.’ Subjects can orient themselves by it because each thing can find in it its own signifying place.<sup>75</sup>

For Chauvet, these three pillars -- not abstracted forms, causes, or analogies -- constitute the ‘essentials’ of a *human* world.

The context of this ‘reconfigured reality’ is fundamental for understanding the very high importance Chauvet places upon the notions of *distance* and *absence* amid relationships, particularly the relationship between the divine and the human. In what follows, Chauvet reveals how human beings’ relationships unfold from their context of being embedded in particular culture, language, and history.

#### 2.1.3.1.5. *Being as ‘Given’: The Entry of Grace and ‘Mature Proximity to Absence’*

While Chauvet’s fuller discussion of ‘gift’ comes later on a sociological level, he introduces it philosophically in Heidegger’s discussion of the arrival of Being as a gift (and furthermore the poet’s role in bringing awareness of ‘the Sacred’<sup>76</sup>). Amid this, in turn, Chauvet finds a philosophical opening for discussion of grace. The arrival of Being, which occurs as an event, is “to be understood ... in the sense of a gift; for Being, according to the *Letter on Humanism*, is the *gift of self in openness*; more exactly, ‘it at once bestows and withholds itself.’<sup>77</sup> “There is, in Heidegger, a *discourse of grace*.... For Being, without either measure of

<sup>74</sup> SS, 49. French edition, 54. Quotations of Heidegger from *Letter on Humanism*, Q. 3, 104-109.

<sup>75</sup> *The Sacraments*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. SS, 55-63.

<sup>77</sup> SS, 49.

calculation, without explanation or justification... is pure grace, pure gift.”<sup>78</sup> Thus does Chauvet ground philosophically the entire question of grace in Heidegger’s discussion of being, language, and human being.

The configuration of the event of the arrival (and withdrawal) of Being as a gift naturally shapes the proper human response: “The ‘event’ (*Ereignis*) we must think about is precisely this ‘appropriation’ (*er-eignen*) of what is freely given, which can come about only through an attitude of graciousness and ‘disappropriation’ (*Ent-eignung*): ‘To the appropriation-*Ereignis* as such belongs the disappropriation.’”<sup>79</sup> One should note the importance Chauvet places on the proper *attitude* which appropriates, that (paradoxically) of graciousness and *disappropriation*, of giving once again. Chauvet has at least as much concern for the attitude by which being (or a concept) is received as with the content of what is given.

*Gelassenheit* turns out to be the proper beginning of appropriation (or reception) of a gift of ‘the Sacred.’ True to Heidegger’s pairing of paradoxical opposites in the arrival-withdrawal of being, Chauvet considers the “human mode of the *appropriation* of Being as play and grace is through the *disappropriation*, that is, the *Gelassenheit*. Charged with attending to the ‘revealableness’ of Being by carrying it into language, the poet, allowing the word to speak, is touched by grace.”<sup>80</sup> Such a posture of *Gelassenheit* to the Sacred’s gift-which-withdraws appropriates this gift through an attitude of graciousness and (further) disappropriation. To thus acknowledge and relate authentically with this absence -- without attempting refusal or control -- is to “remain in a mature proximity to the absence.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> SS, 60-61.

<sup>79</sup> SS, 61.

<sup>80</sup> SS, 61.

<sup>81</sup> SS, 62.

Honest encounter with this withdrawal, with this “*absence is precisely the place from which humans can come to their truth* by overcoming all the barriers of objectifying and calculating reason. This task is burdensome. Is there anything more difficult than to hold oneself in such a ‘mature proximity to the absence of the god,’ than *to agree to this ‘presence of absence’*?”<sup>82</sup> Human beings’ truth -- the ‘truth of their relationship to God’ of which Chauvet spoke earlier -- consists of this allowing, or receptivity, of the ‘presence-of-the-absence’ of the Sacred, of grace.

#### 2.1.3.1.8. ‘Symbolic Efficacy’

In light of reconfiguring how being, language, human being, and human subjects all arise together, Chauvet can speak of “the *efficacy* of the symbol, an efficacy which touches reality itself.... this reality is *the most real*.”<sup>83</sup> For “Not only is language efficacious but it is what is most efficacious.”<sup>84</sup> We understand this symbolic efficacy more vividly from human experience than from syllogistic logic. Chauvet states “the efficacy of the sacraments must be understood in the mode of the symbolic efficacy of the *word*,”<sup>85</sup> which expresses a far richer notion of the formation of subjects than mechanical notions of causality. Even more fundamentally than the notion of gift exchange or symbolic exchange, the workings of language provide the proper horizon for exploring the sacraments, for it touches upon the very formation of subjects, of persons as such. “The *word* should ... be treated as ... the very archetype of what happens between subjects and within any subject. It is in language that ... the subject, takes its origin.”<sup>86</sup>

Such linguistically-based notions of the formation of subjects and symbolic efficacy will become -- at last -- the proper context in which to discuss grace. For “grace is less a value-object

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<sup>82</sup> SS, 63.

<sup>83</sup> SS, 130.

<sup>84</sup> *The Sacraments*, 91.

<sup>85</sup> *The Sacraments*, 94. Emphasis added.

<sup>86</sup> SS, 266. Emphasis added.

to be received than a symbolic *receiving oneself*: receiving oneself from God in Christ, through the work of the Spirit, as daughters and sons, as sisters and brothers.”<sup>87</sup>

### 2.1.3.2. From Psychoanalysis: The Truth of Desire

Chauvet borrows some elements of his approach from psychoanalysis, in an attempt to take greater account of the subject -- one’s desiring, thinking, willing, etc. -- in his or her interiority. While acknowledging this field has its limitations as a science, it counteracts the short-sightedness of scientific thinking’s constant impulse to exclude what is so essential to human living.

#### 2.1.3.2.1. Accounting for Desire: Accessing the Truth of Interiority

Linguistic philosophy is not the only field concerned with ‘overcoming metaphysics;’ the empirical sciences have represented another such attempt. While metaphysics (at one extreme) claimed a totalizing notion of knowable truth, empiricism’s ‘hard sciences’ (at the other extreme) claimed there is no over-arching truth, but only truths knowable from empirical data. Since the linguistic turn and awareness of observers’ ‘already-involved’ status (as in the Heisenberg Principle), it is impossible to deny a place for the human subject within any field of study. How can one account for the (interior) truth of the subject?

Chauvet proposes inclusion of the approach of psychoanalysis which, while it “declares ‘there is only partial truth,’” this necessarily implies philosophical discourse’s affirmation of an over-arching truth which is known partially.<sup>88</sup> The therapeutic work of psychoanalysis, for instance, is never fully achieved as a finished product. This, however, is not to be perceived as a shortcoming, but rather a *paradigm* for theological inquiry. Thus a dialectical approach which accounts for human interiority *and* philosophy reflects more accurately the involvement of the

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<sup>87</sup> *The Sacraments*, 95.

<sup>88</sup> SS, 78, Cf. Chauvet’s use of A. Juranville, *Lacan et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1984) 11-16.

subject with the ‘external’ realities being addressed.<sup>89</sup> This approach reflects more “the internal contradiction from which rises the human subject.”<sup>90</sup>

#### 2.1.3.2.2. Disabusing the Ego: The ‘Test of Melancholy’

An important reason desire must be accounted for is because we desire to know and possess *so* fully, so totally -- i.e., without any mediation -- that we delude ourselves into notions of ‘certainty’ and permanence that simply do not belong to the human condition. So we must undergo what Lacan calls “the test of ‘melancholy,’ ... learning to *consent ‘to find oneself alone in the ordeal of the real’* .... [for] ‘the real is the impossible.’”<sup>91</sup> We must consent to how, for now, ‘we see as through a glass, darkly’ (1 Cor. 13:12), only in an eschatological future can or does ‘the fully real’ become possible for us.

[We] must accept the death of the illusion *everything in us desperately wants to believe, that is, the illusion that we can somehow pull ourselves out of the necessary mediation of symbols*, situate ourselves outside of discourse, and apprehend reality directly, without passing through cultural tradition or the history of our own desire — in short, that we can take our ‘That’s self-evident,’ our ‘It goes without saying’ as reality. *It is precisely these judgments, seemingly so ‘reasonable,’ that never cease to delude us.*<sup>92</sup>

The necessity of mediation thus carries the important admission that we do not (in this lifetime) ever have unmediated direct access to the Lord Jesus. A degree of ‘melancholy’ ought to accompany *Gelassenheit*, of ‘mature proximity to the absence’ of God. This melancholy is itself a proper measure of being in true relation to God: hence such matters of interiority as desire and feeling must be incorporated into theology of sacramental mediation.

#### 2.1.3.3. From Theology: The Parabolic Me-Ontological ‘Word of the Cross’

We have seen how Chauvet considers traditional analogical *language* of causality to be problematic as a language for grace. An implicit complaint of Chauvet is that the onto-

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. SS, 78.

<sup>90</sup> SS, 81.

<sup>91</sup> SS, 79. Cf. Juranville, *Lacan*, 428; 85.

<sup>92</sup> SS, 82.

theological approach, while perhaps correct as an approach that seeks ‘objectivity,’ neglects an essential aspect of *human* being: namely, relationships with other subjects, as lived from one’s subjectivity. Hence traditional theological approaches yield a language too objective, too removed from human addressees who are created, called, commanded, and loved by God, from whom a response is also demanded. Theological language must speak from the decisive ‘place’ of the subject: a place of *relation*.

A better inclusion of the subjective human response is the critical step accomplished by the type of language Chauvet calls ‘*parabolic*.’ The ‘word of the cross’ operates by means of symbol, a chief feature of which is it implicates those it addresses. Though Chauvet does not call it such, it is relational; therefore this implicating aspect (in particular) is why Chauvet’s thought is a proper foundation for the relational approach to the Eucharist we are exploring.

#### 2.1.3.3.1. *Parabolic (vs. Analogic): Implicating Language*

Chauvet borrows the notion of ‘parabolic’ language from Eberhard Jüngel, which not only expresses the divine address, call, and mission to and for human beings, but also -- and more importantly -- demands a response. It implicates its human dialogue partner(s), rather than remaining ‘objective’ as does ontological or scientific language.

So Chauvet looks to the power of language and symbol to implicate subjects: “[The] primordial task of Christian theology ... consists, as Jüngel suggests, in considering the gospel itself as a form of analogy ... a type of *parabolic language* whose distinctive characteristic is ‘to insert human beings, insofar as they are summoned, into the being about which they are speaking.’”<sup>93</sup> This statement -- far more than ‘moving from the metaphysical to the symbolic’ -- captures the radical linguistic difference of Chauvet’s ‘epistemological terrain’ from Scholastic

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<sup>93</sup> SS, 42. Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *Dieu, mystere du monde*, 102, 108. English edition: *God as the Mystery of the World*, 290, 293.

onto-theology. An ‘objective’ approach to theology, while well-intentioned, misses the point -- especially regarding sacramental mediations with God.

Just as each kind of discourse has its own implicit rules, Chauvet likewise considers “this language, where the hearers find themselves engaged, as a peculiar kind of ‘language game’ (Wittgenstein): a ‘hermeneutical’ language which has its own type of coherence and cannot be ‘translated’ either into causative or explanatory language, notably scientific language, or into metaphysical language.”<sup>94</sup> Chauvet employs a different language, which inherently implicates its participants, in order to access a fuller and different kind of thinking, namely of a relational order. As a hermeneutical approach, it is at least as much concerned with the interpreter as with the interpreted content. Such implication of its hearers and readers -- with which the gospel is saturated -- is far closer to the *human* realities of grace and the sacraments than chains of causality.

Chauvet recognizes that conceptual truth alone is insufficient. The purest conceptual theological truths can still become means toward human self-serving ends, and thereby become idols. For Chauvet this danger is far greater than that of ‘inaccurate information’:

The critical thrust for Christian theology does not consist in the apophatic purification of our concepts in order to express God but rather in the use that we make of these concepts, that is, in the *attitude*, idolatrous or not, they elicit from us.... [The] tradition has understood this point for a long time: the most sophisticated ideas may be corrupted into idols.<sup>95</sup>

This brings to the fore once again the importance of one’s *subjective involvement* in the realities considered (in this case, sacramental mediation). Truth in theology is not merely a matter of intellectual understanding: it concerns both the attitudinal response of the subject as well as recognition of *other subjects* as the mediated presence of God. As we shall see, the fullest ‘measure of truth’ regarding the sacraments for Chauvet will be found in what he calls ‘the

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<sup>94</sup> SS, 42.

<sup>95</sup> SS, 42-43.

liturgy of the neighbor': the subject's daily recognition of God in one's neighbor and a life of service that reflects such genuine acknowledgment.

#### 2.1.3.3.2. Hermeneutics of Witness

Given the role of language in the formation of subjects, theologians have a higher calling than mere intellectual interpretation of foundational texts. Theologians, as disciples, are called "to give witness to that in which they know themselves to be already held."<sup>96</sup> All the more is the Christian faith, which professes the revelation of God in the humanity of Jesus Christ and the mediation of the Church, a matter of living out and embodying the truths professed.

For such reasons, the fundamental question of the relation of philosophy to theology receives a nuanced answer from Chauvet. The two fields are related, not so much by particular themes, but by a 'homology' between the philosopher's relation to Being and the theologian's relation to the Christian God. The philosopher's *Gelassenheit* in regard to Being is similar to the theologian's listening for the summons of the Word of God. Because of this homology, Chauvet argues, one "must reject a fundamental divorce" between philosophy and theology.<sup>97</sup>

However, the hermeneutical theology in light of the linguistic turn that Chauvet proposes is more than a simple transposition of *Gelassenheit* from philosophy to theology. True 'interpretation' must run far deeper, to the point of witnessing with one's life. It is a matter of "*producing ... new practices which foster the emergence of a new world. Its truth is always to be made; it resides in a future constantly happening.*"<sup>98</sup> The work of hermeneutics is thus not a matter of recovering an author's intention but of generating practices which accord with the world proposed by the text (in this case, the gospel). Theology must yield 'right practices' which form subjects according to the revelation of God.

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<sup>96</sup> SS, 65.

<sup>97</sup> SS, 76.

<sup>98</sup> SS, 69.



### 2.1.3.3.3. The 'Me-ontological' Logos of the Cross

Christian language must begin from the cross, the second of Chauvet's 'axes' of thought (the first was language). It must do so "because it is in the One whom human beings reduced to less than nothing in his humanity that Paul was able to recognize para-doxically the indirect revelation ('para') of the glory ('doxa') of God: a 'madness' from which 'the power of God' breaks forth (1 Cor. 1)."<sup>99</sup> The Christian *logos* of the cross -- the 'wisdom of God' -- is folly for both Greek philosophy (which seeks wisdom) and Jewish faith (which seeks signs); it runs completely opposite to human logic. Furthermore -- and more demanding -- it directly implicates its hearers into its notions of God, selfhood, being, becoming, and body.

With reference to Stanislaus Breton's interpretation of Philippians 2:5-11 in *The Word of the Cross*, Chauvet says that Paul elevates "the figure of the *Doulos* ('slave') to the dignity of an absolute," thus rendering "the very idea of a divine SELF' outmoded," for a slave only has 'being' in reference to another.<sup>100</sup> The slave does not exist autonomously; he only 'exists' in relation to the master. Furthermore, according to the culture of Paul's time, those who were crucified were reduced to 'nothing' (*me-on*). Since Paul's passage begins 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...' (Phil. 2:5), "true becoming' is not to detach the divine kenosis from that which is carried out in *us*," namely, an obedient emptying-of-self.<sup>101</sup> God revealed himself in the 'nothingness' of Christ crucified, of whom no one took account (cf. Is. 53:3).

So this 'word of the cross' now finds expression in "our *corporality* ... [which] has the responsibility of becoming the very place for this message.... [wherein] we can take nothing

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<sup>99</sup> SS, 69.

<sup>100</sup> SS, 72. Cf. Stanislaus Breton, *Le verbe et la croix* (Paris: Desclee, 1981), 151-152. English edition: Stanislaus Breton, *The Word of the Cross*, trans. with introduction by Jacquelyn Porter (New York: Fordham, 2002), 95.

<sup>101</sup> SS, 72.

without recognizing ourselves as being taken.”<sup>102</sup> Breton states, “God ... solicits from us this body of world and humanity, without which God cannot come among us in *truth*. It is precisely because God is nothing of what is, that God must *become*.”<sup>103</sup> This is the God who reveals Himself in the cross and through the mediation of the Church, which is ‘the Body of Christ.’ This ‘language of the cross’ is God’s own prophetic word, which critiques, subverts, and re-orientes human ideas, values, and lives. It both calls all into question and calls subjects to a new ‘becoming’ which is *mediated in and through* their own bodies. To this mediation in corporality, in the body, we now turn.

#### 2.1.3.4. Mediation and Initiation: Passage Through ‘Death’ by ‘Consent to Corporality’

This confluence of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and theology sets the stage for human subjects in the world. We now examine the interaction of subjects with this world, one another, and the crises by which they develop -- either in greater freedom or illusion.

##### 2.1.3.4.1. Becoming Subjects Amid the Laws of ‘Distances’

The process of becoming a human subject is neither automatic nor painless. Life’s “path of ongoing genesis”<sup>104</sup> demands negotiation of life’s unpleasant and unconquerable conditions. This negotiation process takes place through an unending work of renunciation and ‘mourning’ idealized notions of both the self and life-as-we-wish. We mourn the fact of our own death, but also our alienation from others and ‘the real’ (i.e., our dependence on mediation, the ‘law of symbolic deprivation’). Recalling Lacan’s differentiation of the self that takes place through language, we must also mourn an alienation from oneself (the ‘law of difference’).<sup>105</sup>

##### 2.1.3.4.2. Initiation: Death and Life

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<sup>102</sup> SS, 72.

<sup>103</sup> SS, 73.

<sup>104</sup> SS, 82.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. SS, 97.

The process of dealing honestly with all of these forms of ‘distance’ -- the “*truth of the subject*” -- occurs through a process of initiation.<sup>106</sup> In such initiation a subject ‘dies’ in some aspect of life in order to be ‘reborn’ to fuller life, living more closely according to truth. The ‘death’ we ourselves undergo demands the work of ‘mourning’:

The truth of the psychic subject, always open to the question of Truth, takes place through mourning: mourning for the imaginary coincidence between the (I) of the enunciation and the ‘I’ of the statement, mourning for the correspondence between the subject and the ideal Self, mourning for the hope of ever recovering original beatitude or (which is the same thing) of ever discovering the complete fullness of meaning. It is precisely in the radical loss of this ‘paradise’ and in the consent to the absence of the Thing that the possibility for the subject to cor-respond to the Truth emerges.<sup>107</sup>

Chauvet’s notion of initiation involves a framework -- whether of life situations, or a tribal rite -- of crisis. Living and maturing necessarily involves dealing with crises of grief, in which a privilege of youth must be lost in order to gain access to still-greater potentialities. It involves decisions which embark the subject toward new horizons of life.

#### 2.1.3.4.3. *The ‘Necrotic Temptation’*

Christian disciples -- both in the Bible and in every age -- have an initiatory task of overcoming what Chauvet calls ‘necrotic temptation,’ the desire for unmediated access and/or possession of Christ’s presence in a tangible, guaranteed, and thoroughly objective form. As an *imaginary* desire it is both natural (to desire the fullness of Christ’s presence) but illusory (it cannot be fulfilled and is not meant to be fulfilled). It presents believers with a crisis which requires for its resolution ‘consent to the presence of the absence of God.’ Chauvet takes examples from Scripture (particularly Acts of the Apostles) to demonstrate both the temptation and the transition meant to occur in the disciples’ faith.

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<sup>106</sup> SS, 97.

<sup>107</sup> SS, 98-99.

Beginning with the Empty Tomb of Easter morning, the disciples must reckon with the mystery of Christ's presence to them in new ways. This new form of presence, however, is not merely an arbitrary and interchangeable difference; relating to this new presence demands a kind of grief and consent to a loss, of 'immediate' relation.

In scenes such as the empty tomb (Lk. 24:1-12), the journey to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35), and Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), various disciples must learn to consent to Christ's absence. At the empty tomb an angel informs the women at the tomb "Why do you search for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Lk. 24:5). At Emmaus the disciples journeying to Emmaus encounter the risen Lord, but only recognize him upon his at the 'breaking of the bread,' whereupon he disappears (Lk. 24:31). After the baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip is snatched away by the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Acts 8:39). In each scene (as well as depictions of the Ascension in Lk. 24:51 and Acts 1:10) an epiphany of the Lord is accompanied by a sudden absence.

Even though Christ has conquered death in the resurrection and given hope of restoration of the body, there is nonetheless a 'loss' of immediate access to Christ. While present in the Church through the Holy Spirit, he is no longer present in his own body. This absence cannot be denied or minimized: it serves a most important purpose in the development of mature Christian subjects. It becomes a critical 'choice point' at which a disciple can either remain lost in 'necrotic temptation' or, through 'mourning,' consent to Christ's absence and welcome Christ instead through the mediation of one's neighbor.

The 'necrotic temptation' also plays itself out with regard to the Eucharist. Traditional Eucharistic doctrine assures the faithful that "*the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially*

*contained*” in the Eucharist.<sup>108</sup> Such language admits no room for consideration of how Christ might be *absent* in any degree; indeed to raise that possibility often raises suspicion of heresy or outright denial of the Real Presence of Christ. Refusal of any such admission of Christ’s being *sacramentally* present and thus in some degree absent, however, creates a stumbling block to growth in Christian subjectivity. Though a sacramental mediation, the security of a guaranteed ‘presence of Christ’ can become an end unto itself; the mature work of mourning the absence of Christ can find all-too-easy relief in the Eucharist.

So quite against an onto-theological conception of ‘direct access’ to reality, Chauvet puts forward the truth of the need for mediation. There is also recognition of the emotional toll that acknowledgment of this truth takes: the distance that persists is something to be mourned. The emotional cost is no illusory or insignificant matter: it can be a major obstacle in the journey to relate to God, others, and self in truth. Furthermore, the work of initiation is by no means a one-time occurrence; it must be undergone again and again, as long as we live. Chauvet calls for a mature honesty with oneself concerning our ‘not-yet’ relation to eschatological fullness.

#### 2.1.3.4.5. Consent to Embodiment

*To Symbol and Sacrament I almost gave the title, On Mediation. The entire project can indeed be summed up in the idea of the positive consent to corporality as mediation of the most spiritual relationship with God.*<sup>109</sup>

Our natural desire for immediacy and the need for ‘mourning’ thus face a crisis in the *absence* of Christ. The crisis is surmounted, the initiation finds resolution, in transitioning away

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<sup>108</sup> “In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*’ ‘This presence is called ‘real’ - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be ‘real’ too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374. Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1651; Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei* 39. Accessed 12 December 2016 at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm).

<sup>109</sup> My translation : “J’ai failli donner comme titre à *Symbole et Sacrement*: de la médiation. Tout le projet en effet peut se résumer dans l’idée du consentement positif à la corporéité comme médiation du rapport le plus spirituel à Dieu.” Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Une relecture de *Symbole et Sacrement*,” in *Quaestiones Liturgiques* 88 (2007), 111.

from possessive desire for immediate access to Christ toward a *kenotic* desire to *serve* Christ in the bodies of one's neighbors.

Consent to the truth of the subject, of the human condition, reaches its culmination in 'the law of the body,' of corporality. In the body all the human being's 'worlds' -- including encounter with the symbolic order -- coalesce. For "The body is *the primordial place of every symbolic joining of the 'inside' and the 'outside'....* The body is the *binding*, the space in the middle where both identity and difference are symbolically connected under the authority of the Other."<sup>110</sup> The freedom of the subject, however, paradoxically expands as it accepts the natural limitations of the human condition rather than resists them.

The I-body exists only as woven, inhabited, spoken by this triple body of culture, tradition, and nature. This is what is implied by the concept of corporality: one's own physical body certainly, but as the place where the triple body — social, ancestral, and cosmic — which makes up the subject is symbolically joined, in an original manner for each one of us according to the different forms of our desires.<sup>111</sup>

'Bodies' are thus the inescapable location, the *Sitz im Leben* of human interaction, not only with other human beings but also with God.

This is the way of kenosis, of obedience, of surrender. In no way is this a mere 'spiritualizing' of ethics: charity demands concrete expression in and for the bodies of one's neighbors. Mourning the immediate presence of the desired other must yield to desiring to serve the present other who -- too often -- is undesired, shunned. This way is more demanding, more *apostolic*, in that consent to fuller truth -- not merely of the sacramental presence but also the *absence* of Christ -- sends the disciple to the wounded and alienated bodies in the world.

## 2.2. Relations Among Subjects: Symbolic Exchange

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<sup>110</sup> SS, 147.

<sup>111</sup> SS, 150.

We have thus recounted Chauvet's depiction of human subjects 'as individuals;' we now explore ways subjects relate with each other through the mediation of symbols, and most specifically through gifts. Reconceiving the basic notion of mediation as inherent in language, being, and subjectivity (and not as a 'necessary evil') naturally reshapes the nature of relations between subjects. This section will first examine how Chauvet understands symbols (2.2.1.), namely as means of *recognizing other subjects as such*. Such recognition demonstrates what Chauvet calls the 'symbolic efficacy of language,' an important concept for his notion of sacramental efficacy (2.2.2.). The nature of this efficacy, rooted in the nature of language and symbol, in turn shapes relations and alliances by means of 'symbolic gift exchange' (2.2.3.).

Introduced by sociologist Marcel Mauss and developed by Jean Baudrillard, 'symbolic exchange' offers an analysis of relations between givers and recipients beyond purely utilitarian economics.<sup>112</sup> It also relates subjects and objects to the realm of meaning and values, particularly that which cannot be measured or calculated. Precisely because it articulates such meaning and values well, Chauvet will consider it an appropriate model for understanding both grace and the celebration of the Eucharist.

### **2.2.1. Functioning of the Symbol**

First, Chauvet's notion of the symbol is necessary. Typically the notion of 'symbol' is thought of as an instance of representation of 'something else' not tangibly present: whether that is reality, economic worth, or information. Chauvet's notion is different: "The primary function of the symbol is to *join* the persons who produce or receive it... and so to *identify* them as subjects in their relations with other subjects. The symbol thus ties the cultural pact where all

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<sup>112</sup> Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don* (1925); English edition: *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W.D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990). Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant with an introduction by Mike Gane (London: SAGE, 1993). [French edition, 1976.]

mutual recognition occurs.”<sup>113</sup> This is a critical difference from most common understandings of symbol (including the oft-quoted quip of Flannery O’Connor, mentioned in 2.1.1.1. above). For Chauvet, a symbol thus functions as a revealer and agent: it reveals identities as subjects -- namely, their common subjectivity -- and enacts an alliance between subjects thereby. Chauvet uses an example of visiting a foreign country and overhearing one’s native language spoken. Through the symbol of the overheard phrase, the hearer has an immediate relation and connection with the speaker that does not exist with others around them. The hearer and speaker both share a common culture, perhaps momentarily relieving the alienation felt by being in a foreign country. Generally speaking, symbols thus accomplish a mutual recognition of persons as members of a given culture, fulfilling a basic human social need above all else: “[H]uman beings speak, but only because the symbol has first *made* them human beings.”<sup>114</sup> A shared understanding of a mediating symbol serves to refer, not to an otherwise-absent reality, but subjects to one another. The symbol’s presence can, in a sense, *bring about*, manifest, and confirm the relation between the subjects.

### **2.2.2. The ‘Symbolic Efficacy’ of Language**

Continuing to look at reality through the lens of language, Chauvet borrows the ideas of J.L. Austin and Emil Benveniste on language acts to describe ritual language in closer detail, and its impact upon relationships.<sup>115</sup> As its own kind of language act, symbolic ritual language sets certain processes into motion. While historical narrative is governed, for instance, by the third person and speaks of the past, the discourse of ritual language speaks in the *first* person to a second, in the *present* tense. The current *act* of enunciation is the focus: it enacts a new ‘present’

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<sup>113</sup> SS, 120-121.

<sup>114</sup> J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, 276; cf. Chauvet, SS, 121.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. SS, 130-135. Cf. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); E. Benveniste, *Problemes de linguistique generale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) 1: ch. 19, esp. 242-243.



each time. This highlights an important point for liturgical discourse, as sacred texts -- with their direct address by and to God, and which recount events of God's action in the world -- are 'brought to life' again each time they are proclaimed in the assembly.

All language has both declarative and performative functions whereby, respectively, some information is provided and (more importantly) the relationship between subjects changes by the act of communication.<sup>116</sup> Far more than providing mere information, language is always establishing or altering relationships between subjects, if simply through recognition of the other. Ordinary greetings or 'small talk' about the weather (or conversely, not responding to such) exemplify this reality well: rather little by way of 'information' is communicated, but the mutual recognition (or dismissal) of and by the other is the primary purpose. Again this phenomenon is found repeatedly in liturgical texts (all of which God has certainly heard before). Yet as the praying assembly makes supplication to God for protection, gives thanks, praises God, or confesses its sins, it does so to shape its relationship to God, not 'provide information.'

Furthermore, all language (according to Austin) has three dimensions to it. A *locutionary* dimension concerns the simple physical speech act itself, the saying of something. The *illocutionary* dimension accomplishes a change by speech within a particular context; it changes the relation between subjects. The *perlocutionary* dimension "designates the effect of the language act 'on the feelings, the thoughts, the behavior of the audience or the speaker or still other persons.'"<sup>117</sup> The illocutionary dimension carries particular importance for liturgical rites, as this is what establishes relations between subjects.

To relate briefly these ideas to sacramental theology: for Chauvet the formation and reinforcement of alliances among subjects -- effected by the language of symbols (verbal or

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. SS, 131.

<sup>117</sup> SS, 133.

otherwise) -- becomes the refashioned model for speaking of *efficacy*. ‘Symbolic efficacy’ concerns the illocutionary dimension of language, broadly conceived and in all its Heideggerian aspects concerning the formation of subjects. Symbolic efficacy concerns the establishment of “new relation of places between subjects, a relationship of filial and brotherly and sisterly alliance, that the sacramental ‘expression’ aims at instituting or restoring in faith.”<sup>118</sup> According to this linguistic understanding, “‘grace’ designates not an object we receive, but rather a symbolic work of *receiving oneself*: a work of ‘perlaboration’ in the Spirit by which subjects receive themselves from God in Christ as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.”<sup>119</sup> This reflects another way Chauvet seeks to move beyond popular notions of grace as a ‘thing’ or commodity toward an *attitude* by which one truly lives.

### **2.2.3. Exchange and Gift**

Since the publication of Marcel Mauss’ *Essai sur le don* in 1925, philosophical discourse has explored the question (or ‘problem’) of the gift in a new light. Do gifts create obligations toward donors? Do return gifts (or gratitude) annul an original gift? Such questions continue receiving attention among phenomenologists and postmodern thinkers.<sup>120</sup> Since they call attention to the nature of relationships and graciousness, they are important for sacramental theology as well. Chauvet offers one analysis of exchange, symbolic exchange, as “a model ... for understanding the distinctive way in which the subject comes to be in its relation with other

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<sup>118</sup> SS, 140.

<sup>119</sup> SS, 140.

<sup>120</sup> For an overview of the complicated philosophical and theological question of the gift, including the perspectives of Jacques Derrida, John Milbank, and Jean-Luc Marion, see Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham, 2001). Key texts include Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1992); John Milbank, “Can a Gift Be Given?,” *Modern Theology* 11:1 (Jan. 1995), 119-161; Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given, Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

subjects.”<sup>121</sup> As a form of exchange ‘outside the order of value,’ Chauvet considers it all the more a fitting way to discuss the gift of grace.

### 2.2.3.1. Market Exchange

Mauss studied the kinds of exchange among traditional societies in Canada, Alaska, Polynesia, and Melanesia; traces of these can be found in cultures throughout the world. Two basic categories of exchange thus meet both the practical and social needs of human beings: market exchange (usually of material goods) and symbolic exchange (of what is ‘priceless’ or beyond what can be quantified).

Market exchange “is binary: product X is exchanged for value Y”; direct reciprocity is expected between giver and recipient.<sup>122</sup>

Market exchange:  
Gift  $\longleftrightarrow$  Return-gift

The giver ‘loses’ some possession by giving, the recipient ‘gains.’ Currencies, measures for quantities, and economic value facilitate exchange of all kinds of commodities.

### 2.2.3.2. Symbolic Exchange

Symbolic exchange, however, operates differently. Instead of a merely binary relation it “is structured in a *ternary* way.... Besides the gift and the return-gift, there is here the *reception* of the gift *as* gift and not as anything else.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, though an ‘equal value’ cannot be given back to the giver, some form of recognition and return-gift are nonetheless obligated of the recipient. Such ‘return’-generosity is therefore passed on to another, a third person, extending

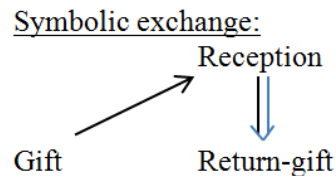
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<sup>121</sup> SS, 99-100.

<sup>122</sup> *Sacraments*, 121.

<sup>123</sup> *Sacraments*, 122.

social ties beyond the original giver and recipient. Instead of giving something of equal value back to the giver, an obligatory “return-gift [to a *third* person] is the mark of the *reception*.”<sup>124</sup>



Whereas market exchange involves the ‘trade’ of goods that can be produced and consumed, symbolic exchange concerns a richer social reality which builds communities, which in turn give individual subjects a context in which to find their identity. Symbolic exchange “has to do first with the desire to be recognized as a subject, not to lose face, not to fall from one’s social rank, and consequently to compete for prestige.”<sup>125</sup> It entails exchange, not of limited material goods, but of recognition.

[The] principle which rules [symbolic exchange] is one of *super-abundance*. The *true objects being exchanged are the subjects themselves*. By the intermediary of these [symbolic] objects, the subjects weave or reweave *alliances*, they *recognize* themselves as full members of the tribe, where they find their *identity* in showing themselves in their proper place, and in putting others in their ‘proper place.’<sup>126</sup>

According to such a model, communal ‘wealth’ thus accumulates in the social and symbolic realms of respect, gratitude, and solidarity. An opening for the notion of self-giving emerges here, since subjects are the ‘true objects being exchanged.’ Gifts mediate above all else alliances, not the mere transfer of commodities. Not least of all, these alliances *give birth* to, precede, and contextualize the identities of individuals. Chauvet upholds this hidden logic of a “fundamental system of ‘obligatory generosity’ and ‘mandatory gratuitousness,’ organized according to a process of gift--reception--return-gift .... [which] *allows us to live as subjects in*

<sup>124</sup> *Sacraments*, 122. Emphases added.

<sup>125</sup> *SS*, 102.

<sup>126</sup> *SS*, 106-107.

*all our relations in what they contain of the authentically human.*”<sup>127</sup> The logic and language of symbolic exchange, which bestows true recognition, gives birth to fully human subjects.

### 2.2.3.3. Baudrillard on Symbolic Exchange

Chauvet refines his notion of symbolic exchange through Jean Baudrillard’s four ‘logics’ of the various purposes of exchange.<sup>128</sup> The first three are varieties of Mauss’ market exchange: 1) the functional logic of utilitarian value (e.g., a car’s utility as a vehicle); 2) the economic logic of exchange value (the car’s cash value); 3) the differential logic of sign value (the status the car signifies), based on a social code of difference. In marked contrast to sign-value is the logic of ‘symbolic exchange’ based on *non-value*, what is beyond exchange value, or ‘priceless.’

Following Baudrillard further, gift exchange entails ambivalence, as a gift can signify either the presence or absence of the giver. A gift likewise expresses to the recipient both relation to and ‘distance’ from the giver. Thus, according to Chauvet a gift-object

‘one lets go [of] as if it were a part of oneself,’ it becomes a signifier that ‘grounds both the presence of the one to the other and their absence from one another. From this comes the ambivalence of all the elements of symbolic exchange ... as a medium of relation and distance, the gift is always a sign of love and aggression.... Thus, the structure of the exchange (cf. Levi-Strauss) is never that of mere reciprocity. These are not two simple terms, but two *ambivalent* terms which are exchanged, and the exchange establishes their relation as *ambivalent*.’ In contrast to the *sign-object*, which refers ‘only to the absence of the relation,’ the *symbol-object* (such as the gift) establishes the relation ‘in the absence.’<sup>129</sup>

Several themes important to Chauvet reappear here: presence and absence, relation and distance, sign and symbol, exchange and reciprocity -- as well as ambivalence. This *ambivalence* of all symbols will prove critical for when Chauvet (and later, Marion) addresses the many subtle

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<sup>127</sup> SS, 103.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. SS, 103-105. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l’économie politique du signe* (Paris, Gallimard, 1972) 61-63, 144-153. English edition : *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. with an introduction by Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos, 1981).

<sup>129</sup> SS, 103.

temptations to idolatry inherent in *any* devotion. Each of the themes mentioned above will have their own ramifications when applied to sacramental and Eucharistic theology. The complexities created by the ambivalence of so many features configure new possibilities for, place limits on, and change the contours of these relations. The gift of *self* emerges from this structure as well which will help relations of grace be understood as self-giving (rather than cause-and-effect, productionist, of the gift of a commodity).

This element of ambivalence is very important to note, for it vastly expands the possibilities for exchanges and changes in *meanings* and *relations* among subjects, quite aside from any tangible objects exchanged.

### **2.3. Relations of Grace: Gift of Christian Identity and Sacraments as Symbolic Exchange**

With Chauvet's linguistic, psychoanalytic, and theological approach, the operative question concerning sacraments changes. Since properly *Christian* subjects come to be by reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, Christians are already-embedded within 'sacramentality': their faith is itself "woven together out of sacraments."<sup>130</sup> Since there is no Christian subject without the sacraments, the basic question is no longer 'why have sacraments?' Instead, Chauvet asks "*What does it mean, then, to believe in Jesus Christ if such a belief is structured sacramentally?*"<sup>131</sup> Something in the nature of the sacraments is instructive for the nature of faith and Christian identity.

Chauvet proposes that the logic of symbolic exchange among human relationships is a fitting model for the relationship of grace between God and human beings. Mauss and Baudrillard brought the 'logic of the gift' and of symbolic exchange to light on an

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<sup>130</sup> SS, 159.

<sup>131</sup> SS, 159.

anthropological level; this section examines how Chauvet transposes them to discussion of grace and the sacraments. It will first review his rationale for this transposition (2.3.1.). Next it will discuss the church which precedes the Christian subject (2.3.2.), then the nature of the Christian identity it bestows. The process for appropriating the faith, revealed in the scriptures, patterns the gift exchange in the Eucharistic liturgy (2.3.5.). This section concludes by describing Chauvet's 'anti-sacrificial' understanding of the Eucharist (2.3.6).

### **2.3.1. Symbolic Exchange in Relations of Grace**

Since symbolic exchange concerns an 'economy' beyond practical value, Chauvet finds it fitting to describe the nature of relationships in the realm of grace. One of Chauvet's chief criticisms of traditional sacramental theology is precisely its *de facto* commodification of grace which causal or 'productionist' language fosters. Symbolic exchange, with its greater focus on subjects and alliances between them, "occurs in the order of non-value, hence its major interest to us in thinking through the gratuitous and gracious relation that is effected between humankind and God in the sacraments."<sup>132</sup> An overview of how Chauvet understands these concepts and the restoration of reciprocity which symbolic exchange accomplishes follows.

#### **2.3.1.1. Graciousness and Gratuitousness**

An appreciation of the gratuitous and gracious relation of God to human beings is of first importance for Chauvet: it sets the horizon upon which grace -- and *then* the sacraments -- are imagined. As gratuitous, the divine initiative of grace always takes precedence: God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). Humans' worship, repentance, petition, or service toward God (in liturgy and life) is always and only a response to God's loving initiative. Furthermore "*Even the return-gift of our human response thus belongs to the*

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<sup>132</sup> SS, 266.

*theologically Christian concept of 'grace.'*”<sup>133</sup> This emphasis helps remove concerns that sacraments represent an attempt to ‘control’ or coerce God into action.

As gracious, the gift God bestows cannot be stockpiled or calculated, nor is it parceled out (“God does not ration his Spirit”). Traditional categories such the ‘accumulation of merit’ by reception of the sacraments in a state of grace betray the calculating -- and ultimately, coercive -- approach with which such language is concerned. This ‘anti-quantitative’ notion also moves theology away from notions of ‘necessary’ or ‘sufficient’ grace.

Symbolic exchange helps us step out of quantitative notions of grace through its appreciation of how ultimately, subjects exchange themselves. All the more in the gifts of the sacraments and Christian identity do we recognize “we are not at the origin of our own selves ... [and] we receive our selves from a gift that was there before us.”<sup>134</sup>

#### 2.3.1.2. Restoring Divine-Human Reciprocity

Another concern of Chauvet’s which symbolic exchange helps correct is a proper sense of the divine-human cooperation, which preserves both divine initiative and a meaningful human response. While human beings are not able to make a ‘direct’ return gift to God, God’s reception of human charity toward the poor, vulnerable, and in need (cf. Mt. 25:31-46) carries a meaning far beyond the ‘economic value’ of the gift. to reception of human self-giving God Himself accepts humans’ self-giving -- which is ‘beyond value’ -- through the mediation of the poor of the world. As God’s gift of self through Word and Spirit are received in an embodied way through the sacraments, humans receive this gift by extending a similar graciousness through loving service for others. This both develops the original recipient as a Christian subject, and calls others into fuller subjectivity.

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<sup>133</sup> SS, 109.

<sup>134</sup> SS, 108.



This paradigm clarifies the nature and place of the human response, which also expands the notion of ‘liturgy’ beyond the time-frame of a mass. The ‘public work’ of members of the church extends the liturgy into the life of the world. For all these reasons Chauvet finds symbolic exchange a more helpful paradigm for speaking of a relation of grace between God and human subjects. The formation of free, loving, and responsible human subjects reframes the purpose, concerns, and terminology of the sacraments.

### **2.3.2. The Church, Womb of Christian Subjects and Identity**

Before speaking of God’s relation to individual human beings through the sacraments, the mediation of Christian identity (in all its elements) through the church must be recognized. God and the church always precede the individual’s coming-to-faith, for “In order to be Christian, one must belong to the church. The church is primary. The gospel is communitarian by its very nature.”<sup>135</sup> The social nature of the church ‘precedes’ the individual believer, and is the necessary mediation for Christian identity. Contrary to modern sensibilities, individual Christians do not first come to faith and ‘then’ constitute the church; as bearer of Scripture, the sacraments, and ethics, the church’s witness in word and deed arouses Christian faith in individuals.

Christian identity is itself a gift, received from God through the mediation of the church: “Christian identity is not self-administered; to obtain it, one must receive baptism, and one does not baptize oneself.”<sup>136</sup> This too has importance for the nature of Christian faith and living. Chauvet is not concerning himself with the question of salvation ‘outside’ the visible church

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<sup>135</sup> *Sacraments*, 31.

<sup>136</sup> *Sacraments*, 20. This process of coming to Christian faith merits its own analysis as a symbolic exchange of the gift of faith -- itself a gift of relation -- which is ‘returned’ by means of proclamation and witness to the world. This is a point Jean-Luc Marion will emphasize with his phenomenology of givenness. It would likewise be interesting how Chauvet, in light of his own Lacanian and Heideggerian themes, would understand the initiation process one is meant to undergo through Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

(which is possible), only with the fact that confession of Christian faith inherently entails membership in the church.

### **2.3.3. Content of the Gift: Elements of Christian Identity**

Chauvet's concern with the formation of human and Christian subjects reframes theological discourse on Christian identity. While sacraments are necessary for the Christian subject, alone they are insufficient: "the sacraments *are only one element among others*" which constitute Christian identity. Faith, expressed even by reception of the sacraments, still has need for scripture and ethics, which are likewise mediated by the church. Faith finds bodily expression through reception of the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation). Furthermore, this embodied faith must be expressed in the course of one's life through a Christian ethic toward other subjects. These elements (scripture, sacraments and ethics) together correspond to the human elements of knowledge, gratitude, and action (or behavior).<sup>137</sup>

Chauvet's understanding of each of these categories is rather broad. The New Testament Scriptures are "the unfolding of the apostolic church's confession of faith," the category also includes theology and catechesis, which explicate these foundational texts.<sup>138</sup> 'Sacraments' includes all forms of celebration and prayer (including postures and gestures associated with prayer), not merely the seven sacraments as traditionally defined by the Council of Trent. 'Ethics' entails "all that pertains to *action* in the name of the gospel": not merely interpersonal relationships but collective social problems that are beyond any single person's choices.<sup>139</sup>

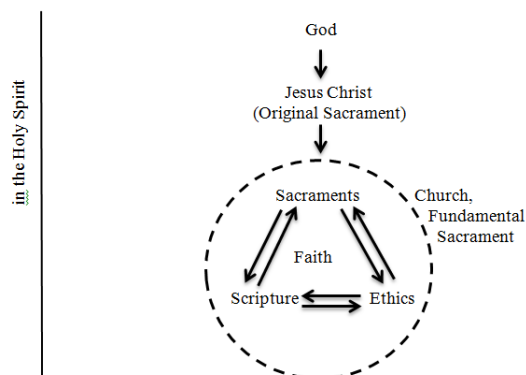
The following diagrams express the relationship among Christ, the Church (represented by the dotted-line circle), and the elements of Christian identity. Chauvet gives two versions:

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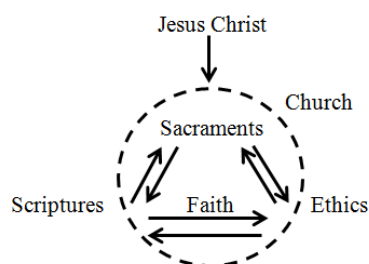
<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Sacraments*, 31.

<sup>138</sup> *Sacraments*, 29.

<sup>139</sup> *Sacraments*, 31.



(1986 version)<sup>140</sup>



(1997 version)<sup>141</sup>

These diagrams bring together several of Chauvet's emphases. The person of Jesus Christ is the mediator of God's gift of self, which elicits the faith of his community of disciples. Faith finds its embodied expression (and reception) in the sacraments, chiefly Baptism and Eucharist. The scriptures, as the written testimony of the earliest Christians, mediate Christian knowledge. The sacraments mediate Christian gratitude, and Christian ethics mediate the action of the living ecclesial Body of Christ in the world. Proclamation of the scriptures and ethical action are particularly oriented 'toward the world,' but the sacraments express their own witness by the church to the world. Recalling still more of Chauvet's themes, Baptism initiates the Christian by means of 'dying.' It is 'performed' on the individual's body by means of elements of the

<sup>140</sup> *SS*, 172.

<sup>141</sup> *Sacraments*, 28. The contrast in diagrams is interesting, yet Chauvet himself does not comment on their differences. The 1986 diagram emphasizes the sacramental nature of Christ and of the Church, and is more explicitly trinitarian. The 1997 diagram appears to place a stronger emphasis on faith and the sacraments as the foundation of Christian identity, from which are born scriptural testimony and ethical expression to the broader world. In the absence of Chauvet's own commentary, however, the importance (or lack thereof) of such differences is merely speculative.

‘cosmic body’ (water), incorporating the recipient into the social and cultural body of the church. The language of the scriptures gives birth to richer Christian subjectivity, informing believers’ lives of action on behalf of others.

Each of the three main elements of Christian identity (scripture, sacraments, ethics) only acquire their full meaning in relation to the other two. Furthermore, all three of these are bestowed to the church through the *liturgy*:

[T]he church assembly attests ... that these Scriptures are the word of God for today and to the ethical life in which they demand to be embodied.... What makes ethical life a Christian reality is .... the ‘form’ which is given it by love understood as a response to God’s love, which came first (1 Cor. 13). The liturgy is the place where this priority of the love of God freely bestowed is attested.... In the measure in which the ethical life of service to others is lived as a response to this primary gift, and therefore takes its source in the sacraments, in that same measure it finds its Christian identity.<sup>142</sup>

Chauvet maintains a fundamental unity among the Christian assembly, scriptures, sacraments, and ethics: likewise among the liturgy and the gift of love God makes through the liturgy. Separation of any of these elements from the others distorts them: “[I]t would be absurd to think or say that one could be a Christian without any ethical concern for others; it would be equally absurd to think or say that one can be a Catholic ‘without going to Mass.’ Certainly only love matters.... But how could this love for others be lived as love for God if it were not rooted in the word and the Eucharist?”<sup>143</sup> The need for the sacraments is not ‘tacked onto’ ethics here in a sort of reverse order, neither is Christ ‘tacked onto’ the sacraments. The gift of the creative and redemptive Incarnate Word gives birth to a ‘body of subjects’ which -- simply staying true to its origin -- expresses itself in actions of self-giving, becoming ever more like unto the source of its knowledge, gratitude, and ethics.

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<sup>142</sup> *Sacraments*, 41.

<sup>143</sup> *Sacraments*, 42.

While these elements of Christian identity are ‘discovered’ on an anthropological plane, they all have their origin in the gift of Jesus Christ. This fact can be easily overlooked by those looking for a ‘descending, from above’ Christology and dissatisfied with Chauvet’s linguistic-psychoanalytic premises. Chauvet supplies an important corrective against any notion his is a ‘merely exemplar’ soteriology:

Jesus Christ ... is not simply an ‘example’ but the genuine ‘sacrament’ of God. To present a Christ who would be first of all an example to imitate is to veer toward the path of moralism, a discouraging, even a fraudulent path since the 54 example to imitate is inimitable. Christ must be announced primarily as the sacrament of God (and as a consequence he is to be ‘imitated’ in a way completely different from that promoted above). As sacrament, that is to say, as the gratuitous gift of God and, more precisely, as Savior. He is our ferryman to God’s shore. We do not have to desperately run after him to join him: he himself comes toward us, as at Emmaus, and takes us in his boat to carry us to the other shore. It is, before all else, this truth that the sacraments are witnessing to us: a pure gift from God deposited in our hands (The body of Christ—Amen).<sup>144</sup>

Christ is to be imitated in a particularly sacramental way: by which Chauvet means, as gift.

Christ comes to us as God’s ‘totally other’ gift; we are called and meant to ‘receive’ this gift by similarly ‘emptying ourselves’ (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) through ‘return-gift’ to other embodied persons in the world around us.

#### **2.3.4. Process of Coming-to-Faith: Consent to Loss and Mediation**

The process by which the earliest disciples came to faith after the resurrection of Christ remains paradigmatic for contemporary believers: it is “*an ecclesial pattern* common to all Christians.”<sup>145</sup> Three coming-to-faith narratives reveal this pattern whereby *Christian* faith comes about: the journey to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35), Philip’s baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), and Saul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-20). Chauvet describes a ‘symbolic exchange’ in a broader (‘Baudrillardian’) sense of changes of meaning: for religious symbols (such as

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<sup>144</sup> *Sacraments*, 53-54.

<sup>145</sup> *Sacraments*, 20.

presence and absence) and the actions (ethics) of the subject. We also see how Chauvet incorporates Heideggerian themes of language (in particular, interpretation), presence-absence, and arrival-withdrawal.

#### 2.3.4.1. First Stage: Proclamation of Christ's Death and Resurrection

In each narrative it is the 'time of the church,' when the 'earthly' Jesus no longer walks the earth. Through a divine initiative, proclamation of Christ as risen is given (Christ interpreting the Scriptures, Philip explaining Isaiah to the eunuch, the risen Christ appearing to Saul). By such interpretation of the scriptures or event, the necessity of the sufferings of the Christ before he entered his glory is attested. Such 'witnessing,' however, is but part of the revelation.

#### 2.3.4.2. Second Stage: Sacramental Gesture

Secondly, a sacramental gesture attests to and mediates the gift of divine grace still further. In the three scenes selected, either a gesture of the 'breaking of the bread' (taking, blessing, breaking, giving) or baptism (by Philip, and Ananias) expresses concretely God's gracious action. (For Paul, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages are reversed.) The love of God is embodied in a sacramental way, and chiefly through these forms of Baptism and Eucharist.

#### 2.3.4.3. Third Stage: Eyes Open Upon an Absence

As the mediating action expresses God's gracious love to the recipient(s), at the same time the original 'form' of the mediator disappears. The stranger on the way to Emmaus vanishes, as does Philip from the Ethiopian eunuch. After hearing the voice of the risen Christ, Paul opens his eyes "but could see nothing" (Acts 9:8). Tangibly or concretely, an absence follows the gift. The 'giver' of the gift disappears -- twice in the giving of the gift.

#### 2.3.4.4. Fourth Stage: Return-Gift of Proclamation

While absence of the giver to the recipient prevents the possibility of a *direct* return-gift, the *obligation* to a return-gift remains. This new situation is meant to prompt the recipient to make a return-gift to a third subject, a new recipient who expands the reach of the gift. The two disciples at Emmaus return to Jerusalem to tell what they saw, Philip proclaims the good news from Azotus to Caesarea, and Paul begins preaching Jesus as Lord at Damascus. Proclamation of the Christian faith -- by word and embodied example -- expresses true reception of the gift of faith, through a return-gift given to others.

#### 2.3.4.5. The Lesson: Accepting the Mediation of the Church

The process of coming to faith thus requires both renunciation of ‘direct access’ to Christ and an assent to the incarnate mediation of the church. Faith in the risen Jesus -- if it is to be faith, and neither direct knowledge nor access -- must accept the mediation of the Body of Christ, the church: “[Y]ou cannot arrive at the recognition of the risen Jesus unless you renounce seeing/touching/finding him by undeniable proofs. Faith begins precisely with such a *renunciation of the immediacy* of the see/know and with the assent to the mediation of the church.”<sup>146</sup> The church ‘substitutes’ as a sacramental body which witnesses by proclamation and deed to the gift it receives from God: “Living in God, the Lord Jesus has left his place on earth, as the story of the ascension shows (Acts 1:6-11). From now on... the church occupies this place symbolically, that is ... the church is not Christ, but his symbolic witness, which means that its original and constant *raison d’etre* is to direct everything back to him.”<sup>147</sup>

The Church is not in any way extraneous to Christian faith: it is the body which mediates Christian faith to all. “The passage to faith thus requires that one let go of the desire to see-touch-find, to accept in its place the hearing of a word” -- which is supplied in part by the

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<sup>146</sup> *Sacraments*, 25.

<sup>147</sup> *Sacraments*, 28.

‘visible word’ of the sacrament, celebrated by the liturgical assembly.<sup>148</sup> So the church, as the ecclesial Body of Christ, takes up Jesus’ words and actions in the world, to be Christ’s presence in the world. By its witness, the desire which all people have for immediate access to God is redirected by word and sacramental gift to become self-giving to and for one’s neighbor.

Disciples are called to remember the Christ revealed by the scriptures and proclaimed in the memorial of the sacramental gesture, which bestows a gift and obligation to be returned through gift to others. The setting in which this occurs is the liturgical assembly.

### **2.3.5. Liturgy of the Church**

As the ecclesial Body of Christ, the church stands as the mediation (or sacrament) of Christ’s continued action in the world. “The gestures the church makes [in the eucharist], the words it pronounces are [Jesus’] gestures and his words. In the fullest sense of the word [the church] is the ‘sacrament.’”<sup>149</sup> The church most visibly takes on this role in its celebration of the liturgy. As the assembly of the faithful “The liturgy is ... theological locus of first importance. It shows us, not by mode of reasoning but by mode of symbolic action, that no one becomes Christian except by being taken into the common ‘womb’ of the church.”<sup>150</sup> The church’s symbolic and sacramental celebration redirects attention and desire according to God’s loving word and will.

While “*every eucharistic assembly truly realizes the church of God,*” such assemblies are not unrelated to other persons or communities, such as the bishop and the universal church.<sup>151</sup> A

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<sup>148</sup> SS, 162.

<sup>149</sup> *Sacraments*, 26.

<sup>150</sup> *Sacraments*, 33-34.

<sup>151</sup> *Sacraments*, 37. The dignity of the liturgical assembly is also clearly affirmed in Church teaching: cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1140, 1141, 1144, 1179; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7; *Lumen Gentium*, Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei*, 35; *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 27. Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann has also been influential in affirming the fundamental importance of the assembly; see Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. by Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1988).



eucharistic assembly must “be ‘lawful,’ that is ... that an ordained minister in communion with the bishop and therefore in communion with the other church communities presides.”<sup>152</sup>

The following sections will examine the subjects, purpose, and actions of the eucharistic liturgy, with a view toward a ‘symbolic exchange’ analysis of the eucharistic prayer.

#### 2.3.5.1. The Christian Subject in the Eucharist: The Ecclesial ‘We’ of the Assembly

Even in the celebration of the Eucharist, the prayers the presider voices aloud are all spoken in the first person *plural*. This linguistic detail has important implications for the celebration of the liturgy. The social nature of the church as an assembly finds expression in the liturgy. The priest does not speak in the first person singular to God ‘on behalf of’ the congregation: the *assembly* offers prayers to God. This ‘we’ is important to note for our relational emphasis, to name properly the subjects involved. The *assembly*, as a social entity, is the subject and recipient engaged in relation with God.

#### 2.3.5.2. Liturgical Actions of Christ, Assembly, and Priest

Recognition of the assembly as a ‘subject’ in the liturgy clarifies the actions of the Eucharistic celebration, and the role of the priest in that celebration. The celebration is, in part, an action of the assembly, gathered and celebrating in the name of the Triune God. Christ presides and exercises his priesthood, and the assembly -- priest *and* congregation together -- celebrates. “The priest who presides (for if all celebrate, one presides) manifests ‘sacramentally’ or ‘ministerially’ that it is Christ himself who presides and exercises his unique priesthood in the midst of the assembly and on its behalf; it is precisely *because* it is Christ who presides that all the members of his body act together with him, on the basis of faith and baptism.”<sup>153</sup> Christ acts

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<sup>152</sup> *Sacraments*, 37. Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 26.

<sup>153</sup> *Sacraments*, 33.

as mediator; the priest as presider manifests Christ-as-priest among the assembly; the assembly acts together with Christ as His Body.

The liturgy recalls and re-presents God's gifts to the church, also giving hope of enjoying the fullness of the Kingdom of God in heaven. This act of thanksgiving does not have its initiative in human action: it remains a response to the action of God across history:

[To] give thanks to God in a Christian manner is not a 'natural' matter but demands a complete.... conversion in the strongest sense of the word .... [The] fulfillment of such a thanksgiving by human beings ... needs nothing less than the action of God (the Father and the Holy Spirit, co-operating subjects...) giving the Son to humankind under the triple dimension of time (past, present, and future).<sup>154</sup>

The assembly is a participation in the Body of Christ, and it has an active role. The assembly is not merely 'acted upon' by the priest who 'acts on their behalf': "this community acts; it acts *as a body*, as a constituted body, as body of Christ."<sup>155</sup> This is made especially clear in 1 Cor. 10:16-17, in which "the subject who blesses the cup and breaks the bread is the 'we' of the assembly."<sup>156</sup> This aspect reinforces an understanding of the assembly as *acting* fully and consciously in its Eucharistic celebration.

### 2.3.5.3. Eucharist as Memorial and Anticipation

For Chauvet the principal 'shape' or nature of the eucharistic action is a 'twofold memorial' -- of both the historical past and the eschatological future. Chauvet himself refers to J.B. Metz's notion of a 'dangerous memory,' which interrupts, subverts, and liberates from the dominant narrative set forth by the world's oppressors.<sup>157</sup> That the Eucharist is a memorial takes precedence over concerns of presence, transubstantiation, sacrifice, or meal. The assembly

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<sup>154</sup> *Sacraments*, 133.

<sup>155</sup> *Sacraments*, 33.

<sup>156</sup> 1 Cor. 10:16-17: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?' *Sacraments*, 33.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. and ed. J. Matthew Ashley, with Study Guide (New York: Crossroad, 2011).

collectively recalls and celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus, the ultimate gift of God, which culminated in God's *withdrawal* at the Ascension and gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. "[I]n the memorial the past is received as present (and even as a present)": through the power of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit, the paschal mystery of God's self-gift is proclaimed, heard, and celebrated anew.<sup>158</sup>

Most fundamentally the church's thanksgiving is a *memorial* of the 'Godself' given to human beings in Jesus Christ. This was originally revealed in the past (recalled through the scriptures and the liturgy), re-presented now in its celebration, but *as a foretaste* of the kingdom of heaven in its fullness. As evidenced within the Eucharistic prayers themselves, the end of history does not occur with the institution narrative; an offering and petition for as-yet-unrealized eschatological fullness follow.

The sacramental 'presence' of Christ ... can thus be understood only *in relation to the twofold memorial* which structures the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer: a memorial of the past in thanksgiving ... and a memorial of the future in supplication .... This in no way minimizes the truth of the presence, but obliges us to place it, as C. Perrot puts it, at the midpoint of a 'double distance between the yesterday of Golgotha and the future of the Parousia': its connection to the Parousia keeps it from being reduced to a simple historical evocation of the cross which would equate the Christian meal with Greek funeral rites; its connection to Golgotha prevents it from remaining in the Jewish status of waiting; and the distance between the two crosses out its very truth of presence with the stroke of absence and prohibits us from conceiving it as a 'full' presence in the Gnostic manner.<sup>159</sup>

Here we see within the heart of the Eucharistic prayer itself the work of 'mourning' Chauvet associates with truly Christian faith. In keeping with Chauvet's cautionary concern with distance as a safeguard of truly reciprocal relationship, the *lack* of full immediacy must be recognized: the Eucharist remains a *sacramental sign*. Acknowledgment of the petition is an important corrective, since it reminds us we still do *not* have full immediate presence vis-à-vis God. There

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<sup>158</sup> *Sacraments*, 56.

<sup>159</sup> *SS*, 391. Cf. C. Perrot, "L'anamnèse néo-testamentaire," *Rev. Inst. Cath. Paris* 2 (1982) 33-35.

is the truth of Christ's presence, but we must not overlook the petition of longing for the fullness of God's kingdom, still yet to come. The Eucharist is a celebration *and anticipation* of the 'proleptic' fulfillment of God's self-giving, whose totality is yet to come.

Though celebrated daily throughout the world, the church celebrates its memorial of the Eucharist most fully on the Lord's Day, Sunday, 'the day after the sabbath' upon which Christ rose from the dead. "The Christian Sunday is the memorial-day of the paschal event.... [The Sunday assembly] is the 'primary sacrament' of the risen One."<sup>160</sup> Chauvet's repeated insistence on the sacramental nature of the *assembly* is important to note: God is 'already' present sacramentally among the assembly, the baptized ecclesial Body of Christ. This is an important corrective of common piety which considers only the consecrated bread and wine as (effectively) the only 'presence' of the Body of Christ, which only 'appears' at the consecration.

#### 2.3.5.4. Symbolic Exchange in the Eucharistic Prayer

We come to Chauvet's application of symbolic gift exchange to the liturgy of the Eucharist. Through close attention to its perlocutionary language of gift exchange, we discover aspects of this celebration that traditional sacramental theology underemphasizes or neglects altogether. These relational aspects open new insights and questions concerning eucharistic theology and Christian discipleship.

As mentioned earlier, Chauvet regards the word as "the very archetype of what happens between subjects and within any subject."<sup>161</sup> The words of the Eucharistic prayer, then, can be understood as intended to be transformative of both relationships with others and within oneself.

The fact that there is a text [of the Eucharistic prayer] signifies that at the outset we are not *competent* to carry out such an *action* [of giving thanks]. In sum, it is not natural for us to render thanks to God in a Christian manner. To carry out the Eucharist

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<sup>160</sup> *Sacraments*, 35-36.

<sup>161</sup> *SS*, 266.

requires that the Church first gain this competence. It is precisely the text that allows the ecclesial subject *to gain this competence*. This text thus makes the assembly follow an itinerary which, by means of certain ‘*transformations*,’ has for its goal the assembly’s conversion.<sup>162</sup>

The intended transformation is spelled out by the narrative of the Eucharistic prayer: “it is not God but we ourselves who are changed by the Eucharistic prayer: all the transformations are expressed as the differentiated work of the God-in-three-persons.”<sup>163</sup>

The text of the Eucharistic prayer, with its symbolic efficacy of language (which bestows subjectivity) bestows the competence and Christian identity to give thanks to God in a Christian manner: namely, in a way which acknowledges the gratuitousness and obligation of the gifts God has given in Christ, which cannot be returned directly but must be returned via the body of Christ in the world.

#### 2.3.5.5. Narrative Program(s) of the Eucharistic Prayer

Chauvet traces this transformation by observing the process of symbolic exchange in the Eucharistic prayer. He follows its ‘narrative program’: the standardized structure found in the Eucharistic prayers used by the universal church.<sup>164</sup> A narrative program “starts from a negative situation of lack... and stops when this lack is filled”; an ‘operating subject’ supplies an ‘object’ to a ‘receiving subject.’<sup>165</sup> The narrative program “that sets the text of the Eucharistic prayer in motion” is announced in the initial dialogue (“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God”); it

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<sup>162</sup> SS, 269. Here, Chauvet overlooks the first three centuries of church history, during which time eucharistic prayers were often offered spontaneously, without a standardized text. Cf. Paul F Bradshaw, *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997); Maxwell E. Johnson, editor, *Issues in Eucharistic Praying in East and West: Essays in Liturgical and Theological Analysis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011); Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists* (New York: Oxford, 1999); Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

<sup>163</sup> SS, 269.

<sup>164</sup> *Sacraments*, cf. 130.

<sup>165</sup> *Sacraments*, 129-130.

concludes with the doxology and Great Amen. This principal narrative / narrative program (NP) unfolds through a set of three narrative ‘sub-programs,’ described below.<sup>166</sup>

#### 2.3.5.5.1. NP 1: Preface and Sanctus

The assembly (the ecclesial ‘we’) gives thanks to God for the gifts of creation and His marvelous deeds in salvation history. A feast day preface may commemorate a particular event or God’s grace in the exemplary life of one or more saints, but in any case the thanksgiving culminates in God’s gift of Jesus Christ. Chauvet notes that the prayer has no other object than what is revealed in the scriptures, and it always culminates in paschal mystery of Christ. Recalling the second stage of the coming-to-faith process outlined above, the preface always recounts “the *biblical past reread Christologically*.”<sup>167</sup> This implies that the Christian assembly is retracing the path of coming-to-faith in its liturgical celebration; the celebration is giving birth to Christian subjects.

The assembly then joins the heavenly host as it celebrates God as the thrice-Holy One.<sup>168</sup> In sum, NP 1 presents “what God *gives* us, Jesus Christ as an *historical* (born of the Virgin Mary and crucified) *glorious body*.”<sup>169</sup>

#### 2.3.5.5.2. : NP 2: First Epiclesis, Institution Narrative, Anamnesis

In the first epiclesis the assembly asks God to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine, that they may (in the present) become the gift Jesus made of them (in the past) to his disciples “on the night he was betrayed, entering willingly into his Passion.”<sup>170</sup> This is both a recollection of Jesus’ ultimate act of fidelity and a petition for re-present this gift among the

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<sup>166</sup> Cf. *Sacraments*, 130-133.

<sup>167</sup> *SS*, 270.

<sup>168</sup> Given Chauvet’s strong emphasis on God’s transcendence, it is surprising this receives no mention.

<sup>169</sup> *SS*, 270.

<sup>170</sup> Eucharistic Prayer II.

assembly. This petition is not ‘out of the blue’ but within a very particular (symbolic) context meant to enable reverent reception of the grace God intends for human beings.

The prayer then recounts, in the presence of God and for the assembly, the institution narrative of the first gift of Jesus’ sacramental body and blood. As mentioned already, it is a twofold memorial relating the present time to both the historical past and the future glory in heaven. The text is a composite of the biblical accounts, and by quoting it two important transpositions, of time and subject, occur at once. First, the speaking subject changes from the ecclesial ‘we’ petitioning God to citation by the priest of *Jesus* speaking in the first person ‘I’ to his disciples. Second, there is a change from narration of the past (‘Jesus took... said the blessing, broke, gave’) -- to the second person imperative, *present* tense -- (‘Take this, all of you ... eat / drink’).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, this citation of the word of God in prayerful remembrance in a liturgical assembly of the baptized carries great significance. The risen Lord addresses disciples in the here-and-now: “*This story [of the institution narrative] by the Church about Jesus in the past functions in effect as the words of the Lord Jesus to the Church in the present,*”<sup>171</sup> as “*a discourse of the Lord addressed to the church.*”<sup>172</sup> Understanding ‘to cite’ as “‘to call upon officially to appear (as before a court)’ ... ‘to quote by way of example, authority, or proof,’” Chauvet writes of the Eucharistic Prayer’s change from communal prayer in the preface to Jesus’ address of his disciples:

This sudden passage from a citation referring to a faraway past to its being used in the present, in the discourse of the Eucharistic Prayer, shows that *by citing Jesus at the Last Supper, the church sees itself in fact cited by him, its Lord, cited to act....* This story is central for the

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<sup>171</sup> SS, 274.

<sup>172</sup> *Sacraments*, 133.

church; it is the effective norm of its actions. Thus, the church ‘executes’ the story as... a *discourse of the Lord obliging the church to obey.*”<sup>173</sup>

This discourse of the Lord -- itself a gift -- obliges the church today: the church “cannot ‘narrate’ Jesus as Christ and Lord without being itself taken in the present into what it narrates in the past.”<sup>174</sup> The assembly receives the gift anew, with its obligation. Jesus’ words conclude with the mandate ‘Do this in memory of me.’

While never contesting belief in Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist, Chauvet emphasizes a particular interpretation of its meaning. It should not surprise us that a Heideggerian notion of ‘*ad-esse*,’ of ‘being-for’ (with its concomitant notions of purpose, care, and relation) come to the fore. The Eucharistic presence is not a ‘being,’ ‘present’ (concerning either location or giftedness) for its own sake; it is oriented toward the disciples for a saving purpose.

[The] story of the institution ... places Christ’s coming-to-presence in this same dynamic of relation [as was time, toward past and future]. First at the level of the *words* quoted, the “take, eat, . . . drink ...” and, still more, the *hyper* (“for”) are essential to the significance of the action. *Hyper* is neither a simple derivation nor an extrinsic purpose of an *esse* that would be sufficient unto itself. The salvific relation it signifies ... indicates that we cannot be content here, under the pretext of ‘realism,’ to imagine the reality at issue as the simple *esse* of a subsistent entity; the relation must be conceived precisely as ‘presence,’ that is, as *being-for*, *being-toward*. In other terms, the *esse* is *constitutively ad-esse*. Moreover, the gestures of gift and sharing indicate the same thing.<sup>175</sup>

All of this is meant to correct a tendency toward thinking of transubstantiated elements as the final goal (or *res*) of the sacrament; they are not. Christ’s presence is the elements serves another purpose ‘beyond itself.’

After the memorial acclamation and recollection of Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection, the anamnesis expresses the immediate offering to God of the sacramental Body

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<sup>173</sup> *Sacraments*, 134. (Translators’ note: “The definitions of ‘cite’ are taken from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1989).”

<sup>174</sup> *Sacraments*, 134-135.

<sup>175</sup> *SS*, 391-392.



and Blood by the assembly. By the act of oblation, the gift is more fully received through an act of dispossession.

#### 2.3.5.5.3. NP 3: Second Epiclesis, Eschatological Prayer

In a second petition for the Holy Spirit, the assembly prays for itself, “so that it may *become what it has just received* in NP 2; and what it has received will be ritually completed in Communion.”<sup>176</sup> Having just received and offered the sacramental body of Christ, the assembly “seeks that it become more fully the *ecclesial* body of this same Christ,” i.e., what traditional sacramental theology designates as the *res* of the Eucharist: the unity of the Body of Christ. Such unity among the ecclesial Body of Christ is the ‘final goal’ of the Eucharistic celebration, not merely in the time frame of the liturgical assembly but in lives witnessing to Christ. Lastly, in hope of enjoying eternal life with God, the assembly asks “participation by the ecclesia here assembled in the reign fully realized.”<sup>177</sup> The doxology and Great Amen conclude the Eucharistic prayer as such.

#### 2.3.5.5.4. Synthesis of Narrative Programs within Symbolic Exchange

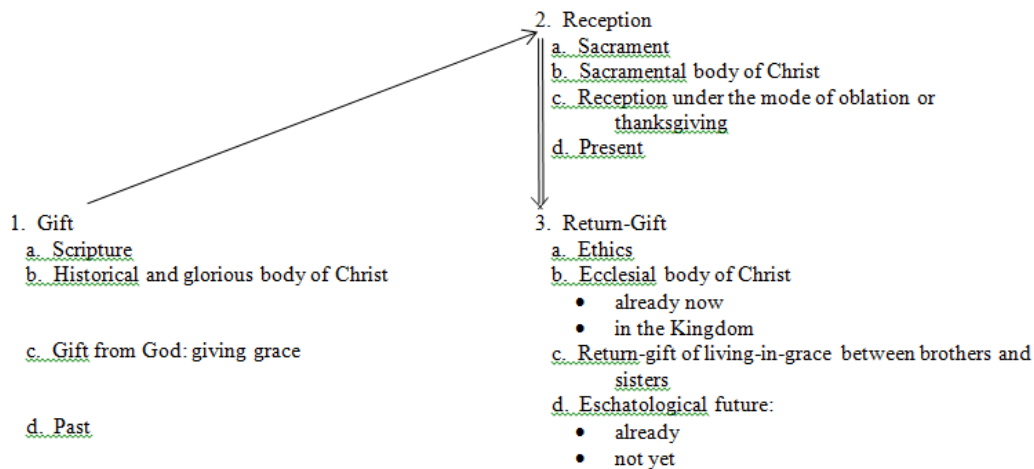
With the subjects (God and human beings), the Eucharist entails gifts (of bread/Body and wine/Blood), markers of identity (Scripture, Sacrament, Ethics), and different periods in history (past, present, future). The diagram below presents how Chauvet brings together these various triads of the Christian symbolic world according to the logic of symbolic exchange:<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> SS, 271.

<sup>177</sup> SS, 271.

<sup>178</sup> SS, 278.



The celebration is first a memorial of how God bestowed gifts (1.) of creation and redemption to human beings (2.) in salvation history, most notably in Jesus Christ. This gift originally occurred in the past (1.b.c.d.), but as it is recalled now in the present, the power of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit present these gifts anew (2.b.c.d.). As finite creatures limited by time and space, human beings are unable to make a ‘full’ return-gift to God, either ‘directly back’ to God or ‘of equal value.’ Nonetheless, having recognized the gift of grace, the assembly remains obligated -- implicitly by the nature of symbolic exchange, or explicitly through scripture’s commandments -- to make a return-gift. So, as in common symbolic exchange of gifts of ‘non-value’ or beyond value, return-gift is made to a wider circle of subjects, namely, other people of the world (3.b.c.). Such acts of justice and charity are given in gratitude and to prepare for God’s eschatological future, the fullness of the kingdom of heaven (3.d.).

This symbolic exchange analysis reveals the dynamic continuity among the three elements of Christian identity, and their respective roles in the formation of Christian subjects. Through scripture (1.a.) the assembly recalls gifts of the past and present, celebrated sacramentally (2.a.), and then extended to an ever-wider circle of subjects through deeds of

service (3.a.). The canon of scripture provides the foundational knowledge; sacraments are a celebration of gratitude; ethical lives give witness to inner transformation.

### **2.3.6. Christ's Priesthood, Sacrifice, and Eucharist**

Every eucharistic theology has an implicit soteriology; both, for Chauvet, are done a disservice by traditional 'sacrificial' concepts and terminology. He acknowledges a need both to keep and refine the meaning of this terminology.

#### **2.3.6.1. Sacrifice: Under Critique**

The theological notion of 'sacrifice' has undergone extensive criticism in recent decades.<sup>179</sup> While rooted in biblical texts (particularly the Letter to the Hebrews), many writers in both soteriology and Eucharistic theology have questioned the value of this traditional motif on theological and/or cultural grounds.<sup>180</sup> Chapter IV of this dissertation will review the influential critique (and eventual *rapprochement*) of sacrifice by René Girard and those who have appropriated it into Christian theology. Liberation and feminist theologians have likewise called attention to the potentially-oppressive aspects of this theme. Other writers consider it essential to the nature of Christianity.<sup>181</sup>

Chauvet's recasting of the Eucharist away from onto-theological 'Real Presence' toward an action of linguistic-symbolic gift exchange involves a reinterpretation of Eucharistic sacrifice as well. Particularly since the *language* of sacrifice has embedded itself within church tradition,

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<sup>179</sup> The criticism of satisfaction (or sacrificial) atonement theory is important for Eucharistic theology of sacrifice because Christ's 'sacrifice' on the cross for the forgiveness of sins becomes the basis for Eucharistic and personal sacrifice.

<sup>180</sup> Theological critiques of sacrifice generally concern an idolatrous notion of God for whom violence is inherent in the divine nature. Cf. Robert Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009); S. Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Stephan Finlan, *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia: On the Eucharist in Its Relation to the Church*, Encyclical Letter (17 April 2003).

questions concerning whether to keep or reject such language, and how to interpret it if kept, acquire particular importance.

Chauvet first contrasts traditional sacrificial theology of atonement and the sacraments with a ‘non-sacrificial’ approach which would reject both the theology and terminology of sacrifice. In *Symbol and Sacrament*, written in 1986, Chauvet associated such a stance with the thought of René Girard.<sup>182</sup> Chauvet believed Girard mistakenly opposes ritual sacrifice and ethical concerns: either ritual sacrifice is effective (removing any need for ethical concern) or ethical (rendering ritual sacrifice superfluous), but not both. Chauvet wants to introduce as a third option ‘anti-sacrifice’: a subversion of sacrificial theology away from ritual notions toward an ethical emphasis.

#### 2.3.6.2. Understanding and Expressing Jesus’ Saving Sacrifice

Chauvet proposes that “Jesus’ priesthood and sacrifice were exercised existentially, and not ritually.”<sup>183</sup> As expressed in Philippians 2:5-11, by his *kenosis* Jesus “lived and ... died in reversing ... the paradigmatic sin of humankind.... [which] is to live its relation with God according to a pattern of force and competition, a pattern ... [of] the *slave* trying to seize ... the omnipotence of the *master* and to take the master’s place.”<sup>184</sup> Jesus’ own posture of *Gelassenheit* expressed and accepted the *distance* proper to the human-divine relationship. This humble ‘letting go’ culminated in Jesus’ surrender before God on the cross, “where he consents to taste humanity to its extreme limit, death experienced in the silence of a God who would not

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. SS, 301-303. Girard, in dialogue with Raymund Schwager S.J., eventually affirmed a qualified understanding of sacrifice, in which God allowed sinful humans to attempt ‘scapegoating’ Jesus, but exposed the lie of this mechanism through the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. This arc in Girard’s thought will be reviewed in Chapter IV. Cf. René Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014). Also cf. Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, Joel Hodge, and Mathias Moosbrugger, eds., *René Girard and Raymund Schwager: Correspondence 1974-1991*, translated by Chris Fleming and Sheelah Treflé Hidden (Bloomsbury Academic: New York, 2016).

<sup>183</sup> SS, 299.

<sup>184</sup> SS, 299.

even intervene to spare the Just One this death.”<sup>185</sup> For Chauvet this ‘word of the cross’ expresses and establishes the proper relation of human beings to God: “This ‘sacrificial’ letting-be seems to us to open a way to express theologically the significance of the life and death of Jesus ‘for all humankind.’”<sup>186</sup> God neither demands nor is appeased by a traditionally-understood ‘sacrifice’ of Jesus on behalf of sinners.

### 2.3.6.3. Jesus’ Gift in the Eucharist: From Ritual to Ethical/Existential ‘Sacrifice’

Thus Chauvet proposes ‘anti-sacrifice,’ which keeps sacrificial terminology but transposes their object from ritual to ethical sacrifice.<sup>187</sup> According to such a model, worship is not expressed primarily in a ceremonial or ritual form but is “embodied in life itself through faith, hope, and charity.”<sup>188</sup> By ‘anti-sacrificial’ Chauvet seeks “not the negation of the sacrificial ... but *the task to convert all the sacrificial to the gospel in order to live it ... in a filial (and hence in a brotherly and sisterly) manner.* ... [this] constitutes the premier place of *our* ‘sacrifice.’”<sup>189</sup> The truly ‘sacrificial’ element for Chauvet is precisely turning *away* from *ritual* sacrifice -- and all its tendencies toward self-serving idolatry -- toward active ‘service of Christ-in-the-neighbor. Ritual is not an ‘end in itself’ but serves to instill an *existential*, first-person readiness to act and live in memory of Jesus.

Chauvet finds the foundation for this approach in the gospel according to John, wherein the evangelist substitutes the washing of the feet for the synoptic institution narrative. Employing the commentary of Xavier Léon-Dufour on John 13:15 (“I have set you an example, that you also should do as [*kathos*] I have done to you), Chauvet states:

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<sup>185</sup> SS, 301.

<sup>186</sup> SS, 300.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. SS, 303-305.

<sup>188</sup> SS, 299.

<sup>189</sup> SS, 311.

‘The comparison with the anamnesis is inescapable: ... Do this in memory of me.’ For this Johannine *kathos* ‘is causal rather than merely exemplary ... as if Jesus said: ‘In acting this way, I give you power to act in the same way.’ This *kathos*, we would say, has the value of a *sacramentum* — that is to say, of a gift on the part of Christ — and not simply of an *exemplum*.... It is finally ‘Jesus himself who, through his disciples, fulfills the service which must characterize them.’ To wash one another’s feet is to live existentially the memory of Christ that the Eucharist makes us live ritually.<sup>190</sup>

This is the way celebration of the Eucharist is ‘veri-fied.’ In a gift *of* giving, Jesus directs his disciples toward the mundane needs of neighbors. This gift which redirects attention and action toward acts of mercy is the ‘anti-sacrifice:’ “the sacred work, the cult, the sacrifice that is pleasing to God, is the confession of faith lived in the *agape* of sharing in service to the poorest, of reconciliation, and of mercy.”<sup>191</sup> In a deliberate move away from cult ritual which too often deteriorates into bourgeois self-indulgence, Christian ‘anti-sacrifice’ seeks the concrete relief of those in need as the ‘return-gift which recognizes and broadens the gift among *other* subjects.

#### 2.3.6.4. Liturgy of the Eucharist: From Ritual Memory to Existential Memory

The ritualized memorial of the liturgy of the Eucharist is thus meant to instill in disciples a living, existential memory of Jesus’ purpose, way of living, and kind of action. Thus, “*ritual* memory of Jesus’ death and resurrection is not Christian unless it is veri-fied in an *existential* memory whose place is none other than the believers’ bodies.”<sup>192</sup> The liturgy of the Eucharist is neither an exercise in nostalgic memory nor a sacrificial appeasement of God, but a commission to live in the present as the ecclesial Body of Christ: “The ritual story at each Eucharist, retelling why Jesus handed over his life, sends all Christians back to their own responsibility to take charge of history in his name; and so they become his living memory in the world because he

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<sup>190</sup> SS, 260-261. Cf. X. Léon -Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist, 1987), 250. There the translation reads “‘as’ (*kathos*) conveys the idea of origination rather than exemplarity.”

<sup>191</sup> SS, 260.

<sup>192</sup> SS, 260-261.

himself is ‘sacramentally’ engaged in the body of humanity they work at building for him.”<sup>193</sup> By recognizing 1) God’s gift to us, 2) His *absence* for a direct return-gift, and 3) His mediated *presence* among those in need, we are given the coordinates for ‘full, conscious, active participation’ in divine giving.

Chauvet’s writings represent an attempt to re-present the philosophical premises of Christian sacramentality in light of the ‘linguistic turn’ of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the awareness of the hermeneutical involvement of subjects with what they encounter. This effort included a move ‘from the metaphysical to the symbolic,’ from a paradigm of causality to one of symbolic gift-exchange, and all while taking account of the revelation of the cross and the contributions of social sciences.

## **2.4. Critical Reception of Chauvet**

We now look to how Chauvet’s ‘gift’ has been received: this section will review the critical reception of Chauvet’s fundamental sacramental theology. Scholarly recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of Chauvet’s proposal (particularly in comparison with traditional sacramental theology) will be examined. Lastly, a last section will explore new directions for Chauvet’s thought regarding a relational approach to the Eucharist.

### **2.4.1. Critical Reception of Chauvet**

#### **2.4.1.1. Impact**

At the least, Chauvet has had a major impact reframing the basic questions, premises, and approach to the phenomenon of sacramentality in Christian faith and identity. Chauvet’s *Symbol and Sacrament* has been hailed as “the most influential work in the field developing a postmodern approach to the theology of sacramentality,”<sup>194</sup> a “provocative new archetype for

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<sup>193</sup> SS, 261.

<sup>194</sup> David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God’s Giving* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1999), 327.

sacramentology,”<sup>195</sup> and a “herculean accomplishment.”<sup>196</sup> As “the first radically different sacramental theology to come out of Europe since the existential-phenomenological transformation of neo-scholastic thinking wrought by Rahner and Schillebeeckx over thirty years ago,” Chauvet has “moved theology from being structured through premodern schemes onto the threshold of the postmodern context.”<sup>197</sup> A large portion of the second Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology conference (1999) was devoted to exploration of Chauvet’s thought. The value of Chauvet’s contribution (in *Symbol and Sacrament* and elsewhere) is, of course, a matter of debate.

#### 2.4.1.2. Favorable Reception: Strengths

Several scholars look upon Chauvet’s contribution with appreciation. Regis Duffy commends *Symbol and Sacrament* as an “innovative and foundational study in systematic theology” whose “orientation ... [is] ultimately pastoral.”<sup>198</sup> Stijn Van den Bossche called it “certainly one of the most brilliant contributions to sacramentology since Vatican II.”<sup>199</sup> Bruce Morrill praises Chauvet’s “success in articulating something of the tragic beauty of the paschal mystery: God’s revelation of salvation as the meeting of divine and human desire (the Spirit) in the human (bodily and historical, assured yet struggling, defeated but triumphant) person of Jesus.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Megan Willis, “Language as the Sanctuary of Being: A Theological Exploration with Louis-Marie Chauvet,” *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010), 872.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph Martos, “Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence,” *Horizons*, 23/2 (Fall 1996): 345-346.

<sup>197</sup> Lieven Boeve, “Theology in a Postmodern Context and the Hermeneutical Project of Louis-Marie Chauvet,” in *Sacraments, Revelation of the Humanity of God: Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet*, ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce Morrill (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>198</sup> Regis A. Duffy, “Symbol and sacrament: a sacramental reinterpretation of Christian existence.” *Theological Studies* 57, no. 3 (September 1996): 551-552. *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 15, 2017).

<sup>199</sup> Stijn Van den Bossche, “Introduction,” in Lieven Boeve and L. Leijssen, eds., *Contemporary Sacramental Contours of a God Incarnate: Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>200</sup> Bruce Morrill, “Building on Chauvet’s Work: An Overview,” in Bordeyne and Morrill, *Sacraments*, xxii-xxiii.



In particular, Chauvet's interdisciplinary approach -- particularly inclusion of post-'linguistic turn' philosophy and psychoanalysis -- earns high praise from many scholars. John Baldovin calls Chauvet "one of the very best sacramental theologians writing today" whose writings are "remarkably balanced," pointing to a third way between objectivist and subjectivist models for the sacraments.<sup>201</sup> Glenn Ambrose finds Chauvet's presentation "thought-provoking" and a "rich source of insights" in its synthesis of theology, philosophy, and the social sciences; since Chauvet is "accountable to the tradition ... for what it has done, and for what it has failed to do," he "may serve as a bridge or a middle ground between traditional and more radical post-metaphysical accounts of Christianity."<sup>202</sup>

Chauvet's insistence on 'distance' and 'absence' within relationship provides an important corrective to traditional theology's overemphasis on divine presence. David Power praises Chauvet for reviving a proper sense of divine transcendence in the sacraments and the Eucharist, radically expanding our awareness of 'otherness' as a mediation of divine presence.<sup>203</sup> While Chauvet is to be commended for relating sacramental theology more directly to ethics, Kenan Osborne says this contribution is "powerful, but it is only a beginning."<sup>204</sup>

Joseph C. Mudd's *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* gives both a thorough critique of Chauvet's project and exposition of how Bernard Lonergan's work achieves Chauvet's goals more suitably. Mudd commends Chauvet in that he

builds on three critical insights from [Bernard Lonergan's] thinking that are critical for any contemporary sacramental theology: (1) human knowledge of reality is contingent and always embedded in worlds mediated by and constituted by meaning; (2) theology is necessarily

<sup>201</sup> John Baldovin, Book Review of *The Sacraments*, *Theological Studies*, June, 2002, Vol.63(2), 419.

<sup>202</sup> Glenn P. Ambrose, *The Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet: Overcoming Onto-Theology with Sacramental Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 6.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Power, *Sacrament*, 307-308.

<sup>204</sup> Kenan B. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), 164.

hermeneutical, involving the theologian in a circle (or spiral) of questions, answers, and further questions; it is not to be a closed system; and, most crucially, (3) the presence of the divine in history is a presence as absence, a truth revealed paradigmatically on the cross, and the key to a eucharistic eschatology.<sup>205</sup>

While Chauvet's work "represents the most thoroughgoing criticism of metaphysical accounts of sacramental theology,"<sup>206</sup> his main contributions are actually found in Lonergan's thought.

Chauvet's "massive contribution to contemporary sacramental theology" has some problems that "call for clarifications and further development."<sup>207</sup>

#### 2.4.1.3. Criticisms: Weaknesses

Regarding critiques of Chauvet, first, the "trenchant"<sup>208</sup> critique by Bernard Blankenhorn of Chauvet was mentioned and evaluated above.<sup>209</sup>

Mudd criticizes Chauvet's two key methodological problems: his "misreading of Thomas' theory of knowing" and an "empiricist understanding of causality that both prejudices Chauvet's reading of Thomas on sacramental causality and influences his notion of the symbolic speech-act as 'revealer/operator.'"<sup>210</sup> First, Chauvet "imposes the problem of bridging subject and object on Thomas," thereby imagining Thomas himself had an 'instrumentalist' notion of language which creates an idolatrous set of concepts about God.<sup>211</sup> In doing so, Chauvet has misunderstood the nature of true judgments, which Mudd explains through the work of Lonergan. Chauvet by contrast proposes a symbolic notion of language as the place of encounter with being, implicating the subject. In doing so, however, he creates a false dichotomy between the metaphysical and the symbolic.

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<sup>205</sup> Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning*, 37.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>208</sup> Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning*, 33.

<sup>209</sup> In section in 2.1.2.1.3. Bernard Blankenhorn, "Instrumental Causality in the Sacraments," *Nova et Vetera* 4, no. 2 (2006): 255-94. Blankenhorn argues that since causal language is found in Scripture and soteriology, it is fitting for sacramental theology.

<sup>210</sup> Mudd, 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Mudd considers Chauvet's replacement of 'sacraments-as-causes' with 'sacraments-as-revealer/operators' merely cosmetic: citing Raymond Moloney, Mudd asks, "is this not efficient causality under another name?"<sup>212</sup> Mudd notes that Chauvet's Heideggerian premises need refinement in order to work in Christian theology. While dismissing Thomistic causality for a Heideggerian notion of language and being, Chauvet has not clarified a doctrine of creation which might distinguish his thought from Heidegger's atheism or taking being simply as a given without a creator.<sup>213</sup> Since Chauvet understands any certain knowledge or judgments as examples of a domineering 'rage to know': the desire to know is inherently sinful, since it is always a subtle attempt at control. Nonetheless, Chauvet himself declares several judgments: he thus risks contradicting his own warnings against creating a 'logic of the Same.' Furthermore, Mudd is critical of Chauvet's attempt to transpose the traditional Eucharistic doctrine of the Real Presence into the Heideggerian category of '*ad-esse*.'<sup>214</sup>

While perhaps 'ultimately pastoral' in its orientation, a major (if not its chief) shortcoming of Chauvet's proposal is its complexity, the corollary of its interdisciplinary nature. Ambrose acknowledges that Chauvet's wide range of sources makes study of his thought "a daunting task," as Aquinas, Heidegger or Lacan "are by themselves hard enough to grasp, and brought together they can be very disorientating."<sup>215</sup> Key elements of Chauvet's paradigm (such as symbolic exchange, mourning, anti-sacrifice, and ethical obligation) are hidden or only suggested by the text of the Eucharistic prayer. After all, "few have mourned consciously over the loss of an imaginary self-presence.... It would seem that the faithful would have to undergo a particular kind of psychoanalysis.... Then one may wonder about the risk of Eucharist becoming

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 32. Cf. Raymond Moloney, review, "*Symbol and Sacrament*," Milltown Studies 38 (Autumn 1996): 148.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Mudd, 117-120.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Mudd, 183.

<sup>215</sup> Glenn P. Ambrose, *The Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet: Overcoming Onto-Theology with Sacramental Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 6. Hereafter *TLMC*.

merely a ‘transitional object’ akin to a pacifier that helps us accept the presence of the absence of Jesus Christ.”<sup>216</sup> Chauvet’s simpler claim that the liturgy “sends all Christians back to their own responsibility to take charge of history in his name” needs some pastoral elaboration to be brought to most people’s attention.<sup>217</sup> Thus, even if correct and fruitful, Chauvet’s thought “will take some effort” to become understandable to popular piety.<sup>218</sup>

While Chauvet embraces philosophy’s ‘linguistic turn,’ Daniel Pilario points out and cautions against Chauvet’s seeming naïveté regarding the ‘innocence’ of language.<sup>219</sup> Without some kind of critical filter, even gift-language can be manipulated toward political or coercive ends. There is no realm of ‘purely economic’ or ‘purely symbolic’ exchange; they are inevitably intermingled. Thus “Any framework, such as Chauvet’s, which posits a clear-cut distinction between the economic and the symbolic runs the risk of reading manipulative power into the divine all-gratuitous action ... (especially when this divine all-gratuitousness is mediated by such a precarious institution as the church).”<sup>220</sup> Vincent J. Miller poses a similar objection regarding a posture of *Gelassenheit* vis-à-vis God, who remains necessarily mediated through the symbols representing God: “In order for *Gelassenheit* to function here, one would have to assume that the symbolic mediation in human culture is as unsullied as God’s mystical presence in the soul. This is clearly not the case.”<sup>221</sup>

Gerard Moore states that Chauvet’s “departure from metaphysics as a central point of sacramental theology.... has not been universally embraced”; furthermore, “Chauvet’s thinking

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<sup>216</sup> Ambrose, *TLMC*, 81-82.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Chauvet, *SS*, 261.

<sup>218</sup> Ambrose, *TLMC*, 192.

<sup>219</sup> Daniel Franklin Pilario, “‘Gift-Exchange’ in Sacramentology: A Critical Assessment from the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu,” in Lieven Boeve and L. Leijssen, eds., *Contemporary Sacramental Contours of a God Incarnate: Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 97. Cf. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 37.

<sup>220</sup> Daniel Franklin Pilario, “‘Gift-Exchange’ in Sacramentology,” 98.

<sup>221</sup> Vincent J. Miller, “An Abyss at the Heart of Mediation: Louis-Marie Chauvet’s Fundamental Theology of Sacramentality,” *Horizons* 24, no. 2 (September 1, 1997): 240.

on symbolic exchange has not been particularly convincing.”<sup>222</sup> Sebastian Madathummuriyil questions whether Chauvet’s “fundamental assumption that every gift obligates a return-gift” can be reconciled with ‘gratuitousness’ and ‘graciousness’ as he intends.<sup>223</sup>

#### 2.4.1.4. Chauvet’s Contributions to Sacramental Theology

Chauvet’s thought makes several contributions to sacramental theology: 1) developing an existential approach; which 2) makes personal recognition central to the sacraments; thereby 3) changing the basis of ‘efficacy.’ His work also: 4) accounts for philosophy’s ‘linguistic turn’; 5) employs the more accessible symbol of ‘gift’; 6) explores a non-sacrificial understanding of Eucharist; and 7) corrects idolatrous notions of the Eucharist. Lastly, 8) his work accomplishes some of the liturgical reform for which Vatican II called.

##### 2.4.1.4.1. Development of Existentialist/Personalist Approach to Sacraments

In advancing the work of Rahner and Schillebeeckx, Chauvet has provided an invaluable contribution to sacramental theology.<sup>224</sup> He brings sacramental theology out of its traditionally metaphysical emphasis further into a personalist or relational mode. Its benefits are simple, immediate, and profound. Chauvet’s primary concern with Christian *subjects* (as such) provides the proper fulcrum to transpose Eucharistic theology to a relational approach. To the extent metaphysical language of causality served the good of theological understanding, such language is badly outdated and pastorally ineffective. Just as no one speaks of their loving relationships in

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<sup>222</sup> Gerard Moore, Review of Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill, *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God: Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet*, *Pacifica* 24 (February 2011), 119.

<sup>223</sup> Sebastian Madathummuriyil, *Sacrament as Gift: A Pneumatological and Phenomenological Approach*, *Studies in Liturgy*, Vol. XXV (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 296.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* [*Schriften zur Theologie*, 1954-1984], 23 volumes (New York: Crossroads, 1960-1992). In particular, “The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” and “The Word and the Eucharist,” Vol. 4: *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (1966); “What is A Sacrament?” and “Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event,” Vol. 14: *Ecclesiology: Questions in the Church, The Church in the World* (1974); “On the Theology of Worship,” Vol. 19: *Faith and Ministry*, trans. Edward Quinn (1983). Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*: trans. from the Dutch (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963). Also by Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, trans. from the Dutch (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968).

terms of metaphysical causality, so exclusive use of causality for sacramental theology and grace is woefully inadequate.

Chauvet's recognition of both God and humans as subjects already reframes discourse on grace, since God fundamentally relates to human beings as subjects, not merely passive recipients of an 'objective' commodity. The heart of sacramental theology is recognition of persons, neither even exchange of gifts *per se* (even under nomenclature of merit, grace, etc.). Chauvet's approach injects some much-needed vitality, personalism, and intersubjectivity into sacramental theology. A greater importance on ethics naturally emerges which entails far more for Christian discipleship than simplistic notions of 'not committing mortal sin.' Chauvet moves sacramental -- and here, Eucharistic -- theology into a relational, personal set of categories, which I would consider the proper basis and conclusion of Eucharistic theology: how the Eucharist is meant to shape our relationships which, as Chauvet states, are the 'womb' of individual subjects and, in the Church, of Christian subjects.

Chauvet's recognition of the human being as subject creates genuine room for meaningful human freedom, action, and reciprocity. Rather than 'cooperating with causes' in a pseudo-mechanical manner (with moral and prayer life separate and arbitrary in relation to the sacramental life), Chauvet's subjects, endowed with gifts within the more-visibly-*ecclesial* context, act with responsibility and freedom.

#### 2.4.1.4.2. Central Place of Personal Recognition

Regarding mission into the world, the 'liturgy of the neighbor' of which Chauvet speaks (borrowing Lévinas -- and itself deserving of greater development in liturgical study) is itself, first and foremost, a matter of discovery and recognition: recognizing the other 'as such'; recognizing the other's dignity; recognizing the other's needs and desires -- all so that true

charity may be shown them. Recognizing the stranger (cf. Mt. 25:31-46) and neighbor (cf. Rich man and Lazarus: Lk. 16:xx) in need overflows naturally from recognition of both the absence of the unmediated presence of God and the obligation for return-gift. This unity of the sacramental/liturgical and ethical (or moral) life in Chauvet's thought deserves greater attention.

#### 2.4.1.4.3. Changing the Basis of 'Sacramental Efficacy'

Not least among the reasons Chauvet's transposition to existential categories is important is the matter of sacramental efficacy. What truly changes people, what changes people's lives, has very little to do with 'instrumental causes' -- it has to do with knowing oneself as beloved. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:16). Neither abstract (i.e., metaphysical) nor practical truth but *existential* truth -- expressed and accepted personally: 'God loves me, us' -- *this* transforms lives. This point is so obvious and yet so often omitted by traditional sacramental theology -- which speaks instead of merit, grace, and metaphysical participation.

A sacramental language that speaks in personalist/existential terms does better justice to the realities they describe. To appreciate the Eucharist, not as a 'localized arrival' of the divine presence, but more clearly as the gracious gift of Godself with an ethical mandate toward the broader human community, celebrates the love that 'impels us' (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14) to bring God's love to the world, as best we are able.

#### 2.4.1.4.4. Incorporation of 'the Linguistic Turn' into Sacramental Theology

An incorporation of philosophy's 'linguistic turn' into theology has been long overdue; Chauvet helps sacramental theology catch up to contemporary philosophy. Chauvet's incorporation of insights across various sciences contrasts favorably with anti-modernist approaches which dismiss critiques of onto-theology, causality, and sacrifice, all of which carry great importance for Eucharistic theology. Analogues from psychoanalysis, sociology, or

linguistic philosophy neither weaken nor change the theological basis for the sacraments, but make them more intelligible for an educated laity to maintain a Christian worldview.

#### 2.4.1.4.5. Gift Paradigm

The symbolic image of ‘gift’ fits Eucharistic theology very well. This universal symbol is accessible to anyone (including children), and naturally associates sacraments with gratitude and appreciation. On an academic level, the ethical and sacramental ‘lives’ stand in closer unity under the theme of gift than under separate discussions of causes, substances, transubstantiation, sacrifice, or merit. Not least, a ‘gift’ model of the sacraments opens a way to sidestep the problematic language of ‘sacrifice’ which can distort understandings of the Eucharist, the meaning of Christ’s death, and inserts violence into intra-trinitarian relations.<sup>225</sup>

Also, the contrast between market and gift exchange provide a helpful paradigm that exposes a ‘bargaining’ or ‘contractual’ attitude we can have with God, wherein we expect a certain return on our ‘investment’ in ascetical practice, prayer, and discipleship. Recognition of God as an ever-gracious giver of gifts -- rather than business partner -- expresses more faithfully a God ‘who is never outdone in generosity,’ who is loved rather than simply feared.

#### 2.4.1.4.6. Exploration of Eucharistic Sacrifice in Light of Critique

Because of the central role of sacrifice in soteriology and Eucharistic theology, and the increasing critique of it in recent decades, every Eucharistic theology must deal with the theme of sacrifice. At the least, the meaning of sacrifice is no longer self-evident or self-explanatory in a scientific age. The more insistently Church teaching emphasizes the importance of sacrifice without defining or explaining it, the more evident the need for a new theological paradigm or

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<sup>225</sup> Under the theme of gift, violence will still be accounted for, but later on, only under sinful human agency.



motif.<sup>226</sup> Chauvet's use of 'gift' as the primary analogue for grace and the sacraments provides this function, particularly as the notion of gift is thoroughly biblical and philosophically meaningful. Certainly, the Church needs to speak of asceticism, renunciation, choice of 'one thing necessary,' and the imitation of Christ. Equivocal use of 'sacrifice' for these -- as well as pagan and Jewish sacrifices, 'spiritual sacrifices,' and Christ's self-offering on Calvary -- only obfuscates the intended reality. A phenomenology of givenness -- as proposed by Jean-Luc Marion in our next chapter -- can help develop this theme, as well as remove the notion of violence from intra-Trinitarian relations.

#### 2.4.1.4.7. *Corrective Measures Against Idolatrous Notions of Eucharist*

Chauvet's thought unmask some subtle tendencies toward idolatry that Eucharistic piety can have. First, insistence on an ever-unfinished mode of questioning, a preference for symbols rather than concepts, and a posture of *Gelassenheit* provide safeguards (albeit, imperfect) against a 'logic of the Same' which effectively 'comprehends' the Eucharist, thereby 'domesticates' it, removing the morally scandalous claims God makes upon us through the Eucharist.

Secondly, understanding the liturgy of the Eucharist as a celebratory *action* of grateful remembrance, leading to recognition of the gift's Giver and His claims upon us, helps name and expose another idolatrous tendency, of Eucharistic adoration. When celebrated as an instance of the divine presence and divorced from its moral claims upon us, the Eucharist becomes a mere product of what a wonder-working God can do, to the amazement of a crowd (audience of spectators?).<sup>227</sup> Certainly, an evocation of wonder towards God is beneficial. Yes, we affirm a change of substance in the bread and wine occurs: but how does such a fact effect any greater

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<sup>226</sup> In its 61 paragraphs, the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de eucharistia* uses 'sacrifice' or 'sacrificial' 68 times; 16 times in paragraph 12 alone. It gives no definition for either term.

<sup>227</sup> This is a sort of 'straw man' depiction of traditional piety regarding the Eucharist, but reflects a simplified understanding common to many people's experience.

unity among the faithful, the true *res* of the sacrament? If understood, however, as recollection and recognition of the loving gift, Giver, and the claims the gift makes upon us, the celebration is reception of gift and task, to offer gratefully a ‘return-gift’ in the context of one’s own life. Such an understanding leads more directly to changed values, lives, and actions: in a word, conversion.

#### 2.4.1.4.8. Recapping Vatican II’s Liturgical Reform

Another credit to Chauvet’s project is how it advances points of liturgical reform (broadly conceived) called for by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>228</sup> Among these are its clearer relation of the liturgy to apostolic work (through ‘anti-sacrifice’ and ‘liturgy of the neighbor’: cf. SC 9-10). Chauvet’s theology ponders the mysteries of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, expressing more fully the entire paschal mystery and not simply Jesus’ death (SC 5). As the liturgical assembly is for Chauvet the womb of individual Christians, his thought clarifies the value of the presence of Christ in the assembly-as-such (SC 7). While Chauvet did not take up linguistic philosophy in order to reflect the changes of Vatican II, certainly a basic understanding of linguistic philosophy makes the importance of the liturgy as dialogue (SC 11, 14) and vernacular for liturgical language especially clear (SC 36, 54). Likewise, an appreciation of the value of symbol for communication helps explain the uniqueness of the Precious Blood (SC 55). Chauvet’s sacramental understanding of the Church vis-à-vis the world (LG 1, 9) helps express its sense of mission (LG 8, 48). Not least of all, Chauvet’s existential approach to the sacraments lends emphasis to the universal call to holiness (LG 7,11,33).

#### 2.4.2. Unexplored Possibilities/Corollaries

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<sup>228</sup> These shifts are mentioned above in the Introduction, Section 1.1.2.

As a ‘fundamental theology of sacramentality,’ Chauvet’s thought opens new possibilities for fruitful theological investigation. Below are some of these possibilities, with greater/special emphasis on those pertaining to a relational approach to the Eucharist.

#### 2.4.2.1. *Birth of Christian Subjects and the Sacraments of Initiation*

Especially as Chauvet’s thought concerns the formation of Christian subjects, an important expansion of this thought would concern the sacraments of initiation in greater detail, especially Baptism and Confirmation, but also the relation of these to the Eucharist.

While Chauvet’s thought emphasizes the social nature of Christian subjectivity, how might it speak of sacramental character? Even if the fruits of Baptism would not thrive for an isolated individual as they would among an active Christian community, how might the notion of sacramental character be transposed into Chauvet’s thought? As a matter of subjectivity rather than ‘essence,’ in what sense is Baptism or Confirmation permanent, and in what sense does Christian subjectivity or identity never acquire a ‘fixed’ status before death?

#### 2.4.2.2. *The Purpose of Alliances: Recognition of Subjects*

One of Chauvet’s most valuable contributions is how he connects gift exchange with the formation of alliances and the recognition of subjects. Full recognition of subjects *as such* -- of Jesus as Son of God, of one’s neighbor (cf. Mt. 25:31-46; Lk. Good Samaritan and Rich/Lazarus), of ‘the Body [of Christ]’ in one’s neighbor (cf. 1 Cor. 10) -- is a fundamental biblical and eucharistic theme which merits far greater emphasis. Pastorally, it is especially important amid our postmodern culture (‘virtual reality’) of endemic alienation, disenfranchisement, and loneliness. In the context of symbolic exchange, gift-giving introduces the full personhood of the other, for both giver and recipient. Symbolic exchange might be

considered most fundamentally as a process of recognition: of giver, gift, and to whom return-gift should be given.

Moreover, we learn that alliances among subjects are ‘kept alive’ by *ongoing* exchange, not a single acquisition of ‘membership’ or an accumulation of merit. The living element of action within alliances (such as the Church) receives the greater emphasis it deserves, which also fosters a richer relation between the sacraments and ethics.

#### 2.4.2.3. *Recognition of Subjects and Liturgy of the Neighbor*

Why is there not a Christian ‘liturgy of the neighbor,’ of encountering the other in charity? Do not all ‘others’ deserve genuine and meaningful recognition, by way of acknowledgment and appreciation -- if simply symbolically, and in our imagination -- simply as a matter of justice? Amid a totalizing consumerist ideology and culture that considers others as means to selfish ends, would not an actual ‘liturgy of the neighbor’ -- odd as that sounds -- provide a fundamentally important corrective? Amid the contemporary ‘hyper-reality’ (Baudrillard) which apparently heightens feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression, would people not benefit from assembling in the ‘real world’ of face-to-face recognition and interaction? Chauvet’s fundamental theology of sacramentality, with its implicit emphasis on interpersonal recognition, can help awaken the Church to the needs of others -- and ourselves -- through development of a concrete ‘liturgy of the neighbor’ according to scriptural warrant and the demands of justice. Such a ritual would provide a stronger and clearer sense of mission and of connection between liturgy and life than what typically concludes the liturgy of the Eucharist (‘The mass is ended, go in peace’).

#### 2.4.2.4. *Embodied/Incarnate Nature of the Sacraments*

While Chauvet touched upon the ‘mediation of the body’ in various forms (cosmic, social, physical), relatively little was said concerning the embodied nature of the sacraments themselves, and the embodied nature of the Eucharistic assembly. What could it mean that the sacraments (and especially the Eucharist) are embodied -- or *incarnate* -- mediations? Especially in light of the linguistic philosophy undergirding Chauvet’s fundamental theology of sacramentality, what kind of gift is given in the ‘embodied word’ of the Eucharist?

#### 2.4.2.5. *The Gift of Giving One’s Life*

The gift of the Eucharist is certainly most unique: study of its ‘nature’ (Christ’s Body and Blood, soul and divinity) has occupied theologians for millennia. Such a traditional approach, concerned with metaphysical questions of ‘what the Eucharist is’ as an object, independent of subjective perceptions, beliefs, or even unbelief. All this is a most important and worthwhile effort. Too often overlooked, however, is the *action* symbolized (or ‘re-presented’) in the institution narrative, itself a fundamental element of the Eucharist and part of its ‘nature’ as gift. Our relational approach to the Eucharist proposed here calls attention to this aspect of the Eucharistic gift: the gift Jesus made ‘of giving’ *per se*, and ‘of giving one’s life.’

Understandably, Chauvet’s model of symbolic gift exchange employs examples of ‘ready-at-hand’ gifts. We have also just mentioned (and suggested for further development) the gift of recognition that comes about from the exchange of gifts and formation of alliances. Gifts are often given as precisely as expressions of love the giver has for the recipient. They reveal love which may be otherwise hidden from recognition; one of the joys of life is such expression-and-recognition of love. We do not necessarily need the Eucharist to experience or discover this, but this aspect is certainly present in the Eucharist. Something still deeper remains our aim.

In the Eucharist we are shown -- and given -- the gift *of giving* one's life ("Having loved his own who were in the world, [Jesus] loved them to the end" -- Jn. 13:1b). The Eucharist first celebrates and re-presents Jesus' miraculous gift of His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Yet these gifts are given with a further mandate: "Do this in memory of me." On an 'initial' level of meaning, these words concern the gift of the ritual, which is celebrated in remembrance of Christ.

On a deeper level, however, these words recalled and celebrated in the liturgy teach that we too -- especially as members of His ecclesial Body -- are called to 'full conscious active participation' in the mystery of loving, as deliberate agents and stewards of our lives. We too are capable of imitating Jesus' loving gift, 'doing' as Jesus 'did' in the giving of His Body and Blood. We are *made* capable of *and called to* the 'greater love' (cf. Jn. 15) of even laying down one's life for others. We are enabled by Jesus' own gift of Himself to us to likewise give of our own lives to those around us.

We are not merely to receive an item Jesus gives his disciples, but to love with the very same love -- God's love. We are freed to give even of our own body and blood, in a metaphorical if not literal sense, as an expression of love in the world. This is the gift 'of giving one's life,' another gift we receive in the Eucharist. If recognized and accepted as a personal call, our task in life becomes deciding to whom, for whom, how, when, and in what form that gift will be given.

Furthermore, reception of the gift 'of giving one's life' is proven (or 'veri-fied') over the course of one's life, through gift of one's life for others. The exchange of our lives in mutual service as members of the Body of Christ is the verified 'life blood' of the Christian community. At each liturgy we hear this call, imagine this possibility of our own full participation in it. If we

never think of it or hear it proposed to us personally, we will never imagine it, and hence unlikely live it. So the liturgical manifestation of the ‘gift of giving one’s life’ is not accidental to its celebration: it demonstrates something essential to the call-within-the-gift: how self-gift calls for ‘concrete’ (or ‘phenomenal’) expression.

#### 2.4.2.6. *Jesus Changes the Symbols -- Therefore the Identities of Disciples*

Given Chauvet’s understanding of how language and symbol shape identity, one aspect of the Eucharist left unexplored is the *change in symbolic meaning* Jesus effects for both the bread and wine, from being Passover symbols to referring to himself. Since language and symbolic world shape identity -- especially in a context of initiation of subjects -- the fact that Jesus changed the meaning of the Passover symbols to refer to himself already reshapes the *identity* of his disciples. While these dynamics are not work in the same precise way for contemporary Christian disciples, it still speaks to an aspect of initiation which is important for understanding Chauvet’s symbolic world.

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The thought of Louis-Marie Chauvet has carved a foundation both philosophical (linguistic, interdisciplinary, existential) and theological (liturgical, scriptural, ethical) to conceive of the liturgy of the Eucharist according to a relational approach, through the theme of gift. Our concern has been (and will continue to be) less ‘what’ the Eucharist ‘is’ metaphysically and more about how the Eucharist reveals and is meant to impact various relationships. While Chauvet’s use of symbolic gift exchange opened a wealth of resources through which to understand these relationships and the subjects involved, this gift is able to ‘keep on giving,’ through the writings of Jean-Luc Marion on the phenomenology of givenness. Our next chapter

surveys Marion's thought for themes related to givenness and the Eucharist that will build on our foundation, developing further our relational approach to the Eucharist.



### **III. Marion: A Thinker of ‘Givenness’**

#### **3.1. Marion on the Eucharist**

##### ***3.1.1. God’s Eucharistic ‘Hermeneutic’***

- 3.1.1.1. ‘Hermeneutic’ of God’s Self-Giving
- 3.1.1.2. Giving of Kenotic Loving
- 3.1.1.3. Eucharist as Epitome and Paradigm of Gift

##### ***3.1.2. The Celebrating Community***

##### ***3.1.3. Reception of the Gift: Transformation of the Community***

- 3.1.3.1. Eucharist, Christ’s Disappearance, and Entry into ‘Trinitarian Play’
- 3.1.3.2. Recasting the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- 3.1.3.3. The Gift of the Real Presence Amid Relationships
- 3.1.3.4. Doctrine of Transubstantiation

##### ***3.1.4. Related Theological Themes in Marion***

- 3.1.4.1. Idols and Icons: Theological Use
- 3.1.4.2. Charity: Becoming the Gift
- 3.1.4.3. Sacraments: Visible Signs of Invisible Grace

#### **3.2. Givenness and the Self: Saturated Phenomena and the Erotic Reduction**

##### ***3.2.1. Phenomenological Reduction to Givenness***

##### ***3.2.2. ‘Saturated Phenomena’***

##### ***3.2.3. Critique of the Subject: Anamorphosis and L’adonné***

##### ***3.2.4. Encounter Between L’adonnés: The ‘Erotic Reduction’***

- 3.2.4.1. ‘What’s the Use?’: Experience of Vanity
- 3.2.4.2. ‘Does anybody out there love me?’: Dependence on ‘From Elsewhere’
- 3.2.4.3. ‘Can I love first?’: Decision to Become a Lover

##### ***3.2.5. Encounter of the Desire of L’adonné with God***

- 3.2.5.1. Qualifying Desire
- 3.2.5.2. Desire for God: Gift of Being Drawn in Love
- 3.2.5.3. Reading Augustine’s *Confessions* on Desire

#### **3.3. Critical Reception of Marion’s Contributions**

##### ***3.3.1. Marion’s Eucharistic Theology***

- 3.3.1.1. Contributions
- 3.3.1.2. Critiques

##### ***3.3.2. Others’ Critiques***

- 3.3.2.1. Impact
- 3.3.2.2. Strengths
- 3.3.2.3. Weaknesses

#### **3.4. Proposals**

##### ***3.4.1. Eucharist’s Context: Covenant Relationship and Obligation***

##### ***3.4.2. Receiving the Eucharist by Becoming Gift***

- 3.4.2.1. Eucharistic Anamorphosis: From Dative to ‘Genitive’ Self
- 3.4.2.2. Recognition by Blessing
- 3.4.2.3. Jesus’ Command to Love ‘First’ and Kenotically
- 3.4.2.4. Reception by Decision to Love

##### ***3.4.3. Eucharist as God’s Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire***

##### ***3.4.4. Liturgy of the Eucharist as Proclamation of Kenotic Love***

##### ***3.4.5. Summary Assessment of Marion’s Gifts***

### **III. Marion: A Thinker of ‘Givenness’**

*[T]he Eucharist and the confession of faith.... are only intelligible in terms of the gift.*

*-- Jean-Luc Marion<sup>229</sup>*

I am exploring a relational model for understanding the Eucharist, how it is meant to transform our relationships. Beginning with Chauvet, we have set this model within a liturgical theology aware of both the linguistic turn and the relations which symbolic gift exchange creates. More so than traditional sacramental theology, these notions of language and symbolic exchange describe fittingly the sacramental mediation of grace: the bestowal and strengthening of Christian identity by means of a divine gift -- in particular, the Eucharist. To specify further the relational nature of the Eucharist we now turn to Jean-Luc Marion, whose thought is “Eucharistic in its very core.”<sup>230</sup> As one who discusses both theological grace and postmodern philosophy, Marion is well qualified to assist appropriating Eucharistic doctrine into a contemporary idiom. Some aspects of Marion’s thought -- whether theological or philosophical -- will be appropriated directly (Eucharistic hermeneutic; etc.) and others developed, either beyond Marion’s direct statements (‘trinitarian play,’ blessing, Institution Narrative, ‘anamorphosis’) or differing from his own ideas (to speak of relationships, development/pedagogy). For this dissertation, Marion’s central contribution will be to use his insight into the recognition of giver, gift, and givee for the liturgical action of *blessing*, as the crucial initial step in full reception of the eucharistic gift and participation in eucharistic giving. As much as Marion’s writings on the Eucharist offer

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<sup>229</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, Second Edition, trans. Thomas A. Carlson with a foreword by David Tracy and a new preface by Jean-Luc Marion, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), xxvi. Hereafter *GWB*.

<sup>230</sup> Philipp Wolfram Rosemann, “Postmodern Philosophy and J.-L. Marion’s Eucharistic Realism,” *The Mystery of Faith: Reflections on the Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, eds. James McEvoy and Maurice Hogan, 231. Cf. Sebastian Madathummuriyil, *Sacrament as Gift: A Pneumatological and Phenomenal Approach*, Studies in Liturgy XXV (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 243.

contributions, so his observations concerning the encounter of God with human beings contribute immensely to the project at hand.

Jean-Luc Marion (b. 1946) earned degrees in philosophy from the Université Paris-Sorbonne in 1974 (*Doctorat du IIIe cycle*) and 1980 (*Doctorat d'Etat*).<sup>231</sup> Drawing upon an eclectic set of sources, Marion cites as “as close teachers Beaufret, Derrida, but also Althusser; as masters, Alquié and Lévinas, but also Gilson, Daniélou, and H.U. von Balthasar; and, as horizon, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.”<sup>232</sup> Completing his studies shortly after Vatican II, he was in charge of the theological journal *Résurrection* from 1968 to 1973, and in 1974 became co-editor of the Francophone version of *Communio* at the behest of Hans Urs von Balthasar.<sup>233</sup> Marion had his dissertation *Sur l'ontologie grise de Descartes* published in 1975, the first of several books on Descartes; as a Cartesian scholar he received the *Grand Prix de Philosophie de l'Académie Française* in 1992.<sup>234</sup>

Marion's scholarly writing is prodigious in its volume, depth, and consistency. Two of his prominent concerns are the phenomenological possibility of revelation and how theology might ‘overcome’ metaphysics. *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies* engaged Heidegger, Nietzsche, Hölderlin, Dionysius the Areopagite, Lévinas, and Derrida.<sup>235</sup> The 1982 publication

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<sup>231</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *The Rigor of Things: Conversations with Dan Arbib*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, foreword by David Tracy (Bronx, New York: Fordham, 2017), 30. Hereafter *RT*. Cf. Biography on University of Chicago website, <http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/faculty/marion.html>, accessed May 11, 2018.

<sup>232</sup> Marion, *GWB*, xxi.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Marion, *RT*, especially 20-29. Marion says that while producing *Résurrection*, “we ‘stuffed’ ourselves with theology.... This is how I added to the philosophical training I had received ... an equally intense theological training,” 21.

<sup>234</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Sur l'ontologie grise de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1975). English edition forthcoming as Jean-Luc Marion, *Descartes' Grey Ontology: Cartesian Science and Aristotelian Thought in the Regulae*, trans. unspecified ( : St. Augustine's Press, 2018). Hereafter *DGO*. Cf. Graham Ward, “Introducing Jean-Luc Marion,” *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (July/August 1995), 318.

<sup>235</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *L'idole et la distance: cinq études* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1977); *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). Hereafter *ID*.

of *God Without Being: Hors-texte* explored Heidegger's critique of onto-theo-logy, hermeneutics, and Eucharistic theology.<sup>236</sup>

Considering his work a development of the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Lévinas, Marion developed his 'phenomenology of givenness' in the trilogy *Reduction and Givenness, Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, and *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*.<sup>237</sup> Meanwhile, he also sustained a dialogue on 'the problem of the gift' with Derrida.<sup>238</sup> While not directly theological, Marion's focus on the phenomenology of givenness and the 'mere possibility' of revelation is important for our project because it opens rich new perspectives through which the Eucharistic gift may be understood.

Elected an *immortel* of the Académie Française in 2008, Marion is currently the Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Professor of Catholic Studies and Professor of the Philosophy of Religions and Theology, Professor in the Committee on Social Thought and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and Dominique Dubarle Chair of Philosophy and Theology at the Institut Catholique de Paris. Marion's writings include what has been traditionally divided into philosophy and theology, and this has generated plenty of controversy in philosophical circles. While Marion claims repeatedly (if not vehemently) his 'pure phenomenology' of givenness remains within the rational limits of

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<sup>236</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être: hors-texte*, Rev. ed. (Paris : Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1982); English edition *GWB* cited above.

<sup>237</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998). *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). Hereafter *BG*. *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). Hereafter *IE*.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. "On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, Moderated by Richard Kearney," in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 54-78.

philosophy, several critics disagree. (Their critiques will be covered in section 3.3 below.)

Briefly, they accuse Marion of ‘smuggling’ theological themes into philosophy.<sup>239</sup>

Within our liturgical theology project such debates (while noted) are not as problematic. After surveying Marion’s writings on the Eucharist, Marion’s philosophical contributions are employed here to help describe in philosophical terms certain relational aspects of the Eucharist, *without reducing* the Eucharist to such terms. In the spirit of ‘giving reason for one’s hope’ (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15), Marion’s thought is included as a supplemental set of ideas to describe an underlying logic of the Eucharist.<sup>240</sup> Marion’s philosophy thus provides a helpful addition to Chauvet’s ‘symbolic exchange’ (which also explains aspects of the Eucharist in relational terms). Admittedly, this reverses the direction of Marion’s philosophical efforts, but we aim toward a different (namely, theological) purpose. Meanwhile, Marion’s own theological writings on the Eucharist will also protect against a reduction of the Eucharist to philosophy.

Across his career Marion revisits and develops earlier themes several times. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to trace, for instance, the full development of ‘the saturated phenomenon’ through its Kantian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian categories into what becomes ‘the erotic reduction,’ a transition into existential/interpersonal concerns and questions. For brevity’s sake Marion’s later writings will be given precedence as representative of his developed thought.

This chapter will begin with an overview of Marion’s writings on the Eucharist (‘the mystery of charity’), liturgy, and sacraments (3.1). Marion’s ‘phenomenology of givenness’

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éditions de l’Éclat, 1991). In English: Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” in Dominique Janicaud, et al., *Phenomenology and the ‘Theological Turn’: The French Debate*, trans. Bernard G. Prusak (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2000), 16-103. Hereafter *P&TT*.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “Faith and Reason,” in *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (Bronx, New York: Fordham, 2017), 3-12.

(3.2) offers concepts (saturated phenomena, idols/icons, and on the self) which can be adopted and developed to clarify dynamics of the Eucharistic gift. After a review of Marion's critical reception (3.3), I propose some developments of Marion's thought (3.4) for incorporation into a relational Eucharistic theology.

### **3.1. Marion on the Eucharist**

While *The Idol and Distance* (French edition 1977) included some theological investigation, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte* (1<sup>st</sup> French edition in 1982) contained Marion's first extended treatment of Eucharistic theology. His subsequent work on the phenomenology of givenness discussed matters potentially relating to the Eucharist (recasting the self as *l'adonné*, forgiveness, and sacrifice), but Marion left their fuller theological connections unexplored. Only with more recent essays and discussions have some of Marion's own understanding of these connections come to light.<sup>241</sup>

To summarize Marion on the Eucharist we begin with his basic principle for Eucharistic thought: the self-giving Incarnate Word sets the terms for any Eucharistic hermeneutic, which is exemplified by the Emmaus narrative (3.1.1). Its impact upon the celebrating community, which exists and acts in unity with its bishop, follows (3.1.2). Revelation teaches important lessons concerning proper reception of God's gift by the community (3.1.3.), namely through acceptance of Christ's loving mission, becoming Christ's active agents in the world. This also has

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<sup>241</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, ed. by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); in particular the essays "The Phenomenality of the Sacrament" (102-115); "The Recognition of the Gift" (125-135); and "They Recognized Him and Became Invisible to Them" (136-143).

corollaries for particular Eucharistic topics (real presence, transubstantiation). Marion's discussion of various theological themes (3.1.4.) conclude the section.<sup>242</sup>

### **3.1.1. God's Eucharistic 'Hermeneutic'**

For Marion the Eucharist, as 'the mystery of charity,' must be allowed to give itself and interpret itself 'from the point of view of the Word.'<sup>243</sup> To 'think the Eucharist' requires "a radical conceptual self-critique" because insufficient ideas lead to idolatry; thus close attention to hermeneutics is necessary.<sup>244</sup> Marion demands that the gift of the Eucharist be allowed to interpret itself by giving itself: "A gift, and this one above all, does not require first that one explain it, but indeed that one receive it."<sup>245</sup> Recipients would learn 'Eucharist' by means of *the giving and receiving* more than by conceptual explanation.

Discussion of the Eucharist must begin from God's self-giving, which is *kenotic* self-giving love; furthermore it must be examined phenomenologically *as gift*. The way the Word-made-flesh gives himself in the Eucharist, the interpretation that the Word gives it, and the moment the disciples 'recognize' Jesus: these are the principal starting points. While hermeneutical concerns reflect Marion's attention to linguistic philosophy and proper 'language for divine things,' Marion is most concerned with maintaining the primacy of 'how the Eucharist interprets itself' over (or even against) the confines of human capacity to interpret the Eucharist.

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<sup>242</sup> While Marion also addresses theologically-related themes of sacrifice and forgiveness, his thoughts on these are best offered after an explanation of his phenomenology of givenness (3.2).

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Marion, *GWB*, 162.

<sup>244</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 163. In an essay on 'Christian Philosophy,' Marion corrects the tendency within hermeneutics toward subject-centeredness with an emphasis on the properly *heuristic* aspect of revelation which draws the self 'outward' toward God. Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, "'Christian Philosophy: Hermeneutic or Heuristic?," in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner and others (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2008), 66-79. Hereafter "'Christian Philosophy.'"

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

The radical gift of the Eucharist must itself set the terms by which it is understood; both the gift and its proper interpretation are ‘from elsewhere.’<sup>246</sup>

### 3.1.1.1. ‘Hermeneutic’ of God’s Self-Giving

As it is for Chauvet, the key scriptural text for Marion’s Eucharistic thought is the encounter between the Risen Jesus and two disciples journeying to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35).<sup>247</sup> The disciples fail initially to recognize the stranger who approaches them as the Risen Lord, but Christ “interpreted to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures” (Lk. 24:27). This interpretation provides a gift, revealing the divine plan of the crucified Messiah which, though foretold by the Old Covenant, was unforeseeable and radically new.<sup>248</sup> To use phenomenological terms, Marion says that Christ “delivers the proper significations and orders the intuitions according to the concepts missing up to this point.”<sup>249</sup> Even so it is not until Christ performs the *actions* of taking bread, blessing and breaking it, and giving it to them that he “was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread” (Lk. 24:35, cf. v. 31); this gesture gives the disciples the sign that gives meaning to all the intuitions and clues that had previously seemed “scattered and absurd.”<sup>250</sup> According to Marion a pattern of meaning emerges: from the text (the law, prophets, and psalms) to its hermeneutic (Jesus’ reinterpretation) to the community of

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 1-29. Hereafter *GR*.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “They Recognized Him and He Became Invisible to Them,” in *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 136-143. Hereafter the article “They Recognized Him,” the text *BIOTS*. Also cf. Marion, *GWB*, 146-152.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. “‘Christian Philosophy,’” 71.

<sup>249</sup> Marion, “They Recognized Him,” 140.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 141. Proposal of a ‘fourfold pattern’ found in the Institution Narratives and miraculous feeding stories as evidence of a ‘historical core’ to the celebration of the Eucharist was put forward in 1945 by Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, new edition with an introduction by Simon Jones (London: Bloomsbury, 2005); esp. 48-70. The presence of these actions within both the Emmaus narrative and Institution Narrative of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the assertion being made here, as historical criticism has called Dix’s original thesis into question. Paul F. Bradshaw, for one, contests Dix’s assertion, as it assumes all traditions arise from a single source when historical evidence indicates “New Testament Christianity was itself essentially pluriform in doctrine and practice.” Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7; cf. 6-8.



disciples, who recognize Jesus (as the one addressing them, and as risen from the dead), but this recognition emerges only with the gesture of the gift.

The central moment is when “the Word interprets [the Eucharist] in person.... at the point where he proffers the unspeakable speech, absolutely filial to the Father -- ‘taking bread, he gave thanks . . .’ (Lk. 24:30).”<sup>251</sup> This is an interpretation ‘of the Word by the Word’ because the Word “intervenes in person in the Eucharist (in person, because only then does he manifest and perform his filiation) to accomplish in this way the hermeneutic. The Eucharist alone completes the hermeneutic; the hermeneutic culminates in the Eucharist.”<sup>252</sup> Into the disciples’ ‘world’ of this-worldly hopes, disappointment, and sadness, *intervenes* and interrupts a *person* who embodies other-worldly gift. This gift -- revealed both *by* Christ alone and *as* Christ himself -- is known only because it is revealed divinely; for the purposes of understanding it, it belongs to the realm of theology, neither philosophy (alone), nor history, nor some other field of knowledge.

This re-orientation of the disciples’ frame of reference toward the gift-according-to-its-own-terms is fundamental to Marion’s entire *oeuvre*. In both his theological and philosophical writings, the gift -- *not* the recipient’s limits regarding intuition -- is the point of reference, the criterion, the new ‘center.’ A de-centering or de-subjectivization of the recipient occurs, changing the terms and nature of the encounter.

Implied in Marion’s interpretation is the importance of recipients’ *participation* in the liturgical celebration for ‘proper understanding’ of the Eucharist: not only through direct observation of the gestures and hearing its words but *accepting* its personal address, witnessing the self-abandoning giving (the prophetic acts of breaking bread and giving it away) and the declaration accompanying the gift’s ‘manifestation.’ The manifold gift of person-interpretation-

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<sup>251</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 150.

<sup>252</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 150.

gesture gives itself to be received *precisely* on its own terms; proper interpretation concludes in the giving and sharing of Christ's body and blood, the gift of his person. The *actions* of the Eucharistic celebration -- of taking, blessing, breaking, sharing, and declaring what the Word says the gifts are -- completes the hermeneutic of the Word.

### 3.1.1.2. Giving of Kenotic Loving

The total, other-worldly gift of God in Christ is the revelation 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). God's loving gift of himself, particularly in Christ and through the Eucharist, expresses visibly the true nature of love: self-emptying kenosis.

This gift of God's love for the world is expressed first and foremost through the gift of the Son of God, Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).<sup>253</sup> The Son is the gift of the Father, to whom the Son constantly refers his person, mission, and teaching.<sup>254</sup> For Marion a variety of words for love are synonymous: charity, *agape*, *eros*;<sup>255</sup> he explains these in terms of (self-)abandon and kenotic love. Furthermore, the term 'love' may be used univocally of God and human beings,<sup>256</sup> though there is the "infinite difference" that God "loves

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Marion, "The Recognition of the Gift," 129. This essay provides a summary of the logic of Christ as gift of the Father; 125-135.

<sup>254</sup> E.g., Jesus' person ("the Father and I are one" -- Jn. 10:30); mission ("I have come not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" -- Jn. 6:38); teaching ("my teaching is not mine but his who sent me" -- Jn. 7:16; "I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" -- Jn. 15:15). The Scriptures testify this gift extends and can be specified still further, in that disciples receive the love of God poured out into our hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5) through the Holy Spirit through faith; this is love which surpasses knowledge (cf. Eph. 3:18) and the peace that surpasses all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7).

<sup>255</sup> Marion argues vehemently against Anders Nygren's notion of a distinction between *agape* and *eros*. Cf. Anders Nygren, *Eros and Agape: The Christian Notion of Love and Its Transformations*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953). Cf. Marion, *RT*, 117-118. Also Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, Cultural Memory in the Present, eds. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 272-273, 383-384. Hereafter *ISP*. Also Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4-5, 220-221. Hereafter *EP*.

<sup>256</sup> Marion cites Denys the Areopagite, who says that God " 'charms' all beings at once by 'goodness, charity, and desire, *agathotēti kai agapēsei kai erōti*," since he loves "with a beautiful and good *eros* of all things, by the hyperbole of desiring goodness, *erōtikē*": the good inspires and fosters *agape* (as also *eros*). Cf. Marion, *GWB*, 74. Cf. Denys, *Divine Names*, IV, 7.

infinitely better than we.”<sup>257</sup> Such love brings about unity and communion, between both God and human beings and among human communities. We receive both awareness of and the proper meaning of these terms from divine revelation first and alone -- though they may be developed by means of reason if their excessive meaning has been witnessed and received -- albeit not by intellection alone, but by means of imitating its self-abandon.

This ‘excess’ of God’s love beyond our understanding is by no means a problem; for Marion it indicates further how God gives himself to be loved rather than merely known (as another kind of ‘object’ -- being thereby domesticated).<sup>258</sup> It is much less important for us to understand merely *rationaly* God’s self-gift of love than it is to accept it by a pure and simple gesture of love. According to Marion, concern with conditions (such as Kant’s) by which phenomena (or God) may be recognized is ultimately idolatrous, since those conditions become the only realm within which God *may* appear or act. For Marion, love “does not pretend to comprehend;” rather, it concerns itself primarily with neither comprehension nor even *reception* of love but “its own giving, giving where the giver strictly coincides with the gift, without any restriction, reservation, or mastery. Thus love gives itself only in abandoning itself, ceaselessly transgressing the limits of its own gift, so as to be transplanted outside of itself.”<sup>259</sup> For God as well as for humans, love is self-giving, which is received by becoming like the gift: becoming a lover oneself.

While predominantly characterized by self-abandoning giving, love induces an effect upon the will of recipients. For Marion, love includes an Augustinian element of ‘being drawn,’

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<sup>257</sup> Marion, *EP*, 221.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Marion, *GR*, 29.

<sup>259</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 48.

an attraction: “we are ‘drawn,’ swept along, pulled by the desire for pleasure when we love.”<sup>260</sup> Love is not one option among others for the will, but is itself the perfection of willing the true good. The will does not act by its own autonomous or self-generating force, but rather ‘By loving, one is drawn.’<sup>261</sup> God’s gift of love, when received by faith as a gift, as grace -- not by the intellect -- has the effect of “spreading ... this attraction into hearts (through the Holy Spirit);” this effect is “what is proper to God in loving and causing love.”<sup>262</sup> God’s grace bestows not only God’s self but the gift of faith in Christ, which allows one to desire to love God.

### 3.1.1.3. Eucharist as Epitome and Paradigm of Gift

For Marion, “kenotic gift culminates *par excellence* in the Eucharist,”<sup>263</sup> as the kenosis of the Word at the Incarnation finds a parallel in Jesus’ total gift of ‘abandonment’ in the gifts of his body and blood. This total self-emptying self-gift, given the night before he died on behalf of and to his disciples, is the ultimate expression of love: “Greater love no one has than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn. 15:13). Christ’s self-gift not only expresses greater love for his friends than for his own self-preservation, but it fulfills his own teaching to “Love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44), transcending the realms of exchange and reciprocity into unconditional love.

For Marion the Eucharist is not only the ultimate gift but the paradigm by which *all* gift-giving is most properly understood; it reveals and epitomizes aspects of gift-giving that ordinarily escape notice.<sup>264</sup> This Eucharistic paradigm is divinely revealed, yet opens

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. Marion, *GR*, 40. Cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, XXVI, 4, 11–27; 262. A more thorough discussion of Marion’s notion of desire (taken from Augustine’s *Confessions*) will appear later in section 3.2, in a discussion of the encounter with love.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. Cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 11–27; 264 (modified by Marion).

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Marion, “The Recognition of the Gift,” 126, 132.

<sup>264</sup> The Eucharist is “paradigm of any gift of alms, and accomplishes its logic.” Ibid., 133.

possibilities for reason to consider.<sup>265</sup> Just as in the Eucharist Christ gives his body and blood in the object-forms of bread and wine (leaving Christ's body and blood invisible), so the invisible nature of a gift-object *as gift* immediately disappears.<sup>266</sup> Every gift, like the Eucharist, becomes a mere object, immediately losing any reference to either its givenness (contingency) or its giver (source). The gift's givenness and giver do not become predicates of the 'item' but become invisible; and yet recognition of these two aspects are *precisely* the requirements for recognition of the gift *as such*.<sup>267</sup> The difficulty of properly recognizing any gift as such is compounded by the risk of its being forgotten or neglected by the recipient. All these paradigmatic aspects of the gift, revealed most clearly in the Eucharist, reinforce the importance of Marion's notion that revelation bestows or even imposes its own hermeneutic upon recipients.

To recognize any gift (including the Eucharist) *as such* -- that is, despite the invisibility of the gift's contingency and transparency -- recourse to a "phenomenology of the invisible" must be had.<sup>268</sup> It is not enough for a gift simply to appear: its giver (source) and its givenness (contingency) must be known for a gift-as-such to be received. Proper recognition of the Eucharistic gift *as such* -- as from the Father and contingent -- is both critical for proper reception of the Eucharist and a fundamental way that Christ reveals the Father. Thus in the Eucharist the respective "glory" of Father and Son "is shared and exchanged" by this "practice of the gift *as such*."<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> The aforementioned article by Marion, "Christian Philosophy," elaborates on this relation between revelation and the 'natural' order knowable by reason. One might also recall St. Anselm of Canterbury's definition of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* ('faith seeking understanding').

<sup>266</sup> Marion describes this phenomenal feature of gift-giving in "The Recognition of the Gift," 125-127, and then relates it to the Eucharist in "a theological approach to the philosophical aporia of the gift" (127) in the rest of the essay (127-135). Section 3.4 below will relate the importance of these phenomenological aspects of transparency and contingency to the Eucharist.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Marion, "The Recognition of the Gift," 129.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 127. Marion also discusses contingency in a phenomenological context in *BG*, 125-139.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 131 and 130, respectively. Discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in this recognition process and sharing of glory will appear later.

The bestowal of the Eucharist is not simply of the (apparent) bread and wine: the Incarnate Word's saying over each gift ('This is my body/blood') "overdetermines" them.<sup>270</sup> The Eucharist expresses the Paschal Mystery because it expresses Christ's complete self-abandonment: "the consecrated bread incarnates the perfectly abandoned gift of a 'body given for [us]'" (Lk. 22:19).<sup>271</sup> Through the visible gifts (of bread and wine), invisible gifts (of Christ's body and blood) of the gift (namely, Christ and the Holy Spirit) of the ultimate giver (the Father) are all phenomenalized. In the Eucharist therefore, the Triune involvement in givenness is made manifest:

Recognizing the gift *as* such then means no longer seeing the thing in its stubborn opaqueness (this man born in Nazareth, this piece of bread, this cup of wine), but *as* it gives itself (Christ, his body, and his blood), from the point therefore *from which* the gift departs, as it happens, from the Father, because, in the end, in its transparency the Eucharistic gift gives the Father to see through the Son and in the Spirit.<sup>272</sup>

The 'material presence' of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine are so minimal -- completely dependent on Christ's words -- that the gift expresses *par excellence* Christ's self-emptying kenosis: it is a gift of self so complete that no 'thing' of Christ's 'self' remains visibly and only the least possible 'presence' (in the host and wine) are visible. This absence of visible body and blood is its very *transparency*, its referral back to Christ who is himself the gift of the 'ultimate' giver, the Father.

The Eucharist manifests God's self-giving visibly, that a recipient might recognize transparently the gift's ultimate origin (the Father) and its contingency. Furthermore, the Eucharist expresses hope in the full coming of the Kingdom of God, the absolutely complete gift of God. Marion does not dwell on the hylomorphic substance or accidents of the Eucharistic elements but on their *referential* character, their meaning *as signs* pointing toward the self-giving

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>271</sup> Marion, *PC*, 133.

<sup>272</sup> Marion, "Recognition of the Gift," 134.

divine Giver. Such attention as Marion pays to these *relations* of the Eucharist -- the trinitarian workings of its givenness, giver, and manifestation through the Son and Holy Spirit -- specify what this dissertation proposes in a ‘relational approach to the Eucharist.’ Connections between these referents and the *event of giving* which the Eucharist epitomizes offers a way to speak meaningfully of the Eucharist as ‘the source and summit of Christian living.’

Marion’s thought presents the Eucharist as God’s self-gift which can only be understood on its own terms: the message is the divine Word himself in a mystery of love that exceeds what any conceptual model can express. Participation in the Eucharistic actions (‘receiving’ its meaning through observation of the taking, blessing, and giving) communicates the gift more aptly than concepts. Reception of this gift (in its fullest sense) leads to a greater attraction to loving, to self-abandoning giving toward others. The Eucharist is important certainly as the Body and Blood of Christ, but its *referential* character as referring to the Father (transparency) and as freely given (contingency) are vital for fuller appreciation of the Eucharistic gift.

### **3.1.2. The Celebrating Community**

God gives the Eucharist as gift to the Church, which receives this gift by becoming like the gift itself. The liturgical assembly must think, act, and be conformed according to the logic of God’s self-giving love, under the guidance of its bishop.

This process of unveiling-leading-to-recognition continues amidst the present-day liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, which “unceasingly reproduces this hermeneutic site of theology.”<sup>273</sup> The Liturgy of the Word’s proclamation of the Scriptures sets the terms. Those terms are expressed again in the gestural actions and words of Christ by the priest *in persona Christi*, which offer -- rather, *give* -- the clearest possible interpretation. The gift (which includes the interpretation) precedes the understanding, as it does in ‘the mystery of charity,’ which

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<sup>273</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 152.

operates ‘without reason’ and does not confine itself to the limits of conceptual understanding. The invisible Word is made visible in the breaking of the bread through the gestures and voice of the priest, accomplishing in fullness the hermeneutic of what is being proclaimed.

The given divine Word calls the community to communion and conformity with God. Interpretation does not ‘belong’ to the assembly, as either a product of its imagination or as if it were analyzing an object. Rather, the assembly ‘interprets’ the Eucharist by an *existential* conformity: that is, “only to the strict degree that it *lets itself* be called together and assimilated, hence converted and interpreted by the Word, sacramentally and therefore actually acting in the community.”<sup>274</sup> From its ‘posture’ of receptivity the assembly undergoes a ‘de-subjectivization:’ the community does not ‘take action’ so much as receive the Word *by recognizing the Word’s* action, made visible by the sacrament. The assembly validates its reception of the Eucharistic gift -- its genuine *recognition* of the gift in its own integrity -- by conformity to it, by becoming more fully the visible and active ecclesial Body of Christ in ongoing world history. Such a *corporate, existential, and incarnate* hermeneutic make significant contributions to ‘a true understanding of the Eucharist.’

A somewhat controversial assertion by Marion concerning interpretation of the Eucharist concerns the unique role of the bishop as theologian. While a properly Eucharistic hermeneutic of the text is undertaken by the community, with the assistance of the theologian the liturgical service still has need of the ‘voice of the Word’ speaking from ‘the place of the Word.’ Since the bishop “alone finds himself invested by the *persona Christi*,” he alone is a theologian proper:

If, first, theology as theology attempts the hermeneutic of the words in view, hence also, from the point of view of the Word, if the Eucharist offers the only correct hermeneutic site where the Word can be said in person in the blessing, if finally only the celebrant receives authority to go beyond the words as far as the Word, because he alone finds himself invested by the

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<sup>274</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 152. Emphasis added.



*persona Christi*, then one must conclude that *only the bishop merits, in the full sense, the title of theologian*.<sup>275</sup>

In a 2001 interview with Richard Kearney, Marion clarified that he was putting forward the patristic tradition as the proper context for theology, wherein the ‘place’ for theology was the liturgy of the believing community.<sup>276</sup> Theology’s questions arose out of the pastoral needs of the church, and *amid the liturgical celebration* the bishop addressed those needs by interpreting the gospel. The rise of universities split theological scholarship from communal pastoral concern, raising questions outside their proper context and no longer orienting people toward worship.

Interpretation of the text by the community can occur, but after receiving the help of the theologian and “on condition that the community itself be interpreted by the Word and assimilated to the place where theological interpretation can be exercised, thanks to the liturgical service of the theologian par excellence, the bishop.”<sup>277</sup> The community needs to recognize the ‘priority of the text’ over itself, and that authoritative interpretation occurs within a liturgical-pastoral context. Also, the assembly’s relationship of union with the bishop is an essential aspect of a properly celebrated Eucharist. Given Marion’s repeated concern to avoid a reduction of Eucharistic presence to “the immediate consciousness that the (community) consciousness has of it,”<sup>278</sup> the bishop may be safeguarding (as *in persona Christi* representative) the gaze of ‘the Other’ who gazes at the community. This of course does not prevent a set of potential abuses or errors originating in the bishop, but Marion seems to consider an identification of Eucharistic presence with (merely) the community’s consciousness the greater danger.

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Richard Kearney, “A Dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion,” *Philosophy Today* 48:1 (2004), 15-16. Hereafter “Dialogue.” “I am thinking of the two Gregorys, Basil the Great, or John the Chrysostom.”

<sup>277</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 152.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 169-170, et al.

### **3.1.3. Reception of the Gift: Transformation of the Community**

I will now examine Marion's writings relating recognition of the Eucharistic gift and the transformation of the community.<sup>279</sup> This results in an existential notion of Christ's 'real presence' in the *ecclesial* body of Christ which awaits its eschatological fullness from God. The radical other-worldly gift of the Eucharist thus calls for transformation not merely of individuals but of their relationships with one another. A note on the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation concludes this section.

#### **3.1.3.1. Eucharist, Christ's Disappearance, and Entry into 'Trinitarian Play'**

The gift of the Eucharist is not an end in itself: it is meant first to be recognized 'as gift,' as gift of love from the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit; it is also a way of reinforcing hope and faith in Christ as risen from the dead. An oft-overlooked part of the Emmaus narrative is important in Marion's 'Eucharistic hermeneutic.' Christ's *disappearance* as he is recognized in the breaking of the bread (cf. Lk. 24:31). Once the two disciples recognize Christ anew -- both Christ in the Eucharist, and Christ as Resurrected -- the visible human form of Christ disappears. This disappearance becomes a *call* for the disciple to 'become what one receives:' a living member of the body of Christ, embodying and manifesting more fully in the world the ecclesial Body of Christ. God entrusts the message of reconciliation to disciples (2 Cor. 5:19) to be his witnesses in the world (cf. Acts 1:8; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15).

The events of the paschal mystery (Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension) and the Eucharist bestow a gift of love, but they also invite those who recognize these gifts 'as such' *to become* a similarly transparent and contingent gift of self in the present world, as Christ was. What modernity calls 'the death of God' -- God's withdrawal from the world, revealed

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<sup>279</sup> To stay within what Marion writes on the Eucharist (and closely-related themes) this section will address only that topic here. Marion's writings on the broader topic of how the encounter of revelation with human beings leads to their transformation will be given below in section 3.2.

particularly in Christ's death and ascension -- calls disciples forth into active roles as 'the Body of Christ' in the world, taking responsibility for others as Christ did.<sup>280</sup> Disciples are called to 'step into' Christ's transparent and contingent 'trinitarian role:' "If Christ leaves, it is in order to free the trinitarian site for the disciples."<sup>281</sup> Such 'disappearance' by Christ "allows the disciples to become not servants but friends, *not spectators but actors* of the redemptive and revelatory action of Christ. They themselves occupy the place, the role, and the charge of Christ."<sup>282</sup> As in the Ascension in Luke 24:50-53,<sup>283</sup> the disciples take on Christ's role as one who blesses. Marion notes that "Christ makes himself recognized -- as gift of presence -- ever since Easter by the sign of the blessing," and "the highest presence of Christ lies in the Spirit's action of making us, with him and in him, bless the Father."<sup>284</sup> An action of Christ taken up by his disciples becomes the true sign of his continuing presence among them.

Full reception of the Eucharist, therefore, involves (in Marion's terms) both recognizing the Eucharistic gift as such *and* stepping into the role of Christ (who is no longer visibly present in the world) as agents taking responsibility to love and bless -- recognizing the Father's gifts -- as Christ did. It involves existential acceptance of the call to become the living ecclesial body of Christ in the world: to live transparently as a Christ-like lover who abandons self. By charitable action that refers to the Father transparently in one's contingent life, a disciple becomes more

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<sup>280</sup> "In light of revelation, the interactions within creation of the visible and invisible, advent and withdrawal -- in short the nature of event (*Ereignis*) -- turn out to be traces and hints of the kenotic self-donation taking place within the Trinity: "The *Ereignis* can therefore be understood in two ways, neither unifiable nor contradictory, nor competing: as such, the last word of Being, and as *medium* or *analogon* of the trinitarian play (the gift of creation referring back to and growing deeper in the original filiation)." Marion, *ID*, 247. The perceived 'absence' or 'death' of God is revealed as the purposeful divine withdrawal (revealed in Christ's Death, then again at his Ascension) which calls forth disciples to step into active roles as 'the Body of Christ' in the world, taking responsibility for others as Christ did.

<sup>281</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 142-143. Hereafter *PC*.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 145. Emphasis added.

<sup>283</sup> "[Christ] led them out as far as Bethany and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God."

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 145.

fully a member of the Body of Christ *acting as such*. “Thus, as much by the Eucharist as by the gift of the Spirit, the withdrawal of the Ascension makes the disciples come unto a perfect, though paradoxical presence in Christ.”<sup>285</sup> This entrance into and living from Christ’s charitable, transparent, and contingent role, as one who continually recognizes the Father’s generosity, constitutes ‘trinitarian play.’

To transpose Marion’s ideas into images from Scripture and tradition, the ‘real presence of Christ’ manifests itself most vividly in the *disciple* -- oneself a ‘member’ of the ecclesial Body of Christ -- who responds in love to the Word and the Holy Spirit, who blesses the Father as the Giver of every good gift (cf. James 1:17). Such a disciple puts Christ’s words into action: “Go and do likewise” (Lk. 10:37); “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn. 13:34); “Do this in memory of me” (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25).

### 3.1.3.2. Recasting the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

Since questions concerning Christ’s ‘Real Presence’ in the Eucharist are central to the Eucharistic theology of the Roman Church, we must explore how Marion addresses them. Traditionally the Roman Church has upheld the ‘objective’ presence of the ‘Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ (i.e., such presence is not dependent upon the ‘subjective’ belief of witnesses). Given Marion’s concerns to ‘overcome metaphysics’<sup>286</sup> and develop a phenomenology of givenness, it should be no surprise that he transposes the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist according to a new interpretation. Since, for Marion, givenness is the most fundamental phenomenological reality, the nature of the Eucharist *as gift*

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “Substance and Subsistence: Suárez and the Treatise on *Substantia* in the *Principles of Philosophy* 1, §51-§54,” in *On the Ego and on God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2007); also cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “Thomas Aquinas and Onto-theo-logy,” in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), 38-74.

reveals the real presence of Christ more effectively than language of ontology (such as Being, presence, substance).

One difficulty of proclaiming the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is that the eschatological *fullness* of this gift will only be known with the eschaton, the *parousia* at the end of time: so Marion first recasts the real presence of Christ according to the gift of time. Fully exploiting the double meaning of ‘present’ as both ‘gift’ and ‘now,’ he changes discussion of Eucharistic presence from presence-as-ontological-Being to the-present-time-received-as-gift. We must “think presence starting from the gift that, theologically, constitutes presence in the present;” these changes have important implications for the Eucharist as the real presence of Christ and as memorial.<sup>287</sup>

In the everyday notion of time (‘metaphysical temporality’) the past and future are imagined and measured as extensions from basic reference point of “the *here and now* by which consciousness assures itself ... of being.”<sup>288</sup> The past apparently ‘fades away from presence’ and the future ‘is not yet’: our language concerning time thus implies corollaries concerning being and presence. Moreover, in such a notion ‘memorial’ tries to preserve something gone by and lost to the past, and ‘hope’ seeks that something good come into the fullness of presence. Time-received-as-Eucharistic-gift, however, reverses a priority in metaphysics for the present over past and future. According to Christian revelation the fullness of being (‘*Parousia*’) and of history come at the *eschaton*: therefore, the true reference point arrives ‘from the future.’

The present of the Eucharistic gift is ... temporalized ... as memorial (temporalization starting from the past), then as eschatological announcement (temporalization starting from the future), and finally, and only finally, as dailyness and viaticum (temporalization starting from the present).... [This] implies that we will understand the Eucharistic presence less in the way of an available permanence than as a new sort of advent.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 171.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

According to this ‘Christic temporality,’ God’s total and final decision of love was established in our past, expressed in the gifts of the body and blood of Jesus Christ upon Calvary and in the Eucharist. This definitive pledge of love nonetheless will find its fulfillment in the eschatological banquet, when Christ himself will again ‘drink the fruit of the vine’ (Lk. 22:18).

Marion’s notion of presence therefore shifts from a static ontological notion of being toward the *event* of God’s advent. This reshapes our understanding of the Eucharist as memorial: it is not merely a nostalgic memorial but a reminder of the full advent of God to come, the ‘not yet’ orientation toward the fullness of the Kingdom. “The memorial aims at the *Parousia*” more than simply the present moment, since the Eucharist is still only the *sacramentally* present body and blood of Christ.<sup>290</sup> For Marion, the fundamental reality of the traditional doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is that it brings God’s eschatological self-gift into visibility, into the phenomenal world: God’s fullness is waiting to be received; it gazes at us, calling our ‘reality’ and selves into question.

This notion of real presence into categories of givenness (explained more fully in section 3.2. below) is reinforced in more recent writings of Marion. Marion speaks of real presence as interwoven with recognition of the Eucharistic gift *as such*, recognition of the Eucharist’s transparency and contingency. Marion contrasts the ‘self-persistence’ or ‘opaqueness’ of an object (which makes no reference to a giver or its contingency) with the ‘transparency’ or ‘real presence’ of a gift, which reveal the gift’s nature. Regarding the Eucharist this means “the minimal remnant of a presence that points to the bread and wine must fill, as abandoned gift, the role of the presence of the gift of the Son who has come in the flesh to manifest his dependence

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<sup>290</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 173. Emphasis added.

within givenness.”<sup>291</sup> The invisible transparency and contingency of the Eucharistic gift -- that is, their *relational, signifying or referential* aspects -- is how phenomenology would express the insight of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.

### 3.1.3.3. The Gift of the Real Presence Amid Relationships

The gift of the Eucharist is never given in pure isolation; furthermore it is *meant* to raise questions concerning all of one’s relationships: “When God provokes us by the gift that his Church names ‘the Real Presence,’ we are confronted by ... the difficulty indeed of our relationship to the infinite, but also ... the difficulty of our relationship with the other ... and therefore with ourselves.... It is a matter of entering into ‘the trinitarian play’ (*le jeu trinitaire*).”<sup>292</sup> An existential notion of ‘trinitarian play’ which hopes and waits for the fullness of God has implications not merely for individuals’ relationships with God, but for all one’s relationships. The radical advent of God’s presence into the world requires that we rethink our relationships: the gift of the Eucharist requires adopting a Eucharistic hermeneutic concerning our relationships. By stating that the gift of the Eucharist’s Real Presence ‘provokes’ us and leads to ‘entering into the trinitarian play,’ Marion clearly indicates that the Eucharist is *meant* to impact all our relationships. It calls into question all our relationships: with God, with others, and ‘therefore with ourselves.’ This point is simply raised here; the precise manner in which Marion’s paradigm explains how these relationships are transformed will be described below,

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<sup>291</sup> Marion, “Recognition of the Gift,” 133.

<sup>292</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, « Splendeur de la contemplation eucharistique, » in *Politique de la Mystique: hommage à Mgr Maxime Charles*, eds. Jean-Luc Marion, Claire-Agnes Zirnheld, P.-M. Delfieux (Limoges: Editions Criterion, 1984), 20, 25. Originally published in *Résurrection* 31 (1969), 84-88. Hereafter “Splendor.” My translation. Marion’s original text (omitted text is bracketed): « Lorsque Dieu provoque par le don de ce que son Eglise nomme ‘la présence réelle,’ nous sommes confrontés, sur [un cas d’autant plus particulier qu’il pousse chacun des termes à l’infini,] à la difficulté certes de notre rapport à l’infini, mais aussi et du même coup, à la difficulté de notre rapport avec l’autre, quel qu’il soit, et donc avec nous-mêmes.... Il s’agit donc d’entrer dans le jeu trinitaire. » Marion’s neologism ‘the trinitarian play’ (or ‘game’ -- *le jeu trinitaire*) could be a ‘play’ on the postmodern notion of linguistic play (*jeu*) and its endless deferral of meaning among signs (*différance*). Jacques Derrida had introduced his notion of linguistic play two years earlier in the 1967 publication of *Writing and Difference*. Also, it might be noted that Marion was 23 years old when this article was first published.

with the help of Marion's phenomenology of givenness (3.2.). As will be shown, our relationships are transformed by our being called out of reciprocity into loving self-abandonment for the other. Beginning with recognizing as gift all that one is and receives, and recognizing others as gifts made in the divine image, the Eucharist calls the disciple to imitate God's loving initiative to love first with total abandon.

#### 3.1.3.4. Doctrine of Transubstantiation

Marion's recasting of Eucharistic presence, however, in no way eliminates the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>293</sup> Though this doctrine is subject to misinterpretation, it holds a critically important place for Marion. Despite its onto-theological terminology of substance and accidents, for Marion the doctrine "alone offers the possibility of distance, since it strictly separates my consciousness from Him who summons it ... [and] my attention and my prayer."<sup>294</sup> The priority of the Eucharistic gift's 'objective' self-manifestation vis-à-vis the recipient "imposes" an "irreducible exteriority.... Only distance, in maintaining a distinct separation of terms (of persons), renders communion possible, and immediately mediates the relation."<sup>295</sup> The doctrine's value is seen especially in the practice of Eucharistic adoration. This form of prayer "is a labor ... of concentration, but one that is essentially desubjectivizing, where the *I* is erased before the one whom it observes speaking."<sup>296</sup> This 'desubjectivization' of the ego -- or, more particularly, its will -- prepares us well for a fuller understanding of the sense of mission that the celebration of the Eucharist is meant to impart.

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<sup>293</sup> "The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation." Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 1376. Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1642.

<sup>294</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 177.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>296</sup> Marion, *RT*, 27.



### **3.1.4. Related Theological Themes in Marion**

Marion has written about other theological themes that, while not directly related by him to the Eucharist, will be employed in my own synthesis. Marion's theological writings on idols and icons proposes a kind of discourse concerning revelation of divine realities to human beings. His writings on the distance between the divine and the human provide an important context for a theological notion of gift. The combination of icons (which reveal the invisible divine) and gifts (which are transparent and contingent) converge very well, as Marion demonstrates, with the traditional definition of sacrament.

#### **3.1.4.1. Idols and Icons: Theological Use**

Writing at the boundaries of theology and philosophy, Marion employs some terms in senses particular to his own thought. Here we explore Marion's motif of 'idols and icons' as he uses it for theological purposes, as a background for his understanding of sacraments.<sup>297</sup>

In *God Without Being* Marion speaks of idols and icons as two ways of experiencing or approaching the divine,<sup>298</sup> but "in one case [i.e., idols] the approach is on our terms, in the other case it is on God's terms."<sup>299</sup> As *mediating* phenomena, both idols and icons "no longer restrict their visibility to themselves": they function as *signs* of the divine.... they are "two manners of being ... not two classes of beings."<sup>300</sup> At hand are "two modes of apprehension of the divine in visibility."<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Section 3.2 below will describe Marion's phenomenological use of this motif, which is important for Marion's paradigm of revelation.

<sup>298</sup> In *GWB* Marion described idols and icons as two ways of experiencing the divine (cf. *GWB*, 1-60; esp. 1-24), but in all subsequent works he describes them as types of saturated phenomena (cf. Marion, *BG*, 229-233; *IE*, 54-81, 104-127).

<sup>299</sup> Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Marion and Theology*, Philosophy and Theology (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 33. Hereafter *MT*.

<sup>300</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 8.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

In this context, the term ‘idol’ for Marion does not carry a pejorative sense. Idols express an authentic vision of the divine that proceeds *from the human*, rather than opening to the divine to receive what it gives. Idols give a particular visible manifestation of what an artist has seen of the divine. An idol functions as an “invisible mirror,”<sup>302</sup> turning one’s gaze back upon oneself, manifesting some desirable aspect of the divine. Its “manifestation and its material expression are almost entirely grounded in the viewer and function as a measure of his or her capacity and desires.”<sup>303</sup> Idols carry appeal for us -- ‘dazzle’ us -- because they match so well with our ideals, hopes, and desires.

Conversely, by gazing at an icon, the one gazing realizes he or she in fact *is gazed upon* by an invisible other. More powerfully than any intention to understand or control the image presented by the icon, the one gazing *is oneself* called into question. One’s own self or meaning -- not the icon’s -- is called into question: “the gaze of man is lost in the invisible gaze that visibly envisages him.”<sup>304</sup> The icon displays itself visibly, yet by overwhelming the onlooker’s intention it signifies an invisible other *as such*; hence, they are unsettling in some degree. The icon truly mediates the *gaze of the invisible* (i.e., the divine) upon the witness. These two ‘modes of apprehension’ are important for Marion as they set the stage for the relation of all that is visible in the world to the invisible: namely, God.

Marion uses the icon motif theologically with scripture’s analogy for the role Christ plays visibly revealing the Father in heaven: Christ is the icon of the invisible God (*hos estin eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*; Col. 1:15).<sup>305</sup> Christ’s visibility as the Incarnate Word refers -- reveals -- the invisible Father who would otherwise remain completely invisible, “and which does not allow

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<sup>302</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 12; cf. 12-14.

<sup>303</sup> Gschwandtner, *MT*, 33.

<sup>304</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 19.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Marion, *GR*, 61-88, 102-108. Marion cites this verse and theme often in both his writings: *ID*, 8, 25-26; cf. *BG* 236-241; *The Crossing of the Visible*, 77, 84; “Phenomenality of the Sacrament,” 111-115.

itself to be seen or aimed at except through ... the icon.”<sup>306</sup> The icon thus preserves the *distance* between the human and the divine, the transcendence of the invisible. Christ’s iconic nature is expressed in John 14:6: ‘No one comes to the Father except through me.’

Marion’s theological notion of icon is a helpful way to speak of hidden (or ‘invisible’) aspects the Eucharist, most importantly, emergence of awareness that one is in a sense *looked at* and encountered by a divine Other. Though present, this Other remains unseen and therefore beyond one’s control or manipulation. Since this Other is divine, the ‘unsettling’ effect is fully proper to the moment: we are removed from the illusion ‘full autonomy’ and ourselves called into question. That the icon brings what is invisible into visibility -- while remaining invisible -- becomes central to Marion’s notion of a sacrament and of the Eucharist in particular.<sup>307</sup> Marion himself discusses the risk of apparent idolatry regarding Eucharistic adoration, and John Baldovin has used Marion’s idol/icon motif to discuss liturgical reform.<sup>308</sup>

Marion’s theological use of idols and icons marks an initial way to distinguish what meets or fits our expectations regarding the divine (idols) from what confronts us as truly from an Other (icons). Similarly, Marion speaks of the sacraments as crossing the threshold between the divine invisible and visible phenomena.

### 3.1.4.2. *Charity: Becoming the Gift*

In *The Idol and Distance* Marion addresses several questions concerning how humans relate to an utterly transcendent God: what language is appropriate to the distance between the

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 103. Cf. Mt. 11:27b: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him;” also Jn. 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

<sup>307</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, “The Phenomenality of the Sacrament,” 102-115, and “Recognition of the Gift,” 125-135, in *BIOTS*.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Marion, “Splendor.” Cf. John F. Baldovin, “Idols and Icons: Reflections on the Current State of Liturgical Reform,” *Worship* 84 (2010) 386-402.

two? Is anything communicated or given, and how?<sup>309</sup> With the help of St. Paul and Denys the Areopagite Marion states “Only love can claim to know Love;”<sup>310</sup> therefore the language proper to relation with the divine cause/*Αἰτία* is *praise* instead of philosophical predication.<sup>311</sup> Similarly, the divine Goodness “gives itself -- not to be comprehended but to be received.”<sup>312</sup> The notion of *gift* predominates everything that transpires between God and human beings, so that humans grow in likeness to divine giving and goodness.

A recipient of divine goodness “receives the gift only in order to give it, such that this gift, in the same gesture, regives the gift redundancy;” by doing this the recipients conform themselves to the event of giving and themselves *participate in* divine love and goodness.<sup>313</sup> Receiving and giving are therefore not two separate actions but one and the same: one “does not receive the gift as such except ... through repetition by giving himself” and thereby *becomes* a gift.<sup>314</sup> Divine goodness and love therefore ‘take on a body’ in the recipient, for through acts of charity “the recipient donor becomes integrally and in person -- hypostatically -- a gift.”<sup>315</sup> A person takes on the likeness of the divine giver.

These texts provide important principles regarding relation between God and human beings which can inform interpretation of other passages (in *Being Given* and *In Excess*) in which Marion speaks phenomenologically of the obligations of a recipient. With any gift, the recipient is not without responsibility: with the gift of becoming a ‘givee’ comes the gift of an “active capacity ... [which] must be put to work.... [and] work on itself in order to receive.”<sup>316</sup> While receptive, the recipient is not at liberty to be entirely passive or unobligated. The work of

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. Marion, *ID*, 139-195, 233-253.

<sup>310</sup> Marion, *ID*, 145.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 151-152.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>316</sup> Marion, *IE*, 48.

the recipient to exercise its active capacities represents its full coming-to-birth, which does not occur all at once but must be ‘put to work’ with the reception of each gift.<sup>317</sup> As *both* recipient of the gift and responsible for obeying its inherent call, the self refashioned in light of the gift is both “the sole master and servant of the given.”<sup>318</sup> This dynamic will take on central importance for understanding ‘reception’ of the Eucharist, looking beyond the reception of the host to the embodiment of charity in one’s life.

### 3.1.4.3. Sacraments: Visible Signs of Invisible Grace

Marion’s writings on sacraments make frequent use of the terms used in the Council of Trent’s definition, albeit in his own way: “Indeed the holy Eucharist shares in common with the other sacraments that it is a sign of a holy thing and the visible form of an invisible grace.”<sup>319</sup> Marion’s notions of ‘visible’ and ‘invisible,’ however, carry meanings particular to his own thought, as will be shown. Sacraments originate from Christianity’s basic assertion of the Incarnation, “the eternal involvement of the God of Jesus Christ in the process of *self*-manifestation and *self*-showing.”<sup>320</sup> For Marion a sacrament’s visible and invisible aspects function “as the two inseparable faces of a single phenomenon,” God’s self-giving.<sup>321</sup> The Eucharist’s visible aspects would include the bread and wine, gestures (elevation, fraction, giving); its invisible aspects for Marion are not merely Christ’s Body and Blood but the gifts’ transparency (their reference to the Father) and contingency (given freely by God, in a particular time and place). Sacraments are the means that accomplish the invisible divine’s self-abandonment into visible phenomenality: a ‘phenomenality of abandon.’

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<sup>317</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Marion, *BG*, 319.

<sup>319</sup> Marion, “The Phenomenality of the Sacrament,” in *BIOTS*, 102. Cf. “Decree on the Eucharist,” Council of Trent, Session XII, c. 3, canon 3.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

Bringing his notions of the visible and invisible together both the Incarnation and the phenomenon of the gift, Marion says a kenosis occurs in which “the invisible is translated, delivers itself up, and abandons itself to the visible to the point of appearing in it as the invisible that it remains.”<sup>322</sup> The invisible God *gives* himself over, *abandoning* himself as a visible phenomenon, in the Incarnation, Eucharist, and his suffering and death; this alone provides the legitimacy of the sacraments. The eschatological fullness of the gift of Christ pervades Marion’s logic for the sacraments: “God’s self-dispensation is at stake in the sacrament, not as merely one of its effects or even one of its gifts, but as Himself. When God gives, he never gives less than himself.”<sup>323</sup> The completeness and concreteness of God’s self-giving into phenomenal form underlies the notion of each sacrament; the fundamental event of each sacrament is this coming-into-phenomenality (or coming-into-visibility). Even the apparent lack of any visible reference to a divine giver (e.g., only a human being appears to administer the sacrament) becomes a feature of the divine self-abandoning love animating each sacramental gift.

### **3.2. Givenness and the Self: Saturated Phenomena and the Erotic Reduction**

Having surveyed Marion’s direct writings on the Eucharist, this next section examines his phenomenological writings for their contribution toward the ‘relational Eucharistic theology’ I am proposing. While Marion himself does not often relate his unique philosophical terms (of givenness, saturated phenomena, or *l’adonné*) to the Eucharist, such terms are ‘saturated’ with possibilities for Eucharistic theology. While philosophical in nature, Marion’s studies on ‘givenness’ contribute to Eucharistic theology in that God “comes to us in and as gift.”<sup>324</sup> Marion’s paradigm will help us express the Eucharist in terms that neither are metaphysical

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<sup>322</sup> Marion, “The Phenomenality of the Sacrament,” 108.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>324</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 3 (‘Envoi’).

(“love is not an object for metaphysics”<sup>325</sup>) nor simply repeating scriptural motifs. Most importantly, Marion’s phenomenological approach opens a far richer notion of the *self* who encounters God; this refashioning of the self in light of the event (or advent) of givenness overcomes a variety of problematic dichotomies (subject-object, self and other) and provides a new paradigm for speaking of encounter. His philosophical concepts offer a profound contribution to sacramental theology because they open a valuable way to describe the *sacramental* encounter between God and human beings -- accounting especially for the transformations in and of *human beings* that both the Eucharist is meant to instill and which Eucharistic theology strives to articulate.

A phenomenological ‘reduction to givenness’ (3.2.1.) establishes the horizon by which Marion aims to ‘overcome’ onto-theology and metaphysics. It also opens discussion of phenomena which ‘saturate’ or exceed the limits of perception and concepts (3.2.2.). Such excess recasts the self as most fundamentally a recipient (*l’adonné*), overturning the modern notion of an autonomous subject who constitutes the phenomena (3.2.3.). Marion’s deeper exploration into the ‘order of charity’ (Pascal) through an ‘erotic reduction’ reveals the dynamics of encounter between persons (3.2.4.); his exploration of the unique dynamics of the divine-human encounter -- particularly concerning God’s truth and human desire -- comes through a close reading of Augustine’s *Confessions* (3.2.5.). This analysis in turn opens discussion of desire, encounter with truth, and questions of ultimate concern, all of which I will use (in 3.4) to illumine what is at stake in reception of the Eucharist.

### **3.2.1. Phenomenological Reduction to Givenness**

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<sup>325</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, “On the Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion,” in Jason W. Alvis, *Marion and Derrida on The Gift and Desire: Debating the Generosity of Things*, Contributions To Phenomenology 85 (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 256. Hereafter “Gift and Desire,” *MDGD*.

According to Marion most analyses of gift-giving or ‘the problem of the gift’ reduce matters to giver, gift, and recipient. In the metaphysical point of view (e.g., Marcel Mauss’ sociological analysis of the gift) “givenness is articulated in terms of a giver, a gift given, and a givee, which are in principle connected by a reciprocal relation,” since a gift “demands ... restitution” from the recipient.<sup>326</sup> Marion considers this reciprocity problematic however, since metaphysical causality prevails: the giver as efficient cause, gift as material and formal cause, for the good of giver and/or recipient as final cause.<sup>327</sup> The gift remains caught up in an economy of exchange: not genuine gifts, but this-for-that.

Marion’s phenomenological analysis of givenness -- “the given as such .... the pure given” -- goes deeper than this.<sup>328</sup> In order to liberate or purify the gift from exchange and reciprocity, it is necessary to reduce matters to givenness: “thinking the gift as gift.... [by] bracketing the transcendence of the givee... giver, and ... of the transcendence of the object exchanged” -- the three standard elements in most examinations of the problem of the gift.<sup>329</sup> Beyond Husserl’s ‘transcendental reduction’ (to ‘objectness’) and Heidegger’s ‘existential reduction’ (to ‘beingness,’ *Dasein*), Marion proposes a third phenomenological reduction, to “the given as such” -- ‘givenness.’<sup>330</sup> This triple bracketing (reduction, or *epochē*) of giver, gift, and recipient salvages the event of givenness from the realm of metaphysical causality and from ‘Being,’ from objects or things. “What *shows itself* first *gives itself* -- this is my one and only theme” -- this fundamental reality precedes concerns about objects, being, or subjects; Marion

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<sup>326</sup> Marion, *BG*, 75.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 2. In *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion calls Husserl’s reduction ‘epistemic,’ Heidegger’s ‘ontological,’ and replaces ‘reduction to givenness’ with ‘the erotic reduction’ to love. Cf. *EP*, 21.



calls this ‘givenness.’<sup>331</sup> His reduction to givenness examines the fundamental *event*-dynamism, not merely of gift-giving, but of all phenomena.

Marion’s threefold reduction reveals some fascinating aspects of the ‘event of givenness’ which, though commonly experienced, are rarely articulated so well. Marion’s understanding of the true nature of a gift calls for our attention, even though Marion eventually brackets gifts altogether. A central assertion by Marion is that “the gift does not consist in an object -- because it does not at all consist” as such; the true essence of a gift is quite distinct from the object that might express it.<sup>332</sup> To clarify this Marion cites as an example the most ‘valuable’ gifts of friendship or marriage, in which the true gift transcends token-items given, such as wedding rings. The profound gift of marriage between two people cannot be reduced to their exchange of rings; their gift, though expressed symbolically through the rings, ‘saturates with excess’ the rings they give each other. Such an example reveals “what is truly at stake in the gift, much more precious and serious than the object that conventionally represents it”: the object is at the service of the ‘true gift’ (such as one’s word, friendship, or love) which remains *invisible*, ‘unreal’ in that it is ‘outside of being.’<sup>333</sup> The ‘true gift’ at stake -- typically over-identified with the ‘gift-item’ in sociology or metaphysics -- is outside of objectness or ‘being,’ but is revealed by the reduction to givenness. The wedding ring, rather, “attests *the gift that I became* in receiving (that of) the Other precisely because in reality [the ring] is *not* equal to [the gift], but offers the symbolic index of the gift, without common measure with what is nevertheless shown in [the ring].”<sup>334</sup> This fact indicates how life’s ‘most important gifts’ *cannot* be reduced to items

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<sup>331</sup> Marion, *BG*, 5.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. Emphasis added. Though Marion’s ‘triple bracketing’ of giver, gift, and givee in the ‘reduction to givenness’ grants only passing mention to the notion of *self-gift* mentioned here, it merits fuller attention in the ‘relational Eucharistic theology’ I am proposing. I will expound on this articulation of self-gift in the context of the Eucharist both in section 3.4 below and in chapter 5.

or objects; the invisible aspects of a visible gift are most essential to its nature as gift. Gifts such as friendship, marriage, oneself, or one's word, "give the most and most decisively give *nothing* -- no thing, no object; ... because what they give belongs neither to reality nor to objectness and can thus surpass all expectation, indeed fulfill a desire."<sup>335</sup> The actual true gift is always invisible, outside of 'being,' manifested symbolically by the material gift.

The decisions of the giver and recipient concerning the gift also call for our attention. The giver has a privileged perspective regarding the gift: the giver's gaze which regards an object as the object of a *gift* grants the object its 'givability.'<sup>336</sup> And yet, interestingly, Marion does not say the 'givability' arises from a decision by the giver to be gracious: rather, "The gift begins and, in fact, is achieved as soon as the giver imagines that he *owes* something -- a gift without thing -- to someone, therefore when he recognizes himself not only in the situation of a givee but also first as a debtor."<sup>337</sup> Givability emerges regarding an object -- visible or invisible - - because the emerging giver recognizes himself as having already *received*; the giver recognizes both the potential gift as already-received and himself as a potential giver. As for the lover the critical moment is the moment of decision to advance (to 'love first'), so for the giver "the gift resides in the decision to give made by the potential giver, but [he] can decide only insofar as he yields to givability, that is to say, recognizes that an other gift already obliged him."<sup>338</sup> A giver realizes him-/herself as already a recipient, already-given-to, already-obliged. The giver gives the gift without expectation of return or gratitude, and 'abandons' the gift, leaving 'no strings attached.'

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<sup>335</sup> Marion, *BG*, 106.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 106-108.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 108. Emphasis added. It is interesting to note the priority of ethical obligation over the giver's decision.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

Reception of a gift requires its own decision, and includes its own challenge. First, acceptance of the gift requires acceptance of an obligation toward another person, whether in an expression of gratitude, a gift to the giver, or generosity toward others;<sup>339</sup> a gift “always imposes an ordeal” whether or how to accept the gift.<sup>340</sup> So Marion’s reduction to givenness brings the ‘acceptability’ of a gift to light. Reception requires “recognizing that one owes something -- (the gift) to something -- sometimes the giver. To decide to receive a gift ... demands receiving at the same time as the gift the knowledge and the acknowledgment of a debt. The gratuity of the gift is paid for with recognition -- of the gift and its very gratuity.”<sup>341</sup> In order to receive, the recipient must admit “that the principle ‘I don’t owe anything to anyone’ can, here at least, suffer an exception.”<sup>342</sup> The illusion of a fully-autonomous self cannot remain in light of receiving a gift. Apparent acceptance of the gift-item while refusing (or neglecting) the obligation is to *refuse the gift*.<sup>343</sup>

### **3.2.2. ‘Saturated Phenomena’**

A major concern for Marion is to correct modern philosophy’s excessive focus on the subject. The common modern notion of the autonomous subject developed out of the work of René Descartes (“I think, therefore I am”) and Immanuel Kant, whose critiques of reason and judgment reshaped Western thought according to the limits of human reason. Marion overturns these notions, calling for radically different notions of the possibilities for divine revelation and the self. His notion of givenness now includes phenomena that previously fell outside of Kantian

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<sup>339</sup> Cf. Marion, *BG*, 108-113.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>343</sup> Again Marion’s reduction to givenness calls only passing attention to the interaction between the givee and others, through the sense of obligation. I call attention, however, to how this sense of obligation openly implies -- indeed, ‘takes as given’ -- *relationship* with others. Marion eventually abandons language of obligation altogether.

rational limits (phenomena ‘saturated with intuition,’ “which I call paradoxes”), both restoring the possibility of divine revelation and prioritizing ‘what is given’ over the recipient.<sup>344</sup>

With the help of phenomenology, Marion takes on Kant’s categories of the understanding to demonstrate how phenomena saturated with intuition -- which overwhelm an observer’s intention -- are not irrational but rather transcend Kant’s criteria to excess in ‘saturated phenomena.’ Against Kant’s notion that only finite experiences can be considered real, Marion wants to examine phenomena that surpass Kant’s finite categories of human knowing. Such saturated phenomena are “*invisible* according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, absolute according to relation, irregardable according to modality.”<sup>345</sup> In each category the phenomenon cannot be reckoned with in the usual manner because of its excess of givenness. Such phenomena are paradoxes: their excess of intuition carries more rationality than the mind can bear: “In every case, recognizing the saturated phenomena comes down to thinking seriously ‘*aliquid quo majus cogitari nequit*.’”<sup>346</sup> Each category of Kant’s criteria (quantity, quality, relation, modality) thus has its paradoxical and excessive phenomenological counterpart. These four corresponding kinds of saturated phenomena (event, idol, flesh, icon) cannot be grasped within rational limits and so demand a ‘hermeneutic’ that accords with what it gives -- just as the Eucharist is only understood this way. This new category of ‘the saturated phenomenon’ creates room for experiences Kant would have considered unthinkable.

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<sup>344</sup> Marion, *BG*, 4.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 199; cf. 199-221. Translator Jeffrey L. Kosky writes: “*Invisible*, from *viser*, designates that which cannot be aimed at, meant, or intended. *Irregardable* designates what cannot be looked at or gazed upon.” *BG*, 363, notes 41 and 42. Thomas A. Carlson, translator of *God Without Being: Hors-texte*, says the term *invisible* was coined by Marion. Marion, *GWB*, 239n8.

<sup>346</sup> ‘Something than which a greater cannot be thought,’ a variation on Saint Anselm’s definition for God in his *Proslogion*. Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner and others (New York: Fordham, 2008), 48.

Idols and icons function here as *phenomenological* terms for paradoxical experiences of quantity and modality.<sup>347</sup> Marion develops his notion of the icon still further in his later writings as he incorporates the work of Emmanuel Lévinas.<sup>348</sup> The face functions in a particularly iconic way (phenomenologically) of its own. Marion even considers *each* face a kind of icon: “[O]nly the icon shows us a face (in other words ... every face is given as an icon);” faces are “not [merely] to be seen, but to be venerated.”<sup>349</sup> An ‘Other’ (otherwise inaccessible to us) both comes to manifestation for us through the face.

The importance of this? Modern philosophy’s incorrigible impasse of a subject-object dichotomy can be overcome; theology can speak of divine revelation without reducing or confining God’s gifts to human comprehension of concepts, language, or experience. More importantly for the development of the relational Eucharistic theology this dissertation aims at, givenness, saturated phenomena, idols and icons (as phenomena) all re-open horizons that relate not only phenomena to a self, but the nature of an encounter between persons -- and all they can give and receive from one another. These notions describe more accurately the impact of the divine gift -- i.e., the transformation of the self through changes in relation, existential questions, desire, and mission.

### **3.2.3. Critique of the Subject: Anamorphosis and L’adonné**

Beginning with *The Idol and Distance* and continuing throughout Marion’s writings (especially the phenomenological works) is “a thoroughgoing critique of ... the modern metaphysics centered on the active, spontaneous subject who occupies modern philosophy from

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<sup>347</sup> Examples include in *BG*, 206-209, 232-233; *IE* 104-127.

<sup>348</sup> Regarding Marion’s adoption of Lévinas’ notion of ‘the face of the Other,’ Cf. Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2001), 80, 91, 139-140, 167.

<sup>349</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 19.

Descartes through Hegel and Nietzsche.”<sup>350</sup> If modernity represented a philosophical ‘turn to the subject,’ Marion aims at a ‘(re)turn to the things themselves,’ particularly the saturated phenomenon, to let it set the conditions of the encounter. This turn to the things themselves -- especially in the case of the saturated phenomenon -- has strong implications for a proper notion of the self. The primacy of what the saturated phenomenon ‘gives itself as it shows itself’ over the self requires radically rethinking the self.

Through what Marion calls ‘anamorphosis,’ the bestowal of the saturated phenomenon gives not only ‘its own gift’ but even gives the recipient *the recipient’s own self*, so that the recipient is most properly named *l’adonné*.<sup>351</sup> *L’adonné* is “defined as he who receives and receives himself from the given.”<sup>352</sup> As a saturating phenomenon gives its ‘call’ (its summons), the recipient necessarily has a passive stance: so the self, usually imagined according to the nominative case (I, ego) is reconstituted according to the dative case (me). The recipient-self is ‘always late’ as its constitution *follows* upon the event of the phenomenon’s appearance: “this *self* can be attested only inasmuch as the phenomenon first gives itself.”<sup>353</sup> Therefore the ‘self’ does not exist as an autonomous subject, but is inverted by the call: it “*is constituted* and no longer constituting because it no longer has at its disposal any dominant point of view over the intuition that overwhelms it.... The *I*... becomes a *me* rather than an *I*.”<sup>354</sup> Marion calls this

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<sup>350</sup> Thomas A. Carlson, “Translator’s Introduction,” xii, in Marion, *ID*.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. Marion, *IE*, 44-53. *L’adonné* is Marion’s chief term for this notion of the self-as-recipient. In some instances Marion uses the term *interloqué*; cf. Cf. Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon,” in *The Visible and Revealed*, 44, 46. In *BG*, 248-319; 322-323. (trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky) *l’adonné* is translated as ‘the gifted.’

<sup>352</sup> Marion, *BG*, 322.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>354</sup> Marion, *SP*, 210-211, first emphasis added; cf. Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner and others, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, ed. John D. Caputo (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2008), 44. In this reversal or inversion of subjectivity, Marion acknowledges a debt to Lévinas: “Such a reversal of intentionality and phenomenality, passing from the object which is visible and aimed at to the face which aims and is thus non-visible, radically alters the entire horizon of phenomenological analysis, as we have all indeed noticed. In that much, we have all become Lévinasians, and definitively.” In Jeffrey Bloechl, ed., *Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas* (New York: Fordham, 2000), 225. Cf. Donald Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 77.

change from ego to witness ‘anamorphosis,’ which is “nothing less than a *conversion*.”<sup>355</sup> The dative case now characterizes one’s identity rather than the nominative; the recipient discovers oneself an ‘*interloqué*,’ one passively ‘spoken to’ by the giving phenomenon.<sup>356</sup> Because the self-recast-in-light-of-giveness, *l’adonné*, is always and only ‘constituted’ *after* a phenomenon gives itself, *l’adonné* is *able to receive the paradox* of the icon, of the face, of divine revelation. The paradoxical and saturated phenomenon can be received since it constitutes *l’adonné* who receives it.

This change of case in the self is far more than a grammatical change: the “constituting subject is succeeded by the constituted witness,” who permits the gaze of the invisible upon oneself.<sup>357</sup> As an example, Marion uses the Markan account of the rich young man (Mk. 10:17-22): the man kneels before Christ, exposing himself to Christ’s gaze, and beseeches his goodness. The “counter-gaze of [Christ]... constitutes ... its witness.... ‘Jesus gazed upon him and loved him’... instituting what [He] gazes upon. The gaze recognizes, establishes, and individualizes ... this electing gaze does not objectify or reify since it ends up loving.”<sup>358</sup> By receiving the counter-gaze which bestows an election, we enter upon the greatest possibility of ‘encounter,’ love.

#### **3.2.4. Encounter Between L’adonnés: The ‘Erotic Reduction’**

Having recast the subject as *l’adonné* through the reduction to givenness, a related topic emerges: encounter between persons, between *l’adonnés*. In what he calls the ‘radicalized’ form of the reduction to givenness, Marion examines the ‘erotic reduction:’ “an intrigue of one gifted

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Hereafter *DAE*. Nonetheless, Marion claims to proceed beyond Lévinas’ ethical reduction to the reduction to givenness.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Marion, *GR*, 64-65. For more on anamorphosis, cf. Marion, *BG*, 123-139.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Marion, *IE*, 44-53.

<sup>357</sup> Marion, *SP*, 211. The Christian as ‘witness’ who testifies: cf. Acts 1:8; Jn. 1:32-36; 19:35-36; 20:2, 30-31; 21:24-25; 1 Jn. 1:1-4; et al.

<sup>358</sup> Marion, *BG*, 240-241.

with another gifted defines exactly the space of the erotic reduction.”<sup>359</sup> We first examine Marion’s phenomenology of encounter between human beings, then his close reading of Augustine’s *Confessions* for a phenomenology of encounter between God and human beings (3.2.5.)

Unlike the modern notion of an autonomous subject, Marion claims that with *l’adonné* (the gifted), “defined as he who receives and receives himself from the given,”<sup>360</sup> the philosophical difficulties of ‘intersubjectivity’ are bypassed. Just as the subject-object dichotomy is overcome through the phenomenology of givenness, so now genuine encounter is possible since *l’adonné* “can receive ... the paradox classified as icon, the face.... To receive the Other ... no obstacle stands between the Other and the gifted.”<sup>361</sup> First, the Other is truly given ‘as Other’ (what shows itself gives itself). Second, the Other is truly received because, along with the gift of the Other, *l’adonné*’s genuine selfhood (as *l’adonné*) is received from the Other. Third, each face appears as an icon which paradoxically and absolutely saturates the category of relation with one another. An encounter is no longer a matter of ‘intersubjectivity’ or ‘interobjectivity’ but “*intergivenness*.... it is a case of one gifted giving itself to another gifted.”<sup>362</sup> This ‘space’ of encounter is the realm of the ‘erotic reduction.’

This transition within philosophy beyond mere sense-data phenomena to experiences of encounter and love is critical: it crosses a threshold between the vanity of mere being or existence and the (potential) ecstatic joy of loving. As Marion states, it restores love as a true philosophical concept, transcending ‘the order of reason’ to ‘the order of charity’s’ (Pascal)

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<sup>359</sup> Marion, *BG*, xi (2012 Preface). The erotic reduction “is not added to the third reduction (the given), nor is it confused with it; it radicalizes it by leading it to its utmost possibility.” Christina Gschwandtner calls the erotic reduction “a reduction where everything but the desire for love is bracketed.” Gschwandtner, *MT*, 90.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.



“erotic rationality.”<sup>363</sup> Ultimately, only the lover -- who is *l’adonné* -- understands “love’s paradoxical logic;”<sup>364</sup> therefore, “The lover is thus opposed to the cogitant.”<sup>365</sup> Marion traces this phenomenal revelation of love and its paradoxical logic through a series of questions. This section (3.2.4.) follows Marion’s ‘stages of development’ of love from the initial implicit desire for it to the decision to initiate love toward others. In the process Marion captures in compelling form the greatest human concerns, which do not ask about mere existence but the essence of living life meaningfully. This dissertation will later (3.4 below) employ these insights toward understanding the Eucharist as a ‘gift of desire.’

#### 3.2.4.1. ‘What’s the Use?’: Experience of Vanity

Modernity, having been shaped by its notion of the self as an autonomous subject, has been misguided in its concern for pure certainty concerning being and existence. In his *Discourse on Method* (1637) Descartes set out, by means of epistemological doubt, to arrive at absolute certainty of knowledge; his famous declaration ‘*cogito ergo sum*’ (‘I think, therefore I am’) assured the certainty of one’s existence. In *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion wants to change the starting point of inquiry toward something more fundamental and important than existence.<sup>366</sup> Certainty of one’s existence, asserts Marion, is insufficient for living, for such certainty is rendered meaningless by the mere question, ‘What’s the use?’<sup>367</sup> So *what* if one is certain of one’s own existence: such certainty does not give life meaning, vitality, or joy against the waves of vanity and absurdity that we encounter. Certainty of one’s existence only puts the self on par with mere objects: it gives no direction, purpose, or meaning to life which might

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<sup>363</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5. Originally published as *Le phénomène erotique*, Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003. Hereafter *EP*.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>366</sup> While Marion has a discussion of vanity in chapter 4 of *GWB*, his use of existential questions in *EP* provides a more concise and more helpful presentation.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. Marion, *EP*, §2, 16-19.

withstand ennui, vanity, melancholy, or boredom. Something more meaningful than metaphysical certainty of existence is demanded by human life against this nihilistic question, ‘What’s the use?’

3.2.4.2. ‘Does anybody out there love me?’: Dependence on ‘From Elsewhere’

In order to discover this meaningful certainty against vanity, “it is no longer a question of obtaining a certainty of being, but instead the response to another question—‘Does anybody love me?’”<sup>368</sup> Unlike scientific paradigms which reduce phenomena to objects whose existence (whether personal or objective) can be verified, Marion’s question accomplishes an ‘erotic reduction’ (an intensified version of the reduction to givenness), which examines life and the world under the standard of love. It requires a different sort of certainty, which Marion calls ‘assurance’: “I must discover myself as a given (and gifted) phenomenon, assured as a given that is free from vanity.”<sup>369</sup> Only assurance of oneself as loved, as a ‘given and gifted’ phenomenon, can overcome the threats of meaninglessness.

However, this love *must* also come “from elsewhere (*d’ailleurs*),” not oneself, as an event: “I am, not by being ... but insofar as I am loved.”<sup>370</sup> Only such a “radical event” from ‘outside the self’ which “determines originally *that which* I am by *that for whom* (or for which) I am.... according to the advent from elsewhere.... [S]omeone wills me from elsewhere” rescues from vanity.<sup>371</sup> We demand recognition by an *other* who recognizes me personally, and in such a way that we know it. This demand, however, Marion considers misguided, as it is inevitably frustrated. Marion says we must surrender the desire to be loved, and simply learn that loving others is the only ‘assurance of love’ readily available to us.

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<sup>368</sup> Marion, *EP*, 21.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

The attempt to claim or provide sufficient love of self by oneself is illusory: it requires more than one can give oneself. “To the question ‘Does anyone love me?’ ... only the excess that surprises and surpasses would suffice. Thus, to love myself, I would have to go beyond myself ... I would demand of myself an excess of myself over myself. But who can add one cubit to his stature?”<sup>372</sup> Assurance that is not ‘excessive’ -- in other words, beyond mere reciprocity or ‘market exchange’ -- is no assurance at all.

Upon looking inward for assurance, there arises recognition “I become a lack to myself... I am neither the principle, nor at the origin, of myself.”<sup>373</sup> A difficulty arises in that “love of self can indeed be proclaimed, but it cannot be performed.”<sup>374</sup> Awareness of this insufficiency -- even denial of it through claims of self-love -- only arouses self-hatred.<sup>375</sup> So the true nature of the self -- decentered, incapable of self-love, not autonomous -- is quite different from our common ‘experience of self.’ Marion’s notion of a non-egoic notion of self is hardly academic, however: it proves essential for escape from the conundrum of the need for love.

### 3.2.4.3. ‘Can I love first?’: Decision to Become a Lover

The illusion of the ego exacerbates the problem: for “the *ego* ... is completely ignorant of love’s paradoxical logic; it knows little about the lover within that it has not yet liberated; it only reads love as the expectation of and demand for an assurance at a reasonable price.”<sup>376</sup> In other words, the ego is thoroughly trapped and enmeshed in *reciprocal* or *market exchange* logic: the ego expects, demands, and negotiates in the interest of self-preservation -- all of which tend to

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<sup>372</sup> Marion, *EP*, 46.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 44. Only by experiencing oneself as beloved (by another) and as lover can ‘I’ “thus legitimately love myself... I love myself mediately, or rather I cease to hate myself through the other’s mediation, and not through myself... Loving oneself henceforward signifies that insofar as I discover myself to be a lover, and thus lovable, I will be able to end up by *loving even myself* -- I will be able to end up pardoning even myself, last of all, which is akin to pardoning the lowliest of all those lovable, the one who is most difficult to love.” *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

become corrosive of loving relationship. The true ‘self’ is not a single united entity, and the attempt to preserve the self (as it normally appears, as the ego) is vain. The chief obstacle consists in reciprocity itself: the demand that one be sufficiently loved before ‘expending’ oneself in love, the demand for a calculated profit from the bargain.

Trapped in reciprocal logic, “love ... remained prisoner to the iron law of reciprocity;”<sup>377</sup> the solution therefore lies beyond reciprocity. It is in a realm of excess which “poses the question of love without, however, submitting it to the prior condition of reciprocity, and thus of justice; that is to say, one that does not presuppose that assurance happens first for me.”<sup>378</sup> A liberation of love from reciprocity -- including the desire to *be* loved -- is necessary. For Marion, genuine loving goes much farther than reciprocity: it involves an excess of love for the other, which paradoxically supplies *the lover’s self* with the simple assurance of loving.

Marion claims this event of liberation issues “from me deep within an elsewhere that is more inward to me than me myself, preceded or validated by no assurance at all.”<sup>379</sup> Appearing quite suddenly, Marion does not describe more of this ‘elsewhere’ which is ‘within’ a person in *The Erotic Phenomenon*.<sup>380</sup> We can only surmise something more of it from his later text *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*.<sup>381</sup> For Augustine, *melius quod interius* -- ‘the better is the more interior.’<sup>382</sup> Augustine also confesses of God that “you were more interior [to

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<sup>377</sup> Marion, *EP*, 70.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>380</sup> The frequent allusions and affinity in *The Erotic Phenomenon* (published in French in 2003) -- without any mention of Augustine’s name -- to Augustinian thought was noted by scholars before Marion wrote *In the Self’s Place* in 2008. Cf. Eoin Cassidy, “Le phénomène érotique : Augustinian Resonances in Marion’s Phenomenology of Love,” in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds. Eoin Cassidy and Ian Leask, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham, 2005), 201-219. In his foreword to *In the Self’s Place*, Marion twice cites lectures on Augustine given in 2004 as the origin of the text. Cf. Marion, *ISP*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>381</sup> Marion wrote *EP* in 2003, *ISP* in 2008.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. *Confessions* X, 6, 9, 14, 156; Marion, *ISP*, 97.

me] than what is most inward in me and higher than the most high in me.”<sup>383</sup> Putting Marion’s (and Augustine’s) texts together in this way, it appears Marion describes what theology would call an interior moment of grace -- albeit reduced from whatever could have mediated its arising.<sup>384</sup> Since *The Erotic Phenomenon* is written as a philosophical discussion of love, Marion is being careful to stay strictly within the limits of phenomenology, which can speak of givenness but not of *grace* in a theological sense, which posits a divine Giver and Gift. Perhaps, having already been criticized for ‘smuggling in’ a divine giver in his previous phenomenological work, Marion omits any explicit reference to God here, though he does at the end of *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Marion acknowledges God as the giver of love to all; any connection to God stirring the soul ‘from elsewhere’ toward loving is left implied. While attribution of this moment to grace is not so problematic within a theological investigation (such as here), it exemplifies a philosophical problem raised by Marion’s critics. Furthermore, by itself Marion’s assertion -- cryptic, mysterious, and working ‘*ex machina*’ even *with* the help of the Augustinian texts -- implies people are readily as keenly aware of their thoughts, desires, and questioning as Augustine. Yet how many people in history have persevered as successfully as Augustine did in such pursuit of interior clarity and truth?

According to Marion, love’s liberation from reciprocity -- a crucial step -- arises when one asks “‘Can I love first?’ ... which means, to behave like a lover who gives himself, rather than like one who is loved tit for tat.”<sup>385</sup> While appearing from an ‘elsewhere’ that arises ‘from

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<sup>383</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 97. Cf. *Confessions* III, 6, 11, 13, 382. Interestingly, Bret Saunders cites this Augustinian passage as used by Marion to denote distance.

<sup>384</sup> *EP* concludes with the realization that God is the first and last lover, whose revelation of Godself as love serves as the paradigm of ‘the lover’s advance.’ Cf. Marion, *EP*, 221-222.

<sup>385</sup> Marion, *EP*, 70-71. Strangely, Marion neither accounts for nor mentions the *possibility* of an external mediation (e.g. by dialogue with others) of the question (‘Can I love first?’) which allows an escape from vanity and reciprocity. By itself, Marion’s attribution of this question’s arising to an exclusively interior movement of grace can create problematic notions: either that one can (and ought to) discover it with enough introspection, or of a ‘predestination’ of those able to ask it and those unable. An exploration of how the witness of the Church can (and

within,' the assurance a lover used to seek from others is provided by *the lover's own decision* to love others -- "which is enough. The lover finds an absolute assurance in love—not the assurance of being, nor of being loved, but that of loving."<sup>386</sup> The threshold of loving is the threshold of genuine 'selfhood,' genuine living: "I do not become myself when I simply think, doubt, or imagine, because others can think my thoughts ... ; nor do I become myself when I will, desire, or hope.... But I become myself definitively each time and for as long as I, as lover, can love first."<sup>387</sup> The previous demands -- to receive love first, and that my love be reciprocated -- are forsaken; concern for the *beloved* exceeds concern for oneself.

The radically creative nature of love appears in light of the lover's *initiative*: "in loving without reciprocity, the lover loves without reason;" just as war breaks out without good reason, "the lover.... declares his love ... without any reason.... The lover thus renders the beloved possible."<sup>388</sup> Marion calls this radical decision to love 'the principle of insufficient reason,' not because it lacks a rationale but because of "a failure of reason itself to give reasons for the initiative to love."<sup>389</sup> Reason, held captive by a logic of exchange and reciprocity, cannot conceive or imagine the paradoxical logic of charity which liberates the self.

Other stages follow in Marion's account of the erotic phenomenon (oaths, the flesh, witness) culminating in yielding to God in an *adieu: à Dieu*. Vowing one's future and flesh for the good of the Other, a lover offers all one's time and person in the vulnerable space of self-abandoning love. The final movement of yielding to God is an important one for expressing a decisive moment of self-abandoning love, especially as it clearly implies relation toward an Other. Marion's text concludes by acknowledging God as the first and perfect lover of all.

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ought to) mediate the possibility for oneself of 'initiating' (actually, responding to God's) love would be a helpful corrective.

<sup>386</sup> Marion, *EP*, 74.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 79, 85.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

In *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion points out the self-awareness and decisions required to become a lover. These stages are compelling both descriptively and prescriptively: they can guide people toward a mature approach to living and loving. Certain features of the liturgy of the Eucharist can serve as catalysts for growth into this approach when understood in this light, shaping desires toward decision to become a lover.

### **3.2.5. Encounter of the Desire of L'adonné with God**

Marion admits he is “not so optimistic about desire as some are;” his comments on desire are sparse, even in a text on love such as *The Erotic Phenomenon*.<sup>390</sup> Marion may also be suspicious of desire as an obstacle to ‘receiving what is given’ as it is, since desires can confine phenomena to the wishes or logic of the recipient and create idols (in the phenomenological sense). Despite the limitations he sees in regarding desire and the minor role it plays in his thought, his commentary on desire (particularly in a close reading of Augustine’s *Confessions*) offers profound insight into the divine-human encounter. While Marion does not directly relate desire to the Eucharist, this material will contribute significantly to the relational Eucharistic theology I am proposing.

#### **3.2.5.1. Qualifying Desire**

To frame Marion’s analysis of desire properly, we first note four qualifications he places on desire.<sup>391</sup> First, desire is more fundamental and more encompassing than even the ‘desire to know’ of which Aristotle speaks: “Desire is prior to the philosophical intention to know and has to be taken seriously as such.”<sup>392</sup> The (mere) desire to know imposes a ‘logic of the Same,’ the will to power seeking to dominate by means of knowledge; thus Marion says that to discuss

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<sup>390</sup> Kearney, “Dialogue,” 20.

<sup>391</sup> Cf. Alvis, *MDGD*, 79-96.

<sup>392</sup> Kearney, “Dialogue,” 20.

desire “we have to get rid of the horizon of Being” and look further.<sup>393</sup> Desire, rather, must be re-thought according to the primacy of givenness (namely, love) over all else. A second insufficient notion of desire is mere biological need: such desire is based on lack, destroyed by excess, and does not survive its fulfillment. Third, Marion also finds desire problematic since it can unwittingly distort clear thought and provoke a refusal of phenomena ‘as they give themselves’ on their own terms. For instance, humans’ desire for permanence is often projected onto God as a concept of God’s eternal and unchanging nature; desire can therefore lead to idolatrous notions. Fourthly, desire is something far greater than what psychoanalysis deems it, an unconscious drive. With these qualifications in mind, we proceed to Marion’s commentary on desire as it relates toward God.

Positively, the desire of which Marion speaks in a specialized sense is a spiritual rather than biological desire. Marion refers to Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Song of Songs* for its proper articulation. The desire operative here is a “non-biological, non-ontical desire, which is not based on lack... the more it is fulfilled, the more there is a rebirth of desire, without end.... [It] is nourished by excess, not destroyed by it.”<sup>394</sup> Given scriptural warrant in Saint Paul (Phil. 3:12-14), it is a constant spiritual ‘striving’ (*epektasis*) toward God.<sup>395</sup> Rather than vanishing with its fulfillment, desire as *epektasis* is “an infinite movement from fulfillment to renewal of desire, in which the *capacity for God is constantly enlarged* or dilated according to the measureless

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Ibid., 21. “So there is a real equivocality about concepts like will, desire, and so on. And that equivocality is further evidence that there really is some limitation to metaphysics.”

<sup>395</sup> Phil. 3:12-14: ‘Not that I have already obtained this [that is, resurrection from the dead] or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward [*epekteinomenos*] to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.’ Cf. Stephen E. Lewis, “The Lover’s Capacity in Jean-Luc Marion’s *The Erotic Phenomenon*,” in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. John R. White, 1:1 (Fall 2010), 239. Hereafter “Lover’s Capacity.” Marion also refers to *epektasis* in a discussion of the Eucharist’s temporal orientation toward the future in *GWB*, 173-176, 181.



measure of ‘He who comes.’”<sup>396</sup> This desire is fulfilled in eternal beatitude, “where each fulfillment is a new *arche*, without end.”<sup>397</sup> Eternal beatitude fulfills a desire, not for ‘possession’ of an object or an Other, but for *participation in living communion* which nonetheless includes and maintains distance.

### 3.2.5.2. Desire for God: Gift of Being Drawn in Love

Marion presents desire in light of revelation in *Givenness and Revelation*, beginning with Augustine’s gloss on John 6:44 (‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him’). Since divine revelation sets the context for discussion, desire serves a positive function, the desire for God. Building on Augustine’s notion that “revelation itself is what draws” the soul to God (*Ista attractio, ipsa est revelatio*) and that God satisfies the hunger for righteousness (cf. Mt. 5:6), Marion concludes that “A desire, then, that is, a will, is indeed necessary if God is to fill it.”<sup>398</sup> So desire is indicative of a certain lack, but only because divine excess keeps expanding *l’adonné’s* capacity for God. Desire is operative in the experience of faith in God, in that the *divine excess* of love, goodness, and truth prompts a more eager desire and still-greater fulfillment.

Marion characterizes desire and love for God as primarily *passive* experiences of ‘being drawn:’ quoting Augustine, “‘The soul is drawn [to God] also by love – *trahitur animus et amore*.’”<sup>399</sup> The soul is drawn to God “very little through my will;” Marion says that “I am drawn ... instead and above all *through the desire for my pleasure* (*‘parum est voluntate, etiam voluptate traheris’*).”<sup>400</sup> Therefore, Marion concludes, “Not only are we permitted (*licet*), but we

<sup>396</sup> Lewis, “Lover’s Capacity,” 239. Emphasis added. Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “De quoi l’*ego* est-il capable? Divinisation et domination: *capable/capax*,” in *Questions cartésiennes I: Méthode et métaphysique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991), 138. Hereafter *QCI*. Cf. Lewis, “Lover’s Capacity,” 239.

<sup>397</sup> Kearney, “Dialogue,” 21.

<sup>398</sup> Marion, *GR*, 39. Cf. St. Augustine, *Tractates 11-27*, 264.

<sup>399</sup> *Tractates 11-27*, 262. Translation modified by Marion.

<sup>400</sup> St. Augustine, *Tractates 11-27*, 262. Emphasis added.

must (*debemus*) admit that we are ‘drawn,’ swept along, pulled by the desire for pleasure when we love.”<sup>401</sup> The natural human desire for pleasure acts as a hook by which God draws people to Himself. Here Marion’s understanding of love -- which dominates his notion of revelation, if not founds his phenomenology of givenness -- and human desire are linked.

For Marion this link concerns “nothing less than the logic of love: ‘*Amando trahitur*—By loving, one is drawn.’”<sup>402</sup> Again the self is not an autonomous subject exerting its will (to power) to ‘move toward God,’ but one who yields to the gift of being drawn. More precisely, “the spreading of this attraction into hearts (through the Holy Spirit) must be understood as what is proper to God in loving and causing love.”<sup>403</sup> This experience of ‘being drawn’ to God by love *through* the human desire for pleasure occurs at the prompting of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5) which fills the will or desire.

The love and desire for God converge in the decision for faith -- itself a *relation* amid a certain distance from God, a situation of lack. The autonomous subject never ‘generates’ its own movement toward God, but rather love, desire, and faith are *received as gifts*: “We will [belief in God] only when we love that which we desire; and in the case of God, we *receive this desire (desire for pleasure) from God* alone: ‘A person is drawn to Christ who is given the gift to believe in Christ. ... Unless this power is given by God, it cannot arise from free choice, because it will not be free ... if the deliverer has not set it free.’”<sup>404</sup> Thus desire, love, faith, the action of the Holy Spirit, and gift all intertwine: the believing self -- *l’adonné* -- has yielded to a *gift of desire for God* it has received from God. The gift of divine revelation also allows the natural

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<sup>401</sup> St. Augustine, *Tractates 11-27*, 262.

Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 60.

<sup>402</sup> Marion, *GR*, 40. Cf. *Tractates 11-27*, 264. Translation modified by Marion.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. Emphasis added.

desire for God to know what it already loves and seeks, circumventing the need to perceive and know prior to loving.

### 3.2.5.3. Reading Augustine's Confessions on Desire

To observe the dynamics of desire within the erotic reduction, we turn to Marion's reading of the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine of Hippo. Marion analyzes the encounter of God, who is both the fulfillment of desire for the *vita beata* and the fullness of truth, with a human being who undergoes an 'ordeal of the self.' While desire remains a minor topic amid Marion's *oeuvre*, I will employ this sustained treatment of it in *In the Self's Place* as an important contribution toward a relational Eucharistic theology.<sup>405</sup>

In his *Confessions*, Augustine sets out to answer the 'great question' he 'became' to himself ('*Factus eram mihi magna quaestio*').<sup>406</sup> Intellect and memory prove insufficient to answer Augustine's question, but study of desire offers a fuller self-understanding. This section will explore the dynamics of desire Marion finds in Augustine's *Confessions* in detail, as it radically challenges the common-sense notion of the self and (therefore) of how to live.

The fact of desire is self-evident; the question of its origin is not. The modern/Cartesian (and Nietzschean) notion considers the egoic self as the origin of desire, but according to Marion this is quite false (as noted above). Rather, Marion asserts, desire acts *upon* and within me, but not as 'my own' possession or accomplishment; it is known but not comprehended.<sup>407</sup> The 'self' is passive in view of desire, which acts upon the self and is not under the domain of the self.

Initiative *per se* belongs to the desire, not the self. Arising from beyond the self, desire makes a profound claim on a person. Extrinsic as desire's origin and goal may be, it reveals something

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<sup>405</sup> Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, Cultural Memory in the Present, eds. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 44. Hereafter *ISP*.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, IV, 1,9,13,422. Marion, *ISP*, 44.

<sup>407</sup> Cf. Marion, *ISP*, 83. Girard will likewise attribute the origin of desire as arising 'from outside' the self, but as the result of imitation ('mimesis') of others' desires.

crucial: desire “is *something I receive and respond to in person*, as such. My desire—or more exactly, that to which I respond and commit myself—knows better who I am than my (intentional) thought ever will.”<sup>408</sup> Desire -- and its claim on what I want, therefore on my life -- is *received as a gift*: it too manifests itself as a given, to *l’adonné*. It orients me to my ipseity and calls for a response. Against the modern/Cartesian notion of desire as the product of an ego or will, Marion recognizes desire is a gift from an ‘other.’

What do people desire most? The *vita beata*: the happy life, blessed life. All desire it, even if it is unattainable in this life. This universal desire is primarily present to us in neither concepts nor intellection but in the “*memoria*.... The desire for the happy life ... inhabits us like the immemorial... in and through our desiring.”<sup>409</sup> All have this inherent desire for the *vita beata*. This requires we refashion our notion of the self: “the ego must now be recognized as [one] who originally desires ... more originally than as *cogitans*, it is put in play as *amans*, lover. And, for the lover, the question ... consists in deciding ... what [one] loves.”<sup>410</sup> Love and desire are thereby related to one another. The self is constituted according to this desiring:

I am, certainly, but inasmuch as I love (and desire the *vita beata*). The lover loves so radically that loving decides everything about himself and first of all his being. Accordingly, to reach himself, he does not have to master an *ousia* ... but reach what he loves; and to know himself, he does not have to be preoccupied with knowing *himself* but with knowing (or at least identifying) what truly is decisive for himself—namely, what he loves in truth.<sup>411</sup>

Loving, therefore, is the proper response to the immemorial gift of desire for the *vita beata*.

What -- or rather, whom -- one *loves* is thus more decisive, more determinative of the self than either one’s being or what one thinks: “desire for the blessed life ... thus turns out to be the

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 84. Emphasis added.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>411</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 96.

principle of the search, more radically than I myself.”<sup>412</sup> Marion’s reading of the principle of desire in Augustine’s *Confessions* unveils a path for us to the *true self* to which neither scientific knowledge nor impersonal metaphysics offers access. In so many words, ‘Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ (Mt. 6:21; Lk. 12:34).

Desire ‘possesses us’ more than we ‘possess’ or control desire; it also *identifies us* more than we identify what we desire, ‘locating’ part of the self elsewhere. Furthermore, desire is not so much a substance as a *lack*, an absence of what (or whom) one desires. The relation between desire and love is brought to light by Marion through desire’s lack:

[N]othing belongs to me more than that which I desire, for that is what I lack; that which I lack defines me more intimately than everything that I possess .... And, more than anything, the lover only desires the one ... who decided him, the lover, to desire; for desire ... is born in the lover just this side of explanations and of justifications.... Born of the pure lack of the other, the lover’s desire affects him without his truly knowing why.... I become myself ... when I discover and finally admit the one that I desire; that one alone shows me my most secret center—that which I lacked and still lack.... My desire speaks me to myself.<sup>413</sup>

Desire manifests something of my fuller, true self as *l’adonné* to myself. It also implies a *relation* to an Other -- the Giver of the *vita beata* -- to which we must pay attention.<sup>414</sup>

Desire arises when an object is located at a distance from me, and operates by virtue of lack (distance and absence). It was precisely such lack, distance from, and absence of the ‘full’ self and the *vita beata* that prompted Augustine’s *magna quaestio* of the self. The manifestation of an object or person as a good at some distance from me sparks desire. Furthermore, we see how admitting what one desires -- *confessing* both the object of desire *and* my *lack of it* -- plays

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>413</sup> Marion, *EP*, 108.

<sup>414</sup> This technical sense of ‘relation’ that desire implies is not to be confused with the common notion of interpersonal *relationship* (such as a friendship). Marion writes extensively about how lovers *approach* or encounter one another, but largely in a fleeting manner that needs constant maintenance (as a loving relationship would cease if one or the other people cease loving). Further comment on the absence of relationship (beyond such fleeting moments) in Marion will come later in this chapter.

into awareness of one's true self. Contrary to what one might expect, I do not 'acquire' or come to possess 'the rest of myself' like any other object; instead, the self is radically challenged *to become* like the gift it receives, existentially. As desire 'speaks' -- 'calls' -- to me (*l'adonné*), my proper response is a confession of its 'taking possession' of me through a kind of obedience to what gives itself: the gift of desire for the *vita beata*. A response of loving (without seeking reciprocity) brings about and expresses a transformation according to 'what gives itself,' which was from the first a gift of love, from the one who loved us first, God. The ego-driven and self-asserting 'I' is distended, expanding into a true self that abides in *loving* rather than mere biological life.

As desired yet not attained, the true self is at a distance from the egoic self, not as a spatial distance, but an 'interior distance': "The distance from the ego to the self's place opens inside the self, not toward the exterior, for this interior alone opens onto what the lover loves."<sup>415</sup> In one's 'interior,' God, who is 'more interior to me than my own self,' appears (*interior intimo meo* -- *Confessions*, III, 6, 11, 13, 382). Within this interior realm converge desire, the *vita beata*, God, the place of the self, and the distance between myself and that place: "If God occupies ... the place of the *vita beata*, therefore the place of my desire, then he ... reveals my final and originary place.... that becomes my *self* more interior to me than my private ego.... God appears as the place of *self* that I want and have to become."<sup>416</sup> For Marion this exposes the lie of the modern egoic/autonomous self; the 'self' is not (strictly speaking) one's 'own.'

Instead, God is revealed as 'the place of self,' issuing a call by means of desire for this true self over one's private ego. 'What I love' elicits an existential call, raising a question of the self I am called to become. Again, this call gives itself to me from a distance: "And thus I am

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<sup>415</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 97.

<sup>416</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 97.

not from myself nor in myself because I am ... what I love.... The *cogito, sum* is carried away toward the *interior intimo meo*.<sup>417</sup> In fact ... *I happen upon and to myself*: 'Here [in memory, in the immemorial] I happen upon myself, and I am recalled [to myself].'<sup>418</sup> The true self thus appears to me by means of desire as its own phenomenon, which 'happens' to its recipient, the gifted (*l'adonné*), the dative 'me.' The *vita beata* I desire above all else, the true self, 'happens to me' as the gift of God, arriving from a 'distance.' All this goes against the Cartesian notion of the self and changes the true nature of living: "I am not when and each time that I decide to be by deciding to think. I am each time that, as lover and as gifted, I *let the immemorial come over me, as a life that does not belong to me* and ... inhabits me more intimately than myself."<sup>419</sup> Rather than 'possessing certainty' of oneself, the true self lives by loving without possessing, receiving its self and life as gifts.

So together, anamorphosis and desire (especially as 'lack') 'decenter' the 'location' of the self: they reveal aspects of the self beyond one's own powers or comprehension. Receptivity and the influence of desire must qualify our notion of the self; they set the person toward a fuller truth. The fulfillment the self seeks, however, can only occur through encounter with truth, which "has its own rigor and imposes its own demands.... [It] imposes a cost upon those who would receive and fulfill it."<sup>420</sup> The *vita beata* can be received only by one ready to accept truth on its own terms, namely, God's terms. For God is not only 'Goodness' beyond all thought and 'cause' of the *vita beata*, but "'highest and more inward truth' (*summa et interior veritas*)."<sup>421</sup> To attain the *vita beata* requires remaining in the presence of God's truth and all it illuminates, by

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>418</sup> *Confessiones* X, 8, 14, 14, 166. Cf. Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 100. Emphasis added. Marion's exploration of *memoria* by way of 'the immemorial' in Augustine is another way the true 'self' is distended beyond the reach (and especially grasp) of the ego or intellect. Cf. Ibid., 69-80.

<sup>420</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 101.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid. Cf. *De vera religione* XX, 38, 8, 72.

confessing God's transcendence and our own sinfulness. However, we struggle to accept or enjoy the truth because it reveals our nature as creatures (not autonomous gods unto ourselves) and of our self-inflicted deformity: sin. "The joining of beatitude and truth—which, in fact, demands nothing less than God—becomes the knot and the nut of desire" -- because beatitude cannot be separated from truth.<sup>422</sup> The true goal of desire makes stern claims upon those who desire it.

To desire *vita beata* without accepting its terms of confession of the truth (of God's transcendence and one's own sin) places the self in a conflicted condition, a state of self-contradiction: "what truth puts into evidence is imposed with such power, that [one] who should receive it can also, sometimes or even most often, not be sufficient for it."<sup>423</sup> The phenomenology of this manifestation -- this advent -- of the *vita beata* paired with truth is described below.

What began as 'aiming' oneself toward the 'incomprehensible' God through prayer becomes a matter of receiving a scandalous truth along with the gift of the *vita beata*: If the happiness I desire will be not mere fantasy but true, not temporary but *eternal*, it will be possible only by abiding in the full truth of God. However, the revelation of truth about ourselves, as creatures and as sinners, is difficult for the ego to bear. The divine *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* not only attracts but repels -- an aspect often overlooked. This unity of beatitude and truth ('the knot and the nut of desire') is hardly pure bliss for human beings to receive; it also scandalizes in that it calls *ourselves* into question, demands an account from us, demands a decision about oneself with no chance to avoid it. Truth's excess demands a person decide in *only* one of two possible ways: "either by the ordeal of bearing its excess ... finding himself

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 108.



affected, modified, altered; or [conversely] by dodging this excess, at the price of a retreat before the evidence, of a retreat far from the true.”<sup>424</sup> The gift of truth provokes and scandalizes by forcing a decision that has ultimate consequences for its recipient; the decision concerns one’s *relation* to the truth that is also beatitude. This decision, however, necessarily concerns one’s entire self; for this reason it is also a decision about which one cannot remain indifferent.

Divine truth thus provokes a crisis: it compels a person to decide toward love or hatred of truth; *concurrently* this decision inflicts a judgment *upon oneself*. The alternatives are either (and only) acceptance of the truth or “rejection ... which does not lead to extinguishing or obfuscating [truth] ... but only to attempting not to see it ... attempting not to see *oneself* illuminated by it; ... hiding from oneself the fact that one cannot hide from it.”<sup>425</sup> This is the threshold between scientific truth (knowledge ‘about’ things) and *existential* truth. As a result, Marion notes, the “contrary of truth is not found simply in error or falsehood but in lying: wanting to keep, in addition to the true, the false, because one loves it as much as, indeed more than, the true.”<sup>426</sup> Lying to *oneself*, by denying what the light of truth reveals about oneself, can even appear pleasing at first, since such denial provides temporarily relief for the wounded ego. Accepting the truth -- not merely *about* God, but *of* God and the self -- requires acceptance of the pain associated with being exposed by it: the pain experienced in the loss of lies one tells about and to oneself.

This is hardly a decision about mere evidence: it necessarily includes a decision *by confession* concerning oneself. Refusal or acceptance of truth’s evidence entails a hatred or love of truth which changes the self; hence “Truth is no longer defined merely by the two values of

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>425</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 110. The aspect of ‘hiding’ from the truth stirs allusions to the first man and woman hiding after they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. After eating its fruit they hide from shame, first from themselves and each other (sewing fig leaves), and from God as they hear him walking in the garden (Gen. 3:6-10).

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 111-112.

truth (the true and the false) but ultimately by the two effects (and two modes of attunement) produced in me by its evidence.”<sup>427</sup> While perhaps a single encounter with truth becomes ultimately decisive for some people, for most such encounters and decisions concerning truth (and oneself) would occur across a personal history, even a lifetime.

By refusal of the truth, recipients deceive themselves. Piling up ‘objectively true’ evidence will do nothing to convince or change the recipient unless the recipient surrenders the egoic self and confesses the truth of God and the self. The contrary of existential truth is found in lying to oneself, in “wanting to keep, in addition to the true, the false, because one loves it as much as, indeed more than, the true,”<sup>428</sup> not simply in falsehood.

Before God’s saturating self-revelation -- particularly in Christ the Icon of the invisible God -- I discover at opposite ends: a) my true self in God’s truth, which is eternal life; and b) a false egoic self accused by the exposure of its sins and lies. My decision boils down to bearing the truth or loving my false self: truth “obliges me to choose: either refuse the truth so as not to have to bear it and to remain what I now am, or accept it and make it incumbent on me to become other than what I now am.”<sup>429</sup>

This existential decision for love and humility (or conversely, hatred and pride) before God also has epistemological consequences. Truth is more readily knowable for the one who loves it, and hidden from one who hates it. The one who loves the truth joins Augustine in his twofold *confessio* before God: confession of one’s own sins and confession of God’s praises. Those who hate the truth commit “the originary lie”: they want complete possession of the good for themselves and by themselves rather than by participation in God.<sup>430</sup> The sin consists of

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>428</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 111-112.

<sup>429</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 119.

<sup>430</sup> Cf. Ibid., 122.

“appropriating [the beauty and truth of God] without *receiving* it, without having to pass through the *reception of a gift*.”<sup>431</sup> As creatures distinct from God, our only participation in beauty, truth, goodness, or being is precisely by virtue of God -- they must be received as gifts, contingent as our own existence is: “the good evaporates precisely because it finds itself possessed, therefore finally lost.”<sup>432</sup> The reality of the self as *l’adonné* -- gifted -- is fundamentally incompatible with an egoic self: this ordeal is resolved only by a decision between these two opposing realities.

Unfortunately the will too often -- in fact, always -- proves insufficient to commit the self in deed to loving the good; one must ask God for the grace to do it. The decision to love and do the truth “does not depend on [oneself], since it is about loving and loving must be received. Here a new principle intervenes: ‘*Da quod jubes et jube quod vis*’ (‘Grant what you command, and command what you will’).”<sup>433</sup> Just as any participation in beauty and truth must be received as a gift and by participation in God’s beauty and truth, so God’s commands to love may only be fulfilled *as gifts received* from God: “I will not love because I will have decided; I will not decide, therefore, because I will have willed it but because I will receive it as a gift.”<sup>434</sup> Verification of this comes in times of temptation, when “the self learns if it loves what it received as a gift and if it loves this gift more than anything else.”<sup>435</sup> In other words, reception of God’s gifts involves *recognition* of grace, its giver, and oneself as recipient -- who is in turn called to *conform to this giving*. The very nature of this event, this phenomenon, *as gift* contains in turn the gift of the *desire and freedom* to conform to this gift -- that is, love -- ‘with all one’s heart, with all one’s soul, with all one’s strength, and all one’s mind’ (cf. Dt. 6:5): all one’s desire, life, even body and blood.

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 123. Emphases added.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 155. Cf. *Confessions* X, 29, 40, 14, 210.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

Gradually, by way of receptivity and desire, the truth who alone fulfills our desire and selfhood comes to light. This fulfillment comes with its own terms, namely confession of the truth about oneself and God. Decisions about the gift of the *vita beata*, oneself, and relation to God all converge, as either receptivity or refusal of God's gifts. This dissertation will include this 'ordeal of the self' in its encounter with God as part of a fuller sense of what it means 'to receive the Eucharist,' as participants must recognize themselves as 'not worthy that Christ should come under their roof' and in need for the Lamb of God to take away sins. Participants must reckon with receiving and communing with the Body and Blood of Christ, becoming more fully aware of living as a member of the ecclesial Body of Christ, and deciding to live according to either one's own will or the call which declares 'Do this in memory of me.'

By learning to see oneself from the point of view of God-who-is-love (by means of accepting the gift of His Word) one eventually -- in the end, according to Marion -- learns of oneself as loveable. This is learned not for the sake of reinforcing one's ego or self-image but in order to liberate the self from egoic self-concern. "In fact, the real issue is to abandon [the egoic] point of view ... in order to see oneself as God alone sees us: as *lovable*, however deformed we might have let ourselves become."<sup>436</sup> The word of the God-who-is-love bestows the possibility for a person to love oneself, in a sort of interruption. Proper love of self itself becomes a gift bestowed through the mediation of God and others: "I discover myself lovable through the other's grace; ... because ... the other convinced me ... that I am worth it. *I love myself mediate*ly, or rather I cease to hate myself through the other's mediation."<sup>437</sup> While God loves us first, perfectly, and always, the mediation of others plays an essential role in opening the way to a

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<sup>436</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 44.

<sup>437</sup> Marion, *EP*, 213. Emphasis added.

proper (i.e., non-egoic) love for oneself. The potential role of the human community and its capacity to mediate God's love ought not be overlooked.

Through Marion's reading of Augustine, we learn that the encounter of the gift of God with our desire for beatitude includes revelation of our distance from God. Both as creatures and as sinners, every encounter with the true God compels either confession of truth (our sins, and praise of God) or lying to ourselves and God (attempting to hide from truth). Our self-understanding is challenged as we discover the 'place' of the true self is in God, not in our egoic or autonomous selves. This also challenges our relation to others, for whom we are suddenly responsible. The divine gift awakens us to our distance from God, ourselves, and others -- but it also bestows precisely what traverses these distances: the gift of agapic love.

### **3.3 Critical Reception of Marion's Contributions**

In the following sections I will first offer my own observations about Marion's contributions to Eucharistic theology as well as offer some critiques. Then following Marion's impact, strengths, and weaknesses as noted by the scholarly community, I propose applications of Marion's thought for Eucharistic theology.

#### **3.3.1. Marion's Eucharistic Theology**

##### **3.3.1.1. Contributions**

Marion restores the place of God's love -- for which metaphysics is insufficient to give account -- as the principle of Eucharistic *theology*. The priority of love and goodness over onto-theological categories of being, substance, and causality has important ramifications. For theology in general and liturgical theology in particular, what the gospel reveals -- what 'gives itself' -- celebrates God's steadfast love which "is better than life" (Ps. 63:3), not substantial

changes in objects, miraculous as those may be. Marion's thought re-reveals the God whose love *exceeds* reciprocity, whose pure grace goes beyond mere exchange to total kenotic self-gift.

While exceeding reciprocity, God's love still demands a response from the recipient, and indeed such a response concerns *l'adonné's* very self much more than particular theological propositions. Marion's reduction of matters to life's deepest concerns through the erotic reduction reminds us of the urgency for theology and philosophy to respond and speak to such concerns.

Eucharistic theology in the West, particularly since medieval times, became increasingly preoccupied with the philosophical categories of substance, accident, presence, cause, and effect, all of which did little to enrich the nature of the mass as a liturgical celebration -- only begging the question Marion poses to all metaphysics: 'What's the point?' Instead, just as real gifts transcend both materialism and metaphysics, the gift of the Eucharist is not to be over-identified with the *items*, the way a newlywed would be remiss to value a wedding ring more than the spouse making a self-gift. Marion's erotic reduction reaffirms the necessity of inquiry into the relationship of human desire(s) with the encounter with God.

Marion's discussions of the gift merit their own attention for Eucharistic theology, even though for phenomenological purposes he emphasizes the exclusion of any economical notion of gift with giver, gift, and givee. His own notion of the Eucharist as a gift which must be received *as such* in its contingency and transparency is a very helpful step in this direction, yet there are still more fruitful corollaries to draw from his thought. For one example, Marion's discussions of gift restore a way to speak of the *revelatory* aspect of the liturgical celebration. Without *some* kind of recognition of the Eucharist's nature as contingent (as gift of free love) and transparent

(referring to the persons of the Trinity), the Eucharist gets reduced within the idolatrous limits of sense perception.

Marion's interpretation of 'trinitarian play' displaces (in a quite creative way) any notion of disciples as merely passive recipients. Rather, for disciples to have been given Christ's 'trinitarian place' to bless the Father and the world by their work animates a more active notion of discipleship of living as members of the ecclesial Body of Christ, a basic scriptural theme. Such disciples are both fully receptive and dependent before God *and* yet fully responsible and active in the world: this is a difficult balance rarely articulated in theology. It corrects problematic notions of the Church as either a holy society serving itself or as mere agent of social change.

### 3.3.1.2. Critiques

Exploration of Marion's thought with 'relational Eucharistic theology' in mind calls forth some aspects for further development. First, the absence of discussion of relationship among persons (whether with God or one another), despite his analysis of encounters, represents a shortcoming in Marion's thought. Three other critiques of Marion's thought will then be addressed: 1) its absence of preparation, catechesis, or practices; 2) the absence of active cooperation with the gift; and 3) the absence of commentary on the Institution Narrative.

First, despite his detailed phenomenological descriptions of encounter between persons (or a person and God in *In the Self's Place*), his limited discussion of sustained relationship becomes problematic. While Marion writes at length concerning the emergence of *l'adonné* through the call of the other, and speaks briefly of the oath between committed lovers (or their 'crossing of gazes'), he does not speak of ongoing relationship(s) between selves, even between a married couple or God and a disciple. Part of this difficulty is likely born from the

phenomenological method, which only speaks from the first person singular; even so it brackets an essential ingredient of life. Marion's erotic reduction concerns itself rigorously with present-moment decisions to love, however without discussion of relationship. This exclusion is somewhat strange, since *l'adonné* does not -- indeed, *can* not -- 'exist' in isolation: a *l'adonné* only comes to be within a horizon of relationship. Also, while it is true that love in its purest expression transcends reciprocity and that (mere) reciprocal exchange can direct interactions toward selfish ends, total exclusion of reciprocal relations is unattainable (short of dying on behalf of another). Reciprocal exchange includes positive aspects that can build up love (such as through shared duties) rather than corrode it.

In his theological writing as well, Marion offers little discussion of relationship, even though all the theological principles Marion prizes most -- God is trinitarian and kenotic love, Christ as the Gift of the Father, the Eucharist as paradigm of all gift-giving -- pertain to relationships. While he (rightly) upholds Christ's death on the cross as a decisive revelation of distance within the Godhead, he typically speaks *only* of this distance. However, Christ himself fostered enduring relationships with his call of the Twelve (cf. Mt. 10:1-4) and clearly addressed relationships in his teachings on topics such as prayer, forgiveness, and almsgiving (cf. Mt. 5-7). In *The Idol and Distance* Marion discusses the 'distance' necessary for relationship with God at some length, but without discussion of the Church or the sacraments. Granted, Marion is restoring a sense of God's transcendence and not doing theological ethics, moral theology, or ecclesiology: but the absence of discussion of relationship leaves a gap in his account. While Marion himself refrains from such discussion, his thought offers plenty of potential insight for the topic.



Without doubt the Christian faith upholds Christ as embodying the ideal of total, agapic, kenotic, self-giving love (cf. Phil. 2:6-11), and Marion does well to point out the inadequacy of love that expects reciprocal return of its gift. While it is necessary ultimately to transcend reciprocal gift-exchange to accomplish the erotic reduction, a pedagogy of love can (and indeed can only) occur through relationships based on mutual exchange and reciprocity. An education in duties toward others (or even oneself), for both individuals and society, is essential for establishing a just social order. Reciprocal duties -- of the rich and poor, young and old, those in power and the alienated -- shape fundamental values, priorities, and even virtues. While love which seeks return is imperfect, duty and reciprocal exchange have a proper pedagogical place toward a more perfect love, as a training in giving oneself and expressing love through practical means.

So I will take Marion's thought outside his own parameters (section 3.4 below) to explore its insight into relationships, for these are precisely the context for life's most meaningful decisions and actions, especially those of the lover. For example, the celebrated liturgy of the Eucharist -- the very paradigm of all gift-giving -- arises out of relationships God establishes. Not only do Creation or the Incarnation of the Word but the Trinity itself -- of which Marion speaks freely and eloquently -- presume relational contexts, entail relationship within the Godhead, and have profound implications for all relationships. Relationships (either with God or other human beings), covenant, and community all provide contextual elements essential for living and understanding life. The richness of love found in a friendship across decades -- whether in marriage, community, or individual friendships -- exceeds what any momentary experience can capture or express. Loving entails desiring the good of the other and communion with the other. To reduce all to matters of mere encounter while neglecting the quality of

ongoing relationships is to neglect the unique beauty of covenantal love and the value of fidelity. This becomes all the more important in the Eucharistic context since the words of Christ spoken over the wine concern ‘the new and everlasting covenant.’

Such discussion of relationship is not antithetical to a phenomenology of encounter. On the contrary -- and specifically concerning the Eucharist -- phenomenological thinker Emmanuel Falque upholds a place for enduring relationship, in the mutual ‘abiding’ (*la manence*) between Christ and the disciple is the very goal of Eucharistic communion (‘Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them’ -- Jn. 6:56).<sup>438</sup> The participant in communion becomes “fully incorporated into God.”<sup>439</sup> Such relational aspects simply must be included for a full and accurate discussion of the Christian faith, the Church, its sacraments, and the Eucharist in particular. Interestingly, Donald Wallenfang both employs Marion for his phenomenology and states that the Eucharist is “essentially a phenomenon between persons .... the pinnacle expression of Christ’s solidarity with all human persons.”<sup>440</sup> According to Wallenfang the Eucharist “allows humanity to recognize the *theological* in Christ and in themselves -- a recognition that occurs through the course of the Eucharist as *theological* conversation between persons.”<sup>441</sup> In Christ, God is not just giver but recipient as well. The relationship of covenantal solidarity Christ establishes with human beings -- strengthened by communion -- can be accounted for within a Eucharistic theology informed by Marion’s phenomenology.

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<sup>438</sup> Emmanuel Falque, “This is My Body: Contribution to a Philosophy of the Eucharist,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, eds. (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2016), 292-294. Hereafter “This is My Body.” Interestingly, Falque notes that ‘the Real Presence’ denotes that the Eucharist is “given and ready ... to be desired.” Furthermore, ‘animality, corporeality,’ and *desire* “take on meaning and are converted” in Eucharistic communion. Cf. “This is My Body,” 293-294. Also cf. Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. George Hughes (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2016), 227-230.

<sup>439</sup> Falque, “This is My Body,” 293.

<sup>440</sup> Donald Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 199. Hereafter *DAE*.

<sup>441</sup> Wallenfang, *DAE*, 201.

Second, while attention to the gift on its own terms is important to avoid reduction of the gift to idolatrous notions, the need for preparation, catechesis, and practices remains. First, the requirement of Baptism before participation in the Eucharist speaks of a necessary preparation; the completion of initiation through Confirmation further indicates that the Eucharist is not to be considered an all-sufficient gift in isolation. Education through catechesis is necessary as well. Although the Eucharist exceeds all that concepts could express about it, both the original biblical context and some conceptual analogies (gift, blessing, food) remain necessary to begin communicating its meaning. Catechesis regarding God, Christ, and the Church is necessary for providing a meaningful context. Without such context and understanding the Eucharist appears as a completely foreign language, communicating very little of ‘the mystery of charity’ or its logic. A place for ascetical practices to facilitate reception of the gift (such as prayer, fasting, or almsgiving), that the word might bear fruit (cf. Mk. 4:1-20) must also be maintained.<sup>442</sup> Most of all, repeated reception of the Eucharist (as possibility and fact) bespeaks the need for an ongoing process of learning how to receive this gift fully.

Third, Marion’s strong emphasis on *l’adonné’s* receptivity to the gift gradually neglects the need for decision and cooperative action to be transformed according to the gift and become a lover. Most of all, the ‘trinitarian space’ opened up in his earliest theological writing remains underdeveloped. Marion’s account of Christ’s Ascension, blessing, the call to ‘take Christ’s place’ in the world as the Body of Christ unites Christ’s Paschal Mystery with the call to discipleship in profound ways. Amid Marion’s phenomenological concerns, this *jeu trinitaire* finds only a weak correlative in the lover who ‘decides to love without reason.’ The difficulty of qualifying the *activity* of a lover who *is being transformed* -- according to love’s will? his own?

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<sup>442</sup> Tasmin Jones cites this as a critique of Marion, proposing many more practices. Cf. Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion’s Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness*, Philosophy of Religion, ed. Merold Westphal (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 156-157.

who acts? -- complicates the issue, but the need to account for this activity remains. The potential for the gift of another's will, which nonetheless must be acted upon, may point toward a solution of this difficulty.

Lastly, for all that Marion writes concerning the Eucharist, only rarely does he mention the words of Christ, 'This is my body' / 'This is my blood.' If perhaps such language is problematic for Marion's attempt to bypass onto-theological language of being, it would nonetheless be all the more helpful for Marion to clarify how he interprets these words so central to the sacrament. By comparison, he talks at far greater length about the Emmaus narrative as a 'hermeneutic' paradigm and Christ's disappearance than the actions of taking-blessing-breaking-giving. Matters of its origins in the Jewish Passover or its narrative context are omitted altogether, as are the Eucharist as food, the new covenant, blood poured out for others, forgiveness, or the mandate to 'Do this in memory of me.' The several gifts that saturate these elements and Marion's thought would mutually benefit each other from further exploration. If the Eucharist is the paradigm of all gift-giving, exploration of this radical gift's emergence from such historical, thematic, and dramatic/narrative elements would be all the more enriching.

### **3.3.2. Others' Critiques**

I now look at how Marion's 'gifts' have been received in the scholarly community: first, the impact of Marion's thought for theology (Eucharist, sacraments) and philosophy (phenomenology of givenness). Next, scholarly recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of Marion's thought (particularly in comparison with traditional sacramental theology) follows. In closing, some additional assessments are offered.

#### **3.3.2.1. Impact**

The volume of significant conferences, books, articles, and dissertations dedicated to aspects of Marion's thought attest that his influence is significant and continues to increase. *New Blackfriars* devoted its July/August 1995 issue to Marion's work.<sup>443</sup> Major academic conferences involving Marion's thought (and/or person) in 1997,<sup>444</sup> 1999,<sup>445</sup> 2003,<sup>446</sup> 2004,<sup>447</sup> and 2008,<sup>448</sup> all of which became publications, reflect the intensified interest in the questions it raises. Texts by Robyn Horner and Christina M. Gschwandtner have provided important syntheses and developments of Marion's lengthy writings.<sup>449</sup>

Proposals for sacramental theology built on Marion's thought include Sebastian Madathummuriyil's *Sacrament as Gift: A Pneumatological and Phenomenological Approach* and Donald Wallenfang's *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*.<sup>450</sup> Madathummuriyil considers Marion's phenomenology of pure gift to be the most fitting way to express God's self-gift. The true gift of God is of love, *agape*, which obligates not a returned gift but a response of *agape*. A response of "living out the grace" in pure appreciation of the gift *as such*, rather than 'obligatory return' (i.e., equal exchange or reciprocity), ensures the

<sup>443</sup> *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895, Special Issue on Jean-Luc Marion's 'God Without Being,' (Jul/Aug 1995).

<sup>444</sup> September 1997 "Religion and Postmodernism" conference at Villanova University; John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

<sup>445</sup> November 3-6, 1999 Conference, Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology (LEST II) at KU Leuven, Belgium, "Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context: Fundamental-Theological Approaches," Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries, eds., *The Presence of Transcendence: Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

<sup>446</sup> January 2003 Conference at Mater Dei Institute at Dublin City University, Ireland; Eoin Cassidy and Ian Leask, eds., *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham, 2005).

<sup>447</sup> May 7-9, 2004 Conference at University of Notre Dame, "In Excess: Jean-Luc Marion and the Horizon of Modern Theology." Essays collected in Kevin Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame, 2007).

<sup>448</sup> 2008 Annual Conference on Christian Philosophy at Franciscan University of Steubenville; "Selected Papers on the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Marion," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 1:1 (Fall 2010).

<sup>449</sup> Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theological Introduction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), hereafter *DG*; Gschwandtner, *MT*.

<sup>450</sup> Sebastian Madathummuriyil, *Sacrament as Gift: A Pneumatological and Phenomenological Approach* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012). Hereafter *SG*. Wallenfang, *DAE*.

freedom of the recipient.<sup>451</sup> Marion's 'iconic mode of presence,' which can account for distance, absence, and withdrawal as well, creates a notion of presence not limited to either the (modern) subject or language. Regarding the Eucharist, Marion's categories allow for both the givenness of the gift and the radical otherness of God.

Donald Wallenfang uses Marion's phenomenology of gift to express the Eucharist as manifestation, as a gift constantly re-given in forgiveness through eternity. In partnership with the thought of Ricoeur and Lévinas, Wallenfang proposes a 'dialectical phenomenology' of the Eucharist as manifestation and proclamation, in both prosaic and poetic discourse that include both phenomenology and metaphysics.<sup>452</sup> Only by taking into account paradoxes (as in Marion) which maintain an "unresolved dialectic as the centrifugal force of truth" (as in Ricoeur) can Eucharistic theology avoid devolving into reductionistic accounts.<sup>453</sup> The Eucharist "exhibits an intrinsic iconicity that must be explored through Marion's illuminating hermeneutic of the saturated phenomenon."<sup>454</sup>

Crina Gschwandtner ranks Marion as "one of the most important living French philosophers" whose works are permeated with connections to theology.<sup>455</sup> Leaving aside the scholarly debate regarding categorizing it as philosophy or theology, Gschwandtner proposes Marion's work "can be read as advocating a lived theology – a spirituality that is also a theology, a theology that is grounded in prayer and spiritual practice."<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Cf. Madathummuriyil, *SG*, 153-308; 314-315.

<sup>452</sup> Cf. Wallenfang, *DAE*, xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>455</sup> Gschwandtner, *MT*, 1; cf. "Introduction," 1-8.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

John Baldovin has applied Marion's themes of idols, icons, and gift to liturgical reform, as a hermeneutic to discern attitudes toward the liturgy.<sup>457</sup> An idolatrous notion of apostolic tradition preserves traditions for their own sake, at the loss of transparency; an iconic notion of liturgy preserves a sense of transparency, the glorification of God, and the sanctification of people. Similarly, the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice needs to maintain a balanced dialectic of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' aspects, recognizing Christ both in invisible glory and in one's visible neighbor. Concerning the role of the ordained priest, one cannot forget the common priesthood of all the Baptized.

While Marion has not developed a systematic theology of the sacraments, Charles Lock notes that Marion's thought is "intensely sacramental."<sup>458</sup> In particular, both his theological and phenomenological notions of the icon serve as prime examples of re-imagining a sacramental *worldview*, as opposed to a world of mere objects existing as entities unto themselves. By the absence of systematized sacramental thought, Gschwandtner proposes that Marion is "instead calling us to do theology ... as the response to a call, as the unfolding of God's self-manifestation ... in the face of Christ."<sup>459</sup> This accomplishes a transfer from mere assent (intellectually or by belief) to theological concepts to an existentially lived response with one's whole life.

Like Madathummuriyil, Brian D. Robinette considers Marion's thought very helpful for theology, applying Marion's notion of saturated phenomenon to Christ's resurrection (*Grammars of Resurrection: A Christian Theology of Presence and Absence*).<sup>460</sup> The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an 'im-possible Gift': an unforeseeable fulfillment of creation and Israel's history;

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<sup>457</sup> John F. Baldovin, "Idols and Icons: Reflections on the Current State of Liturgical Reform," *Worship* 84 (2010) 386-402.

<sup>458</sup> Charles Lock, "Against Being: An Introduction to the Thought of Jean-Luc Marion," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 37 (1993): 371.

<sup>459</sup> Gschwandtner, *MT*, 142.

<sup>460</sup> Brian D. Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection: A Christian Theology of Presence and Absence* (New York: Crossroad, 2009). Hereafter *Grammars*.

unbearable, transgressing binaries of presence/absence, body/spirit, historical/eschatological; unnamable, therefore requiring a pluralism of expression; and unconstitutable, reconstituting disciples as members in the ecclesial Body of Christ.<sup>461</sup> Such excessive notions must be reckoned with in order to receive God's self-giving as it has been revealed and to participate in the divine life into which we are called.

Marion's Eucharistic thought does not receive as much attention as his phenomenological writings; his phenomenology of givenness receives the majority of scholarly attention. Kevin Hart states that Marion can be considered the most important living phenomenologist, "certainly in France and perhaps also in the world."<sup>462</sup> For Gschwandtner, Marion's notion of gift which implicates and makes claims on its recipient requires theology to account for an important existential element: "Conversion means not only to recognize and receive the gift of God but to love in the same kenotic fashion that refuses to pass on evil and instead is willing to absorb it by love."<sup>463</sup> In turn, Marion's philosophical work opens an important space for discussion of theological topics within philosophy.<sup>464</sup> Wallenfang attests that Marion has made a major advance in phenomenology, particularly with his notion of saturated phenomena.<sup>465</sup> Marion has clearly garnered the attention of a variety of theologians and philosophers, and made an important impact in contemporary theology, including sacramental theology.

### 3.3.2.2. Strengths

Lambert Leijssen celebrates Marion's restoration of gift, which presents God's self-revelation in Jesus as the icon of the invisible (Col. 1:15) "as pure gift (*don*), to the abandonment (*abandon*) of his Son, for the forgiveness (*pardon*) of evil" returns to the fore of theological

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Robinette, *Grammars*, 69-115.

<sup>462</sup> Kevin Hart, Review of Christina M. Gschwandtner, "Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion," accessed on October 25, 2017 at <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/degrees-of-givenness-on-saturation-in-jean-luc-marion>.

<sup>463</sup> Gschwandtner, *MT*, 142.

<sup>464</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>465</sup> Cf. Wallenfang, *DAE*, xxxii; 54.



reflection.<sup>466</sup> This primacy of the gift is especially important for understanding the sacraments as God's continual giving to human beings amid the trials of life. Leijssen also notes that Marion's notion of reception of the Eucharist involves a richer sense of the prayer of the entire assembly, which petitions God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon both the gifts of bread and wine and the members of the assembly.<sup>467</sup>

God's self-giving manifest in the Eucharist calls for a response of witnessing to this giving by becoming in turn one who 'loves first.' Gschwandtner commends Marion's synthesis of fields too often held separately by theology: spirituality, liturgy, reason, faith, speculation, and experience; at the same time she warns against use of Marion's thought to construct a new metaphysical system, which would set idolatrous limitations on God all over again. If Marion's thought can be called a theology it is a theology of "experience of the divine in the crossing of gazes in prayer and in love, if we are willing to expose ourselves to it."<sup>468</sup> Marion's thought does not impose again a system so much as witnesses to the experience of God, particularly in liturgical prayer. Most of all, theology's task is "to unfold the claim made upon us, the given of experience, most supremely the abundant givenness of the eucharistic gift of the broken body and shed blood."<sup>469</sup> The unfolding of this claim, manifest amid the self's encounters -- in the liturgy with God, and with others in the church and the world -- is the intention behind inclusion of Marion's thought in this dissertation.

Thomas A. Carlson lauds Marion's thought for how it liberates, not so much humans in a social sense but liberates "*God* from ... human sciences ... and metaphysics ... [which] culminate

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<sup>466</sup> Lambert Leijssen, *With the Silent Glimmer of God's Spirit: A Postmodern Look at the Sacraments*, trans. Marie Baird, foreword by George S. Worgul, Jr. (New York: Paulist, 2003), 78. Hereafter *SGGS*.

<sup>467</sup> Cf. Leijssen, *SGGS*, 56-57.

<sup>468</sup> Cf. Gschwandtner, *MT*, 142.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

in the nihilism of our time.”<sup>470</sup> Marion’s critiques of the onto-theology found in so much Eucharistic theology (with its concerns of presence, form and matter, substance and accident) similarly liberate thinkers to receive the gift of the Eucharist ‘as it gives itself’: as God’s self-gift in Christ which calls its recipients to a proper response. Similarly, Nathan Mitchell praises Marion’s thoroughgoing critique of philosophical and theological preoccupation with the subject. According to Mitchell the ‘S/self’ has become itself an idol; Marion is able to both name the problem and propose a solution through his notion of *l’adonné*.<sup>471</sup> Mitchell names a characteristic idolatry of our age which pervades not only philosophy but theology and popular culture as well. Mitchell’s observation also reminds us that revival of awareness of conceptual idolatry across all variety of theological thought is itself an important corrective Marion offers. Against thinkers who might portray Marion as belonging among postmodern heretics (as he aims for a higher goal than merely saying ‘God exists’), Philipp W. Rosemann says Marion’s works “are both fully orthodox and take into consideration many of the concerns of postmodern philosophy.”<sup>472</sup>

Praise for Marion also comes by way of Orthodox Christianity. Nikolaos Loudovikos says gratitude is owed to Marion’s “remarkable”<sup>473</sup> *God Without Being* for bringing forth “the most essential and difficult Western theological problem.... [to] show how the Augustinian/Thomist God, or at least a certain long-living understanding of him, was, in a way, absent from creation.”<sup>474</sup> Loudovikos also finds Marion’s notion of givenness compatible with the Orthodox idea of synergy, albeit with precautions to preserve the active thought and

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<sup>470</sup> Thomas A. Carlson, “Blindness and the Decision to See: On Revelation and Reception in Jean-Luc Marion,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame, 2007), 153.

<sup>471</sup> Cf. Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*, New and expanded ed. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 108.

<sup>472</sup> Rosemann “Marion’s Eucharistic Realism,” 233.

<sup>473</sup> Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 245n61.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

cooperation of the human recipient(s).<sup>475</sup> Loudovikos appears somewhat conciliatory in this assessment, as Marion practically never seems to attribute or preserve an active *human* role regarding cooperation with the divine.

In sum, Marion's re-examination of revelation on its own terms restores the simplest of notions -- gift -- as the single theme which underlies creation, common experience, and the special events of biblical revelation. He restores revelation and the experience of it as viable possibilities for philosophical investigation, often through paradoxes which hold opposites together: invisible grace and phenomenality, receiving oneself with the gift, presence and distance. These are genuinely valuable contributions by Marion which engage significant contemporary concerns and philosophy directly. In particular, Marion's work to restore the biblical motif of gift brings sacramental theology back to the fundamental reality of *grace*, which has been constrained to commodified or productionist categories for too long, as Chauvet noted. Marion's themes of the primacy of love, divine transcendence, and givenness all restore essential fundamental aspects of our relationship to the divine. As someone who appropriates a wealth of scriptural and traditional theology into contemporary postmodern thought, Marion is making an invaluable contribution to Catholic theology.

### 3.3.2.3. Weaknesses

Direct critique of Marion's Eucharistic theology is somewhat sparse in comparison with critique of his broader theological and phenomenological projects. Gschwandtner questions Marion's depiction of the Eucharist as *always* being a saturated phenomenon; simple experience of most liturgies would far more often note not rapturous beauty but 'poor' phenomena of inattention, misunderstanding, or indifference.<sup>476</sup> Marion's portrayal of the Eucharist as

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. Gschwandtner, *DG*, 182; 170-192.

exclusively an overwhelming experience also neglects the varieties of experience possible due to different ecumenical traditions, settings, or styles of celebration. As primary as the gift of the Eucharist remains, the quality of its reception remains in part shaped by the disposition of the recipient. Gschwandtner also cites Marion's lack of account for the communal and bodily -- if not visceral -- aspects of the celebration as gaps that call for closer examination.<sup>477</sup> Wallenfang seeks to balance Marion's phenomenology of manifestation with Ricoeur's thought on proclamation; this in turn raises questions why Marion so strongly prefers Luke's Emmaus story over the Last Supper narratives and the words Jesus gives with the bread and the wine.<sup>478</sup> Madathummuriyil likewise observes the need to balance Marion's phenomenological account of the Eucharist with a proper pneumatology which accounts more explicitly for the role of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic celebration.<sup>479</sup>

The first edition of *Dieu sans l'être: hors-texte* in 1982 provoked "savage reviews, especially by French Dominicans" for including the thought of Thomas Aquinas under Heidegger's critique of idolatrous 'onto-theology'.<sup>480</sup> While seemingly reluctant to admit any fault, by 1991 Marion changed his mind, dissociating Thomas Aquinas from any charges of 'onto-theology' in which God is reciprocally effected by what He has caused. In the preface to the English edition of *God Without Being* (1991), Marion clarified the distinction between Thomas' (proper) subordination of *esse* to God and Heidegger's univocity of Being with the divine.<sup>481</sup> Marion's new understanding was first explained at length at a conference in Toulouse in 1994, published in 1995, and included in the second English edition of *God Without Being*

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<sup>477</sup> Cf. Gschwandtner, *DG*, 182-186.

<sup>478</sup> Cf. Wallenfang, *DAE*.

<sup>479</sup> Cf. Madathummuriyil, *SG*.

<sup>480</sup> Fergus Kerr, "Aquinas After Marion," *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (July/August 1995), 363. Kerr does not specify any authors of these reviews.

<sup>481</sup> Marion, "Preface to the English Edition," *GWB*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, xxi-xxvii.

(2012).<sup>482</sup> In the preface to this second edition Marion admitted that the original's "bit of polemic... undoubtedly does merit being corrected and debated. Indeed, my position has changed notably since 1982."<sup>483</sup>

Though Marion claims such is the case, his exoneration of Thomas raises several questions about Marion's opinions of the neo-scholasticism to which Thomas gave such influential rise. Is neo-scholastic theology 'onto-theological'? If so, how and when did it go astray from Thomas' subordination of *esse* to God? Is Marion's 'bit of polemic' truly corrected by Marion himself? If so, ought not there be more changes to *God Without Being* than an appendix chapter in the second edition?

The fundamental (and perhaps representative) critique of Marion's phenomenological project came from Dominique Janicaud in 1991.<sup>484</sup> Janicaud considers Marion representative of a second generation of phenomenologists who, following Lévinas, corrupted phenomenology by inserting (implicitly or explicitly) a biblical God into its horizon.<sup>485</sup> Placement by Marion within phenomenology of an "opening [*ouverture*] to the invisible ... to a pure givenness [*donation*]" creates a "rupture with immanent phenomenality."<sup>486</sup> Concerning Marion's proposed 'inquiry into a 'pure form of the call'' in the form of givenness, Janicaud asks: "In what way does this

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<sup>482</sup> Colloquium given June 3-4, 1994, at Institut Catholique de Toulouse. Published as Jean-Luc Marion, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," *Revue Thomiste* 95:1 (January 1995), 31-66. English edition in Jean-Luc Marion, "Thomas and Onto-theo-logy," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 38-74; also in chapter 8, "Thomas Aquinas and Onto-theology," of *GWB*, Second Edition (2012), 199-236. This change is also in the newer French edition.

<sup>483</sup> Marion, "Preface to the Second Edition," *GWB*, xxix-xxx. Marion says his polemic "concerns Heidegger first and also touches on Thomas Aquinas indirectly.... I am ready to maintain today the apparent paradox that Thomas Aquinas *did not* identify the question of God, nor that of his names, with Being, or at least with Being as metaphysics understands it within its 'concept of Being.'" Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1991). In English: Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," in Dominique Janicaud, et al., *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn': The French Debate*, trans. Bernard G. Prusak (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2000), 16-103. Hereafter *P&TT*.

<sup>485</sup> Cf. Bernard G. Prusak, "Translator's Introduction," in *P&TT*, 3-4.

<sup>486</sup> Janicaud, *P&TT*, 17.

reduction ... remain phenomenological?”<sup>487</sup> Marion’s proposal of a ‘post-metaphysical’ phenomenology-open-to-theology has “no respect for the phenomenological order.... [It resorts to] autosufficiency (pure givenness ‘*gives itself*’!) that restores *metaphysica specialis* -- and its favorite trick, autofoundation -- rather than giving it the boot.”<sup>488</sup> These are clearly strong charges, especially against someone claiming to be as scrupulous concerning method as Marion does. Despite Marion’s denials, according to Janicaud phenomenological neutrality in Marion has been abandoned.<sup>489</sup>

Janicaud’s critique extends still further since he considers the errors of the ‘theological turn’ in phenomenology to be rooted in Lévinas, upon whom much of Marion’s thought depends. Janicaud accuses Lévinas (and implicitly Marion) of “a paradoxical and strategic blurring of the boundaries between the phenomenological and the theological.”

Janicaud’s critique is convincing as it raises serious questions about Marion’s project as a ‘pure phenomenology’ to which Marion appears to have failed in his response. It is one matter to lay claim to saturating phenomena that meaningfully surpass the boundaries of Kant’s epistemology; it is quite another (at least, as a philosopher) to describe such phenomena as ‘given,’ which so strongly implies a giver, the phenomenon as an intended (thereby personal) gift. Thomas A. Carlson describes the relation of Marion’s theology and phenomenology well by saying they “inform one another more or otherwise than Marion himself might allow.”<sup>490</sup> Many of Marion’s examples of saturated phenomena are drawn from Christian texts, when quite ‘natural’ experiences of ecstatic joy or dread of death pose themselves as qualified examples.

Despite Marion’s strong claims to methodological purity, his phenomenology does not stand

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<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>488</sup> Janicaud, *P&TT*, 65. In his own summary of Janicaud, John D. Caputo says Janicaud thinks “Marion bids farewell to both common sense and phenomenology.” John D. Caputo, “The Hyperbolization of Phenomenology,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame, 2007), 69.

<sup>489</sup> Cf. Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>490</sup> Carlson, “Translator’s Introduction,” xv, in Marion, *ID*.

satisfactorily on philosophical grounds alone. His is clearly a ‘theistic phenomenology,’ which is to say, a phenomenology drawn from (Christian) theology, that too readily attributes an invisible gaze from behind the saturating icon. This critique still does not disqualify Marion’s contributions toward this theological project of a relational Eucharistic theology, but it is duly noted.

In 1995 a special issue of *New Blackfriars* addressed Marion’s thought, particularly his *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*.<sup>491</sup> There, John Milbank chides Marion’s attempt to uphold a radical divine gift which also correlates (by means of phenomenology) with philosophy: “Marion seeks to be both Barth and Heidegger at once.”<sup>492</sup> In Milbank’s estimation Marion wants the best of both phenomenological and theological approaches, yet is in the end unfaithful to either. Marion’s arguments, says Milbank, presume “a priority of ethical intersubjectivity ... [which] cannot really be made phenomenologically evident, and still less manifest is the identity of the call as that of a caller.”<sup>493</sup> Here again we see suspicions of ‘smuggling’ theological concerns into phenomenology, while claiming methodological purity. Laurence Hemming hails Marion as one of the first theologians to take Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics as a whole seriously, but nonetheless considers Marion “insufficiently attentive to [its] complexity,” particularly concerning the ontological difference.<sup>494</sup> Milbank and Hemming thus offer echoes of Janicaud’s critique, that Marion’s ‘phenomenology of givenness’ fundamentally theological.

Jacques Derrida had many reservations concerning Marion’s phenomenological methodology and conclusions. In his text *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, Derrida challenges the possibility of the gift, claiming that the gift nullifies itself (and certainly would not justify

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<sup>491</sup> *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (Jul/Aug 1995).

<sup>492</sup> John Milbank, “Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics,” *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (Jul/Aug 1995), 325.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 328-329.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. Laurence Hemming, “Reading Heidegger: Is God Without Being? Jean-Luc Marion’s reading of Martin Heidegger in *God Without Being*,” *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (July/August 1995), 343-350.

itself), since it remains within the realm of reciprocity.<sup>495</sup> According to Derrida, Marion's assertion that the 'pure call' comes from 'the Father' (as opposed to mere 'Being') exposes a hidden Christian theology, as it attributes the call to a personally giving God.<sup>496</sup> Derrida's critique is similar to the criticism made by Milbank (that Marion 'seeks to be Barth and Heidegger at once'), claiming to be 'purely phenomenological' but retaining theological premises. In a famous debate with Marion on September 27, 1997 at Villanova University's "Religion and Postmodernism" Conference, Derrida claimed that Marion's "extraordinary extension of *Gegebenheit*' ... only makes sense against a theological background," as every experience of perception becomes an observation of givenness.<sup>497</sup> As Bernard G. Prusak notes, Marion's reply (which considered phenomenological purity secondary to concern for 'the things that interest phenomenology') "retracts his concession even while proffering it."<sup>498</sup> Both Derrida and Prusak observe how Marion's interests undermine his *phenomenological* methodological purity. That language of the 'givenness' of phenomena -- as opposed to their 'appearing,' perhaps -- inserts theological premises seems a possibility that many would admit, except Marion himself. For philosophy this represents a weakness (if it inserts presumption of a giver), but for theology it leaves an important possibility open, and can thus even be considered a strength. Though the 'purity' of Marion's phenomenological method remains debatable, suspicions

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<sup>495</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992). Hereafter *GT*.

<sup>496</sup> Derrida, *GT*, 52n10. Thomas A. Carlson notes that while Derrida's critique would apply to Marion's theology, it does not necessarily apply to Marion's phenomenology. What Derrida quotes a note by Marion on a text of Heidegger, yet Marion is referring to a pure call prior to the call of the Father, which apparently remains a possibility for Heidegger. Cf. Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 206-207n18.

<sup>497</sup> Cited in Bernard G. Prusak, "Translator's Introduction," *P&TT*, 5-6. The text of Marion's paper at this conference was published as Jean-Luc Marion, "In the Name," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 20-53. It reappears in revised form as the final chapter of Marion's *IE*, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of It," formed the text of a paper Marion gave at this conference. Cf. Robyn Horner, "Translator's Introduction," in Marion, *IE*, xix.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



regarding insertion of a personally-giving God can become a strength when employed within theology, when everything in creation is a gift.

Kathryn Tanner raises a concern that Marion unwittingly domesticates Revelation in “a tight conceptual system,” in effect substituting givenness as an all-encompassing principle for Heidegger’s Being.<sup>499</sup> The phenomenological horizon of givenness thus risks becoming the new idolatrous mirror which reflects only what we desire to see (such as a divine Giver). This word of caution (which echoes Milbank’s and Hemming’s criticisms cited above) is welcome: it reminds us how true reception of the call issuing forth from revelation both makes scandalous demands of us for action (not mere knowledge) and is only manifest in the recipient’s generous response. The ‘priority of ethical intersubjectivity’ and the recipient’s responsibilities in the face of givenness -- which radically call the self into question -- deserve a far stronger emphasis than their proportion of Marion’s writings on these matters would suggest. In particular regarding the Eucharist, theology must consistently recall that Jesus does not say ‘*Know* this in memory of me,’ but ‘*Do* this in memory of me’ -- namely, Jesus’ own self-giving which goes far beyond self-preservation. Tanner’s criticism -- which should hardly be limited to Marion’s thought -- is a salutary reminder that the *ethical* demands of Christian discipleship toward other people must retain their priority over any conceptual understanding of the Eucharist.

Some specifically theological criticisms of Marion concern the nature of faith. Shane MacKinlay questions Marion’s interpretation of Emmaus as a paradigm for understanding faith and revelation. In particular it neglects the “primary, existential sense of faith as personal trust in -- and commitment to -- a complex of meaningful *relationships* and significations in which a

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<sup>499</sup> Cf. Kathryn Tanner, “Theology at the Limits of Phenomenology,” *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 204; cf. 201-213. 201-231. Hereafter “Theology at the Limits.”

person situates himself or herself.”<sup>500</sup> Marion’s near-exclusive emphasis on the relation of the given to *l’adonné* (always in the singular) again overlooks, even neglects, the influence of relationships in communities.

Jeffrey Bloechl argues that Marion neglects ‘the horizontal dimension’ of theology, the presence of the divine among what is immanent.<sup>501</sup> This blind spot appears again in Marion’s arguments for the exclusivity of the bishop as theologian: Peter-Ben Smit points out the absurdity that any single human figure -- even a bishop -- could alone be an authoritative interpreter for a community, seemingly overlooking the common membership in which they all share.<sup>502</sup> Similarly, John Baldovin points out how, with this exclusivity of the ordained priesthood, Marion risks “sanctioning a kind of idolatry” by neglecting the priesthood of the baptized.<sup>503</sup>

### **3.4. Proposals**

Several elements of Marion’s thought, both theological and phenomenological, make excellent contributions toward the relational Eucharistic theology this dissertation proposes. While Marion’s phenomenological project prioritizes ‘pure givenness’ which excludes even the giver, gift, and givee, my own use of Marion’s thought prioritizes his theological writings which relate God and human beings by means of the gift of Jesus Christ, the icon of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). These proposals also read Marion’s analyses of *encounters* in light of revelation: even though these play a lesser role in Marion’s projects, they help account for encounters with Christ in the liturgy and others in the world, connecting ‘liturgy and life’ in the way Vatican II

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<sup>500</sup> Shane Mackinlay, “Eyes Wide Shut: A Response to Jean-Luc Marion’s Account of the Journey to Emmaus,” *Modern Theology* 20:3 (July 2004), 447-456. Emphases added.

<sup>501</sup> Cf. Jeffrey Bloechl, “The Postmodern Context and Sacramental Presence,” in *The Presence of Transcendence: Thinking ‘Sacrament’ in a Postmodern Age*, eds. Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries, *Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 3-17, especially 12-17.

<sup>502</sup> Cf. Peter-Ben Smit, “The Bishop and his/her Eucharistic Community: A Critique of Jean-Luc Marion’s Eucharistic Hermeneutic,” *Modern Theology* 19:1 (January 2003), 40n55.

<sup>503</sup> Baldovin, “Idols and Icons,” 398.

documents (such as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*) and papal teaching so strongly emphasize. The contributions I propose also move outside some boundaries of Marion's own explorations, to speak not merely of 'encounters' between persons but relationships. In light of these ideas, the Eucharistic gift may be summed up as the God's gracious and scandalous gift of desire, to seek to love even if it is not reciprocated.

### **3.4.1. Eucharist's Context: Covenant Relationship and Obligation**

The theological reality of the relationship -- indeed, communion -- given by and with the Eucharist, and for which Christ gave himself on our behalf, calls for greater attention. To recall Marion's own Eucharistic 'hermeneutic:' we receive proper interpretation of the Eucharist by drawing upon the principles and logic ('order of charity') given by and in the Eucharist. The Eucharist was and is revealed in the context of Christ's self-giving to his disciples: each time it occurs, it does so in the context of *and for the sake of* a specific relationship, 'the new and eternal covenant.' Therefore, I examine the impact of Christ's Eucharistic gift-giving within and upon relationships.

Reception of the Eucharist 'as it gives itself' requires acknowledgment and acceptance of the covenantal-ecclesial context in which it is celebrated. The Father's initiative sent the gift of Christ to and for the world through the Holy Spirit, establishing and revealing in the events of the paschal mystery a 'new and eternal covenant' -- i.e., a relationship. The establishment of this saving relationship was the purpose for which the gift of the Son was given (cf. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:10-11; Heb. 8:6, 9:15-22); human beings enter into this covenant (most fundamentally) by faith, Baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As Marion notes, the liturgy of the Eucharist celebrates and commemorates the self-gift of Christ, the icon of the invisible God, and proclaims the future eschatological fulfillment for which the Church hopes. Having heard the scriptures

interpreted in the light of the Word, the assembly petitions God the Father by appealing to Christ's gift of himself, proclaiming the death of the Lord until He comes again in glory (1 Cor. 11:26). The liturgy of the Eucharist celebrates and manifests this gracious gift once again so that its participants recognize and reaffirm their covenant relationship with God. The 'new and eternal covenant' between God and human beings -- a *relationship* characterized by the love that *is* God (1 Jn. 4:8, 16) -- contextualizes both the celebration and theology of the Eucharist.

In addition to the relationship between God and human beings which established the covenantal relationship, the *ecclesial* context of the Eucharistic celebration must be acknowledged and accepted as another layer of its foundation. Every celebration of the Eucharist acknowledges the participants' communion -- even if partial -- with the angels and saints in glory and the universal church. Participants likewise petition God on behalf of the Church, the world, and the dead in recognition of relationships which transcend space, time, and even death in eschatological faith and hope. Not least of all, the community of the liturgical assembly 'precedes' the individual believer, both in terms of initiation into the Church and participation in the liturgical prayer. Such fuller recognition of the *ecclesial* body (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29) of Christ, to which members of the Church belong (1 Cor. 12:27), enables a richer sharing of the life and love one receives in the Eucharist.

Proper recognition of all these contextual elements, invisible and visible, has important pastoral consequences. It is essential to counter privatized piety which narrows the participants' vision toward only one of these elements, whether 'vertical' (relating to God to the exclusion of all others) or 'horizontal' (relating to visible others without reference to God/Christ). The liturgy of the Eucharist is not an escape from unpleasant realities but a fuller inauguration of the Kingdom of God, a thoroughly *relational* reality. These points are emphasized to restore the

relational and communal contexts which common experience can appear to bypass, to the neglect of the obligations which accompany those relationships.

### **3.4.2. Receiving the Eucharist by Becoming Gift**

While reception of the Eucharist would appear a simple matter of taking, eating, and drinking, its full implications extend much farther. Marion's ideas, especially of receiving-by-giving, help articulate this fuller meaning. Marion's ideas are particularly helpful for describing the way a communicant fully receives the Eucharistic gift 'as it gives itself,' 'on its own terms.' We employ and develop Marion's notions to explore the Eucharist in terms of anamorphosis, blessing, call to trinitarian play, and the decision to become a lover.

#### **3.4.2.1. Recognition by Blessing**

Marion's phenomenology of givenness and liturgical/Eucharistic theology can converge to demystify the prayer practice of blessing. Thoroughly biblical in origin, blessing pervades both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and is present throughout both Jewish and Christian liturgical practice. One of Jesus' chief actions in the miraculous feeding stories (Mt. 14:19; Mk. 6:41; Lk. 9:16), the Institution Narrative of the Eucharist (Mt. 26:27; Mk. 14:23; Lk. 22:17,19; 1 Cor. 11:24), and at Emmaus (Lk. 24:30) is to bless God, giving thanks -- εὐχαριστεῖω.

According to Marion, recognition of a gift 'as such' requires proper recognition of a gift's contingency (that it is given freely), transparency (that it is a sign of a giver), givee (oneself), and giver (God). Put another way, these are the *relationships* a gift concerns, proper recognition of which constitutes a way to understand blessing. More practically, recognition of these truths -- *particularly* their relational context -- leads to gratitude, an important aspect in the genesis of charity in the recipient.

In the context of full reception of the Eucharistic gift, blessing entails recognition of the divine giver, of the divine gift of communion, and of the self (and others) as recipient-givee. The recipient is called and enabled to do this by the grace of being *l'adonné*, when recognizing Christ as the divine giver, affirming by faith that the gifts are Christ's Body and Blood, and oneself (and other recipients) as recipients. Recognition of God as the giver is to recognize the invisible gaze and loving intention bringing about the gift in the present time and place. By faith one recognizes or affirms the gifts as the body and blood of Jesus which draw the recipient into a closer communion in the new covenant. Full recognition of the self-as-givee also means *accepting* the gifts of communion, covenant, and forgiveness as personally *intended* by God, not to the exclusion of others but as an expression of divine love for the recipient.

One of Jesus' chief actions in the miraculous feeding stories (Mt. 14:19; Mk. 6:41; Lk. 9:16), the Institution Narrative of the Eucharist (Mt. 26:27; Mk. 14:23; Lk. 22:17,19; 1 Cor. 11:24), and at Emmaus (Lk. 24:30) is to bless God, giving thanks -- εὐχαριστεῖω. In Jesus' taking and saying the blessing over the gifts of bread and wine during the Institution Narrative, we observe how he recognized: a) the bread and wine as gifts; b) the Father who gave them to Jesus; and c) at least implicitly, himself as recipient of these gifts. Understood in this way, blessing is not a magical act but an affirmation in faith central to proper reception of any gift, a recognition of the persons to which the signs refer, and the expressions of love therein.

This clarified notion of blessing as proper recognition takes on still-greater importance in the context of understanding the role of the Church in the world. As noted above<sup>504</sup> Marion interprets Christ's act of blessing in Luke 24:50-53 as important for understanding 'the real presence' of Christ among the ecclesial body of Christ, the Church. The Church takes up Christ's activity of blessing: continuing Christ's work of revealing the Father, the gifts of Christ

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<sup>504</sup> In section 3.1.3.1., 'Eucharist, Christ's Disappearance, and Entry into 'Trinitarian Play.'

and the Holy Spirit, and the world as the recipient of those gifts. The ongoing activity of blessing by members of the Church serve as proclamation of God as giver of all gifts and giving, for the world to hear as an invitation to join in the life of blessing. While Marion himself does not directly relate full recognition of the gift *as such* (its transparency and contingency) with the action of blessing, these actions illuminate each other richly. The act of blessing is clarified well by Marion's notion of gift-recognition. It is to adopt 'the Eucharistic hermeneutic' or worldview that constantly interprets life in terms of givenness and the gift.

Recognition of the gift 'as such' through blessing becomes essential to the celebration of the Eucharist, since "There is no presence of God among men, if men do not bless him and the one he has sent.... [God's] blessing by men constitutes the condition for the possibility ... of Christ's being *recognized* by them."<sup>505</sup> Christ's presence does not depend on human blessing, but true *recognition* of Jesus as the Christ, as the Son of God, occurs only among those who acknowledge him *as a gift* of the Father: "The presence of Christ, and therefore also that of the Father, discloses itself by a gift: it can therefore be recognized only by a blessing."<sup>506</sup> In other words, *grace* is only truly recognized as such by grateful blessing by its recipients. Conversely, thinking of grace as an 'effect' does not suffice to 'recognize' it truly -- much less its giver.

Furthermore, upon Christ's bodily 'departure' at the Ascension, the disciples "begin ... to accomplish in their own body that by which Christ received being the corporal gift of the presence of God: the blessing of the Father. Having been spectators of the gift, they become for the first time the actors of the presence: received, incorporated into them (and above all them into it), given to all."<sup>507</sup> The act of blessing-recognition becomes a crucial hinge by which the

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<sup>505</sup> Marion, *PC*, 129. Emphasis added.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

recipient ('spectator') *enters trinitarian play* and becomes a giver, an active cooperator in the ecclesial Body of Christ.

The Eucharistic *l'adonné* sees others receiving the Eucharistic gifts and so by grace is called to 'recognize the body of the Lord' (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29) present in other members of the Church. Sent forth by Jesus' word 'Do this in memory of me,' the *l'adonné* is called to serve Christ present in the needy of the world (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). Through the Eucharistic gifts -- which includes the command 'Do this in memory of me' -- *l'adonné* learns to recognize, bless, and serve the body of the Lord throughout the world.

This gift leads to a new recognition of the self as well: by virtue of both the giver (God-who-is-Love) and the gift (of communion with Christ), a givee properly recognizes oneself as such when recognizing oneself *as beloved* by God. One's true self 'comes' from and through the Eucharistic gifts of Christ's kenosis, which bestow communion with God and vision to recognize our true relationships with others in the Church and the world. Through Christ's example, command, and spirit, recipients also receive the desire to initiate love, to 'love first.' By cooperative decision in the 'obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) which works through love (Gal. 5:6; cf. Jam. 2:14-26), we fulfill the giving of what we have received: the gracious and scandalous gift of desire to love as Christ.

These gifts are gracious in that God's love liberates a person from narcissistic self-concern ('Does anybody out there love me?') toward the lover's radical decision to initiate love ('Can I love first?'). They are scandalous since they reveal *our own* contingency, the location of the self in God and in others, and the truth that we are not 'our own' but belong to God (cf. Rom. 14:7-8). They are scandalous because they point to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6).



Christ's Eucharistic gift also renews covenant *obligations* for its recipients. Reception of these gifts makes of the recipient *l'adonné*: one who is 'gifted' and receives the gift by becoming a giver of kenotic love. The gift is not 'retained' or 'possessed' like an object but shared precisely through dispossession of egoic self, even to the gift of one's own body and blood for others. This is the 'loss of self' which Jesus enjoins upon those who would follow him (cf. Mk. 8:35). We can either accept and love these truths or refuse and hate them, but the latter -- as Marion points out in *In the Self's Place* -- is merely to lie to ourselves.

#### 3.4.2.3. Jesus' Command: Call to 'Trinitarian Play'

Full reception of the Eucharist involves accepting the gift on its own terms, in its entirety. With his injunction 'Do this in memory of me,' Jesus commands his disciples not simply repeat the ritual in memory of him but to give *their own* body and blood as Jesus has. Jesus calls his disciples to love as he has just demonstrated: taking the initiative to love (loving 'first') and kenotically, without expectation or demand of return gift. The gifts are given, not to be collected or merely consumed, but as a *participatory point of entry* into trinitarian play -- to 'full, conscious, active participation' in giving self, proving reception of the gift by giving from one's own life. Jesus' command is another layer of the Eucharistic gift *enabling* disciples to know and live out their obligation, which is itself a grace of God.

This full participation in giving self both begins immediately during the liturgy -- even if unnoticed by many -- but is also meant to extend beyond the time and setting of the liturgy. Full participation in giving self involves three moments: the oblation by the community, the reception of communion, and living deliberately as a member of the ecclesial body of Christ in the world. After the *anamnesis* of the paschal mystery, each Roman Eucharistic prayer includes an oblation of the consecrated gifts, immediately offering the gifts back to God. Even if this oblation

escapes the attention of many, it engages the community immediately in giving and receiving. More urgent than even communion or more prayers is this liturgical reflex to receive-by-giving-away, to dispossess and share the gifts. Those receiving communion present their bodies to God as a spiritual sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) in another participation in, another initial movement toward, full self-giving. Lastly and most importantly, full reception of the Eucharist entails living out the mission to enter ‘trinitarian play’ by living deliberately as a member of the ecclesial body of Christ in the world, ready to ‘love first.’

Through the example and command of Jesus, the imagination is opened to the possibility of giving one’s ‘body and blood.’ Jesus’ gift in both the Eucharist and on the cross shows his disciples it is possible: one’s *own* body and blood become ‘givable,’ whether through martyrdom or the labor of one’s life.

#### 3.4.2.4. Reception by Decision to Love: Acceptance of the Gift on Its Own Terms

While Marion has a place for decision in the erotic reduction (namely, a person’s decision to become a lover), he thoroughly resists any notion of active cooperation with grace which might appear to attribute initiative or activity to the recipient. By contrast, this dissertation emphasizes both the importance of the recipient’s decision to become a lover and repeated decisions to cooperate actively with the divine grace given.

The mystery of cooperation with divine grace simply surpasses the limits of language: it demands of the human being both receptivity and active cooperation, an ‘active and cooperative receptivity.’ (Here, it can be helpful to recall Chauvet’s insight into the disparity between language and the real.) The need to receive and accept grace does not absolve a recipient of responsibility for initiative, active cooperation, and perseverance; “what matters is faith working through charity” (Gal. .

Thus, mere consumption of the consecrated Eucharistic gifts still does not assure ‘full reception of the Eucharist’ or transformation of the recipient. While the gifts are (‘of themselves’) gracious and scandalous expressions of God’s love and claim upon us, it is evident that not all who receive communion either live or understand the Eucharist according to these ideas -- much less offer their lives in martyrdom. A deeper change remains necessary to speak of full reception of the Eucharistic gift.

As Marion points out, true reception of any gift requires of the recipient *becoming* “integrally and in person -- hypostatically -- a gift.”<sup>508</sup> It is not that a recipient first receives a gift *and then* gives it again; the recipient most fully receives the gift *by* giving again. The real ‘gift’ at stake is the act of giving: “The gift itself consists uniquely in the act of receiving/giving, and in no other ‘content.’”<sup>509</sup> Marion shows us how fully receiving a gift goes far deeper than grateful reception of items, but entails *entering existentially* into giving-and-reception.

So one ‘receives the Eucharist’ most fully by the decision to become a lover, becoming a giver of kenotic love. This decision becomes possible through the gift of the Eucharist, through Christ proving his love for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). This decision is furthermore only possible as a *response* to the gospel proclamation: it is not a summoning and assertion of will but is the deeper reception of the gift of God’s love, a cooperation with the movement of the divine will. The liturgy of the Eucharist not only retells but *re-presents* -- ‘re-gives’ -- Christ’s gift time and again; such repeated hearing of the call and reception of the gifts is necessary to overcome the dullness of the human heart, the ‘sloth of disobedience,’ and forgetfulness of God which resist participation in the paschal mystery of kenotic loving and living. Through such a decision the recipient-giver also recognizes people in the world as icons

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<sup>508</sup> Marion, *ID*, 168.

<sup>509</sup> Marion, *ID*, 170.

of the wounded Body of Christ to be fed, given drink, visited, cured, clothed, and welcomed (cf. Mt. 25:31-46).

By decisions to give of one's own life, one grows in strength as a living member of the ecclesial body of Christ. Yet such radical decisions are only imaginable, made possible, and made desirable by Christ's prior self-gift made present to us in the Eucharist. This gift re-centers one's life (anamorphosis), speaks of Christ's loving self-gift to each of us (recognized in blessing), commands us to go and do likewise ('Do this in memory of me'). We either accept the claim the giver makes upon us and love accordingly ('becoming the gift'), or we refuse the claim, hate the truths it presents, and cut ourselves off from the loving that leads to the *vita beata*.

### **3.4.3. Liturgy of the Eucharist as Proclamation of Kenotic Love**

Marion's analyses also offer a new way to appreciate the liturgy of the Eucharist as a proclamation of love. The liturgical proclamation of incarnated love in the Eucharist -- by sign, word, and gesture -- testifies to God's selfless loving. This proclamation of divine love which transcends reciprocity announces 'good news' to the world. The 'distance' between the self who despairs of love ('Does anybody out there love me?') and the self who loves ('Can I love first?') is traversed.

Though Marion does not speak in terms of 'relation to self' or others, Christ's love and gift of himself mediate between -- *interfere* with -- the self and its self-hatred. An unselfish love is proclaimed through gifts in a personalist expression: 'Take this all of *you*... given up for *you*.' Ritual recitation of the oath of Christ's self-donating love corrects our notions of self, along with our attitudes and actions toward ourselves and others. At the divine initiative -- as God always loved us first (1 Jn. 4:10) -- a gift of love is recalled and manifested as visible phenomena of

bread and wine, which at that moment made no demand for reciprocity: it *simply forgives and liberates* the recipient from the sinister trap of reciprocity in love.

This revelatory moment is essential to ‘the mystery of faith’: the *unilaterally* proclaimed, manifested, and given gift of God’s love toward human beings -- ‘God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself’ (2 Cor. 5:17); ‘God proves his love for us in this, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:8). Recognition and acceptance of the Eucharistic gifts in this manner can empower a change from self-concern (‘Does anybody out there love me?’) to imagining initiatives of love for others (‘Can I love first?’). Such a change in primary concern effects changes in one’s relationships with every other person. Not only are other disciples proposed as people to be loved, but all: strangers, the needy (cf. Mt. 25:31-46; Lk. 16:19-31), and enemies (cf. Mt. 5:43-48).

Rather often in Eucharistic theology, the sacramental gifts are exalted to such a degree that the liturgical *celebration* and its import are lost. Recognition of the liturgy of the Eucharist as a public proclamation of Christ’s gift in the present world is one way to express its value *as an action* and not simply as means to liturgical ‘products.’ This perspective sheds light on the kerygmatic and prophetic value of the liturgy that is, again, too often lost amid a deeply-embedded ‘productionist’ mentality. Furthermore, this moment takes place within a far broader proclamation that includes praise of God for creation and redemption, celebration of God’s kingdom among a particular community, and the missionary charge to extend Christ’s love in the present-day world. In light of the importance of ‘givenness,’ the liturgical *actions* -- the ‘breaking of the bread’ and the gestures which manifest the gifts to the assembly -- are essential to the proclamation of and witness to Christ’s love for the world.

Reception of the Eucharist entails ongoing recognition of and participation in the Eucharistic anamorphosis, communion, mission, and decisions, all of which culminate as a gift of desire to love first. Christ's command 'Do this in memory of me,' opens the possibility and offers the desire for us to make a gift of one's own body and blood for others; we can recognize *our own* life -- our 'body and blood' -- as 'givable.' The body, blood, selfhood, and loving desire that constitute the more abundant life (Jn. 10:10) all come to us as gifts from another, namely, Jesus Christ.

#### **3.4.4. Eucharist as God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire**

The Eucharist 'fully received' is not just a gift of Christ's body and blood but of his *desire*: the loving desire to give completely of oneself, kenotically, in a gift which verifies reception of Christ's original gift. The Eucharist is a gift of desire, in at least two senses: first as a gift *expressing* God's loving desire to and for us (as a self-giving action directed toward communion), secondly as a *bestowal* of this desire to the recipient (recognized in the giving of one's life). To call the Eucharist a gift of *desire* emphasizes 'full conscious active participation' in the *giving* Christ enables, exemplifies, and inspires. The gift of desire does not replace or exclude understanding the Eucharist as gifts of Christ's body and blood, but without the recipient *desiring* to give oneself as Christ does, the Eucharistic gifts transform the self *less* fully, consciously, or actively. Understanding the Eucharist as a gift of desire upholds a *dynamic* notion of 'reception-by-giving.' Insofar as eucharistic theology and practice seeks to foster 'fully, conscious, active participation' in the divine mysteries, the desire and cooperative decision to 'live eucharistically' can and needs to be brought more fully into deliberate consciousness.

##### **3.4.4.1. Eucharist Expressing God's Loving Desire**

The sacramental gift of Christ (the ‘saturated phenomenon par excellence’) in the Eucharist represents a ‘lover’s advance’ of the divine excess of goodness, truth, and love. The Father who sent Christ to us as gift while we were still sinners (cf. Rom. 5:8) loved us first (cf. 1 Jn. 4:19); this occurred originally in history in the person of Jesus Christ; this gift is given to us again sacramentally in each celebration of the Eucharist.

In an excess of kenotic love which is *agape* and *eros*, Jesus’ words given in the Institution Narrative unveil the gifts’ significance: ‘this is my body, which will be given up for you’ and ‘this is the chalice of my blood: the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ Since the gifts these words concern are given for the sake of a *communion* between the Giver and givee, to abide in love (cf. Jn. 15:9), these words first express Jesus’ loving *desire* for the redemption of sinners. Jesus’ visible actions and gifts, with his audible word, express God’s love. They concretely and definitively express God’s desire to give Godself to human beings.

First in Christ (historically) and again (sacramentally) in each liturgy, words, gesture, food, and drink give this excess of charity in gifts able to be tasted, smelled, seen, touched, heard; they are even consumed and assimilated into the body. In both the past (as an original event) and present (as the risen Christ speaks to the liturgical assembly) the words and gestures of Jesus recounted in the liturgy of the institution narrative express the ‘greater love’ Christ has for his disciples and the world.<sup>510</sup> In perceivable words and deeds, the gifts express the superabundant loving desire God has for sinners, as Christ bestows the gifts of life even in view

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<sup>510</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 12:31b: Paul writes: ‘I will show you a still more excellent way,’ the way of charity (1 Cor. 13); cf. Jn. 15:13: Jesus tells his disciples, ‘Greater love no one has than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’

of his imminent betrayal by his own disciples.<sup>511</sup> It is not an abstract or remote love but is fully embodied and incarnate, surpassing even the desire in Jesus' human will for self-preservation.

Yet this gift-which-is-nourishment also includes a scandalous command: a call to live into trinitarian play: 'Do this in memory of me.' It is a scandalous command in that it demands of the recipient more than what any egoic desire would initiate or could put into action. What Jesus commands is beyond what the egoic desire can imagine, desire, or will, since obedience to Jesus' command is the undoing of the egoic self -- which is itself a critically important aspect of the gift. As Marion noted concerning Augustine's *Confessions*, truth scandalizes us because it "provokes a difference, and bars neutrality, for it always imposes a choice on the one who receives it and undergoes it."<sup>512</sup> Truth's excess demands a person decide in *only* one of two possible ways: "either by the ordeal of bearing its excess ... finding himself affected, modified, altered; or [conversely] by dodging this excess, at the price of a retreat before the evidence, of a retreat far from the true."<sup>513</sup> The gift and the anamorphosis the Eucharist brings about (becoming *l'adonné* of the gift) nonetheless create the possibility that a recipient may be so changed as to obey the command, be transformed into a living and active member of the body of Christ, and a witness in one's *Sitz im Leben* to God's kenotic loving. The Eucharist's unity of beatitude and truth is hardly pure bliss for human beings to receive; it also scandalizes in that it calls *ourselves* into question, demands an account from us, demands a decision about oneself with no chance to avoid it.

The Eucharistic gift 'opens the self to itself': it reveals one's true selfhood as received from Christ, makes radical demands of us, and calls for changes in one's ultimate concerns. We

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<sup>511</sup> Interestingly, all four scriptural accounts of the Institution Narrative (Mt 26:20-30; Mk. 14:22-26; Lk. 22:14-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) associate the event with Jesus' betrayal ('On the night he was betrayed' -- 1 Cor. 11:23).

<sup>512</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 108.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.



adopt these notions into a relational Eucharistic theology that speaks in categories of desire, selfhood, and relations.

#### 3.4.4.2. Eucharist Bestowing God's Loving Desire, To Be Lived

Secondly, the Eucharist is a gift *bestowing* a share in God's own loving desire, which is gracious, gratuitous (free, initiating). By *manifesting* the divine excess of love to human beings, the Eucharist 're-presents' anew the divine goodness, in the face of which *l'adonné* undergoes the 'ordeal of the self' described by Augustine (and recounted by Marion in *In the Self's Place*): the egoic self is 'undone,' and the presence of divine goodness and truth, as the true place of the self, advances upon *l'adonné* in an 'impossible' gift of Christ's body and blood, offered to be taken up *in and by the flesh* of the recipient and put into action.

This is the 'gift of desire' in an 'objective genitive' sense, a gift which imparts and bestows God's loving desire to us. To love *with God's own loving* -- with *His* loving and forgiving desire -- is our high calling. It inspires loving beyond selfish benefit, to continue recognizing the need -- and in some degree, God-given capacity -- to imagine, discover, desire, initiate, and reveal agapic loving. This gift of God's own loving desire for us to take up and live from is a decisive moment in becoming Christian subjects; it provides what Marion describes in terms of 'the erotic reduction' (which excludes everything but the desire to love) and of 'something arising within me' leading to a decision to become a lover. The gift can be considered as a share in the 'graciousness and gratuitousness' of the divine giver, which is the freedom to love without prior reason (other than one's own decision). God's free, loving, initiating, creative *desire* liberates the recipient to initiate love as the giver does; the *desire and action* -- not mere 'items' -- are meant to carry over to the recipient.

Insofar as the gift of the divine lover's advance is recognized as such -- as a divine gift to oneself -- it arouses *l'adonné's* gratitude and desire to give likewise of oneself. Yet this desire is not definitively fulfilled in this lifetime: it is a gift of spiritual striving, *epektasis*, based not on lack but renewal of desire: "the more it is fulfilled, the more there is a rebirth of desire, without end.... [It] is nourished by excess, not destroyed by it."<sup>514</sup> The recipient is radically challenged *to become* more fully like the gift it receives.

Jesus' words to his disciples are not '*Watch* this' -- they are '*Do* this.' What is the 'this' Jesus is showing them, that his disciples might in turn 'do'? They are to do what Jesus himself has just done, with their *own* gifts: disciples are to give *their own* 'body and blood,' their lives, their work, all their intention. The gift is received by *entering existentially into the giving* Jesus has exemplified. Jesus has just pledged the total and irrevocable gift of himself, giving his own body and blood, for the sake of the forgiveness of sins (taking an ultimate responsibility for every 'other').

Therefore, doing what Jesus has just said he is doing, a disciple is to give of one's self -- one's 'own' body, one's 'own' blood: gifts on loan as they really are -- as Jesus himself gives, unconditionally, for a purpose that glorifies God, in grateful memory of Jesus. Jesus *concretized* and *incarnated* the gift of himself; we are called to do the same: "I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). One receives Jesus' Eucharistic gifts most fully by fully giving in the same way again, with one's own life: this reveals 'full receipt' of the gift, giving in kind. Our greatest way to express gratitude is to become like him (insofar as we are able) by giving as he did. The 'most visible' form this takes is in martyrdom, yet it can unfold in the course of anyone's life. Whether in marriage's vocation

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<sup>514</sup> Cf. Kearney, "Dialogue," 21. "So there is a real equivocality about concepts like will, desire, and so on. And that equivocality is further evidence that there really is some limitation to metaphysics."

to mutual and unreserved gift of ‘body and blood,’ or a priest’s or religious’ consecration, or any person’s existential decisions, all people have the opportunity to make of the fact and finality of death an opportunity for loving and definitive self-giving. With Jesus’ gift of the Eucharist, we discover our own ‘body and blood’ as gifts both received *and* ‘*givable*,’ to and for others in charity, service, and witness.

### **3.4.5. Summary Assessment of Marion’s Gifts**

With the help of Marion’s attention to the dynamics of anamorphosis, recognition of the gift, trinitarian play, and the decision to become a lover, the richness of the Eucharistic gift becomes more evident. In fully receiving the Eucharist -- loving as Jesus has loved, and doing so in memory of him -- disciples are called to give of themselves, as concretely as gifts of bread and wine, as nourishment for body and soul, out of love for other persons. With the example of Jesus’ self-giving and the gift of the Eucharist, we can at least begin to imagine partaking of a share in God’s radical loving, even when it costs us everything. Doing so means shedding idolatry at its source (namely, the illusory self) in a foretaste of the ‘more abundant’ eternal life Jesus came to give us (cf. Jn. 10:10).

For liturgy to relate to life more clearly, some mediation between the two must become more evident. This chapter has explored Marion’s thought as a mediation between the realms of liturgy and life, in particular by specifying the Eucharist’s gift of desire -- not as a gift to receive (only, or merely) but a gift to *become and enact* in one’s *own* self, flesh (‘body and blood’), life, and death. Marion’s observations concerning dynamics of the encounter of God with human beings demand new notions of the self, impose obligations, and elicit our deepest desire for love. They contribute immensely to the project at hand.

As a theologian, Marion rewrites several topics -- revelation, language, theology, notions of the self -- from the primacy of God's gift of love in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. In hindsight it becomes more 'visible' how Marion's work has been concerned with the unique event of the Eucharist, which transgresses all boundaries of the sensible, of presence, causality, and relationship. God's gift of the Eucharist -- the gift of Godself (Christ's Body and Blood; also of the Holy Spirit) -- sets up a relationship that maintains the dialectic of communion *and distance* which is so central to Marion's thought. The very natures of gift and of communion entail the distance which is necessarily part of the 'mystery of charity' that cannot be reduced to either complete union or separation. The 'word of the cross' employs the so-called 'death of God' to unveil the mystery of charity; the gift of love celebrated by the liturgy of the Eucharist is part of our 'Passover' into our roles as disciples in the trinitarian play.

The impact of the gift according to Marion's phenomenology reshapes our notion of the subject; for our theological purposes it opens a way to describe the process of sanctification, of transformation into a more fully Christian subject. First, as an inversion of subjectivity: no longer is a recipient an 'ego,' an autonomous agent who constitutes phenomena as objects. Rather, the givenness of the saturated phenomenon constitutes the recipient. Next, an examination of the self's desire calls the subject into question and reveals new aspects of the self. Our desire for the *vita beata* opens us to scandalous truth concerning the self, resulting in an ordeal for the self which reveals still more about the self and requires decision. The impact of the divine gift is also reflected in the existential questions that concern various stages of experience. All these aspects help describe for us how the divine gift in fact 'opens the self'; thus they offer new ways to understand the *relational* impact of receiving the Eucharistic gift.

Marion's phenomenological concepts help us understand how the divine gift interrupts the hidden ideologies of the ego (as self-sufficient), scientific knowledge (as all-encompassing of human concern), and market exchange (as characterizing all relationships) opens a new and far richer way to understand the importance of liturgy than a legalistic obligation to fulfill.

Chauvet and Marion have common themes in their writings on the Eucharist: language of praise, sign, gift, blessing, presence, withdrawal/distance, abandoned flesh, the 'word of the cross,' personal recognition, Christ's 'existential' (rather than ritual) sacrifice. *Self-giving* is upheld as the height of true freedom, and expressed -- *incarnated* -- either in one's own body or symbolically. It is the gift *by* and *of* a person *to* and *for* persons, for the sake of a covenant relationship. All of this helps us appreciate more fully the gift of the Eucharist from a relational perspective.

That being said -- and while he protests firmly to the contrary -- Marion's phenomenology is so often infused with Christian themes (love, idols, icons), examples (from Christian scriptures), and implied references (creation, grace) that its integration into theology is easily accomplished. His phenomenology of givenness bears many characteristics of the fruit of theological reflection interrelating experience, creation, and grace. Noel Dermot O'Donoghue summarizes the nature of Marion's contribution well when he hails *God Without Being* as "above all .... [i]t is first and last a prayer," for it is "at the heart of the giving and receiving that prayer arises ... the original mystery that issues into time from beyond time."<sup>515</sup> This statement applies fittingly to Marion's entire *oeuvre* which, even as it benefits from corrections by philosophers and theologians alike, serves more as a single-minded *witness* to God's giving than as either a philosophical treatise or an account of how God's gifts are cooperatively received. As such

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<sup>515</sup> Neil Dermot O'Donoghue, "In the Beginning was the Gift... A marginal note on '*God without Being*,'" *New Blackfriars* 76 No. 895 (July/August 1995), 352; 351-353.

Marion's phenomenological contributions -- anamorphosis, recognition of the gift, the nature of encounters -- are most welcome within this theological concern. In a liturgical setting and in conjunction with other thinkers, concerns for the purity of phenomenological methodology recede in favor of a (reasonably) complete account of the liturgy of the Eucharist. Marion's phenomenological writings make invaluable contributions to our project of a relational Eucharistic theology, since they attend so carefully to human experience of and encounter with the divine.

As with Chauvet, Marion's writings on givenness reframe the reality of grace. *Every* event, every 'thing,' every encounter is gift of grace. From the totality of creation to the most fleeting perception of beauty, these did not *have* to be, but are occasion for recognition: most of all, recognition of encounter and relationship, and the joyful (if challenging) obligation to love. Yet, as recounted above, Marion's account has its blind spots, one of which is the 'horizontal' or social aspect of faith. Gifts can have a great influence on social relations -- not least when they are misinterpreted, leading to envy, accusation, and violence. In order to both raise these issues and observe how Jesus' gift offers redemption from the causes of violence, we now recruit our third contributor to our relational Eucharistic theology: René Girard.

## **IV. Girard: A Thinker of Desire**

### **4.1. Overview of Girard's Mimetic Theory**

#### ***4.1.1. Seeds of Conflicts: Desire as Mimetic***

#### ***4.1.2. Growth of Conflicts: Rivalry and Identity Crises***

#### ***4.1.3. 'Resolution': The Scapegoat Mechanism***

##### ***4.1.3.1. Murder of an Expendable Victim***

##### ***4.1.3.2. Its Anthropological Purpose: Restoration of Unity***

##### ***4.1.3.3. Its Religious Disguise: Sacrifice***

##### ***4.1.3.4. Effects of Scapegoat Mechanism: A Deceitful 'Peace'***

#### ***4.1.4. The Scandalous Cost of Forsaking Sacrificial Violence***

### **4.2. Theological Applications of Mimetic Theory**

#### ***4.2.1. The Satanic Nature of the Scapegoat Mechanism***

#### ***4.2.2. Salvation Through Imitation of Christ***

#### ***4.2.3. Jesus' Subversion of Sacrifice: The 'Original Liturgical Reform'***

##### ***4.2.3.1. First Stage: The Kingdom of God Challenges the World's Order***

##### ***4.2.3.2. Second Stage: The World's Judgment on the Word***

##### ***4.2.3.3. Third Stage: Christ's Nonviolent Fidelity to His Mission Unto Death***

##### ***4.2.3.4. Fourth Stage: Resurrection as the Father's Judgment***

##### ***4.2.3.5. Fifth Stage: Sending of the Holy Spirit***

##### ***4.2.3.6. The Cause and Value of Jesus' Death***

##### ***4.2.3.7. Girard's Refined Stance on Sacrifice***

##### ***4.2.3.8. The Demands of Conversion and Discipleship***

#### ***4.2.4. Worship in a Violent World: The Lamb of God Reconciles the World to God***

##### ***4.2.4.1. Yom Kippur: Atonement Within the Jewish Liturgical Context***

##### ***4.2.4.2. Jesus' Saving Death as a Liturgical Atonement***

##### ***4.2.4.3. The New Covenant Liturgy: The Last Supper***

##### ***4.2.4.4. Eucharist/Mass***

##### ***4.2.4.5. The Love Behind the Gift***

#### ***4.2.5. Sacrifice Reappropriated***

##### ***4.2.5.1. Reframing Creation and Sin***

##### ***4.2.5.2. Recasting Redemption***

##### ***4.2.5.3. Sacrifice According to Christ's Image***

### **4.3. Critical Reception of Girard's Contribution**

#### ***4.3.1. Girard's Contributions***

##### ***4.3.1.1. Clarifying Christ's Unique Sacrifice***

##### ***4.3.1.2. Restoring the Gospel Challenge of Nonviolence***

##### ***4.3.1.3. Relating Desire and the Holy Spirit***

#### ***4.3.2. Shortcomings***

##### ***4.3.2.1. Weak Soteriology***

##### ***4.3.2.2. Equivocation of All Archaic Sacrifice***

##### ***4.3.2.3. Developments Needed***

#### ***4.3.3. Others' Critiques***

##### ***4.3.3.1. Impact***

##### ***4.3.3.2. Strengths***

##### ***4.3.3.3. Critiques***

### **4.4. Applying Mimetic Theory to the Liturgy of the Eucharist**

#### **4.4.1. *Liturgy of the Eucharist as a Gift of Desire***

4.4.1.1. The Gift of Christ's Loving Desire

4.4.1.2. The Gift of Christ's Loving Desire in the Liturgy of the Eucharist

#### **4.4.2. *Ritual Reversal of the Origins of Violence***

#### **4.4.3. *Gift of New Relations***

### **IV. Thinker of Desire: René Girard**

To refine our notion of the 'gracious and scandalous gift of desire' given in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we now turn to the 'mimetic theory' of René Girard (1923-2015). A literary scholar by training, Girard also explored ethnology, anthropology, and biblical studies; his theory has also been taken up in politics, economics, sociology, psychology, and theology. Its adoption by several theologians (particularly Raymund Schwager) brought Girard's mimetic theory into dialogue with theology. We employ his insights here to highlight the scandalous and liberating impact of the Eucharist upon desire, identity, and relations.

Born on Christmas 1923 in Avignon, France, Girard obtained an undergraduate degree in Medieval History at École Nationale des Chartes in Paris in 1947, and obtained a doctorate in History from Indiana University in 1950.<sup>516</sup> Girard's initial book *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (1961; *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*)<sup>517</sup> and a work on Dostoevsky<sup>518</sup> (1963) contrasted 'the romantic lie' with 'novelistic truth,' positing that desire is mediated to us by others. While teaching at Johns Hopkins University, Girard was one of the organizers for the 1966 conference that introduced French theory and structuralism to America. Lucien Goldmann,

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<sup>516</sup> "American Opinion of France, 1940-1943."

<sup>517</sup> René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961). English edition: René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). Hereafter DDN.

<sup>518</sup> René Girard, *Critique dans un souterrain* (Lausanne: Lausanne, L'Âge d'Homme, 1976). English edition: René Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky*, trans. James G. Williams, *Studies in Violence, Mimesis, & Culture* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2012).



Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida all participated; “Girard quipped that he was ‘bringing *la peste* to the United States.’”<sup>519</sup>

In *La Violence et le Sacré* (1972; *Violence and the Sacred*),<sup>520</sup> Girard -- against the anthropological, psychiatric, and structuralist theories of Frazer, Freud, Lévi-Strauss, Hubert and Mauss -- connected the notion of an originary murder with sacrificial mechanisms, which both hid and perpetuated violence within human culture. The sacrificial system in fact *created* the social order (and sustained it), rather than vice versa. This captured the interest of Raymund Schwager (1935-2004), Professor of Systematic Theology at Innsbruck, Austria. In 1974 Schwager began corresponding with Girard and proved both influential upon Girard and helpful for a wider acceptance of mimetic theory among theologians.

After other brief teaching posts at Duke, Bryn Mawr, and SUNY-Buffalo, in 1981 Girard became the inaugural Andrew B. Hammond Professor in French Language, Literature and Civilization at Stanford in 1981. Author of over 25 books, Girard’s texts *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* (1978; *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*)<sup>521</sup> and *Je vois Satan tomber comme l’éclair* (1999; *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*)<sup>522</sup> most directly relate his theory to biblical texts. Recipient of six honorary degrees, in 2005 Girard was named an *immortel* of the *Académie française*.

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<sup>519</sup> “Stanford professor and eminent French theorist René Girard, member of the Académie Française, dies at 91,” accessed on 30 November 2017 at <https://news.stanford.edu/2015/11/04/rene-girard-obit-110415/>.

<sup>520</sup> René Girard, *La Violence et le Sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972). English edition: *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Hereafter *VS*.

<sup>521</sup> René Girard, *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* (Paris: Grasset, 1978). English edition: *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World: Research undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and G. Lefort*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). Hereafter *TH*.

<sup>522</sup> René Girard, *Je vois Satan tomber comme l’éclair* (Paris: Grasset, 1999). English edition: *René Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001). Hereafter *ISSF*.

Literary and ethnological studies led Girard to study the relation of sacrifice to religion, and therefore to Greek tragedy and the biblical texts, uncovering a contrast between what he calls the Christian ‘logos of the [evangelist] John’ and the worldly and violent ‘logos of Heraclitus.’<sup>523</sup> Girard’s mimetic theory ambitiously seeks to account for (no less than) the origins of religion and of all human culture; others have found it relevant for anthropology, psychology, sociology, politics, economics, literature, and more. While such bold claims cause some to question the theory’s effectiveness across academic specialties, “Theology is less worried by Girard’s kind of multidisciplinary promiscuity, and in fact sees it as essential to its own task.”<sup>524</sup> According to its proponents, mimetic theory offers theologians an overarching perspective traditionally provided by philosophy as the ‘handmaiden of theology.’

Though Girard says “all of my books have been more or less explicit apologies of Christianity,”<sup>525</sup> and contain several theological assertions, he does not claim to be a theologian. His mimetic theory is an *anthropological* insight drawn from novels and biblical texts. Girard’s advocates consider this modesty admirable; critics find it disingenuous. (This claim and its reception is analogous to Marion’s claim to ‘pure phenomenology.’) Proponents find his work attractive since by way of literature, ethnology, and comparative religion, it affirms the unique revelation of Jesus Christ and the Gospels: “Girard’s impact on theology has been considerable, as theologians recognise in his work a new way of conceiving of the doctrine of the atonement, and in particular a fresh contribution to Christianity’s theological understanding of sacrifice.”<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Cf. Girard, *TH*, 263-280.

<sup>524</sup> Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 5. Hereafter *GT*.

<sup>525</sup> René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoit Chantre*, trans. Mary Baker (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, Chicago Distribution, Kindle Edition), Kindle location 186. Hereafter *BE*.

<sup>526</sup> Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard: Religion Today* (London: Darton Longman Todd, 2005), Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 2313-2315. Hereafter *DG*.

Girard's creative approach can thus offer a new apologia for Christianity.<sup>527</sup> Amid a secularized and pluralistic world, mimetic theory holds Jesus' death as a critical moment in human history.

With the help of Girard's Christian interpreters (particularly Raymund Schwager, James Alison, and Robert Daly) we will explore the implications of mimetic theory for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Mimetic theory offers an anthropological rationale underlying Christ's most gracious self-giving, which both reverses the genesis of violent sacrifice and bids his disciples to imitate what he has done for them ('Do this in memory of me'); as such it more closely relates the 'nature' and 'grace' of Jesus' action. Just as our treatment of Marion in chapter 3 used his philosophical thought to help clarify theological matters (against the direction of Marion's own movement), so here Girard's mimetic theory is employed as a teaching tool for a relational theology of the Eucharist, but without reducing the Eucharist to elements of Girard's mimetic theory. After an overview of Girard's mimetic theory (4.1) we explore some of his theological statements and the proposals for mimetic theory and theology (4.2.) of Raymund Schwager, James Alison, and Robert Daly. Critical reception of Girard (4.3.) follows. My proposals for further theological application of mimetic theory to the Eucharist (4.3) follow, particularly concerning matters of desire, identity, and relations.

#### **4.1. Overview of Girard's Mimetic Theory**

For Girard, "No single question has more of a future today than the question of man,"<sup>528</sup> and his mimetic theory aims to address this question (and its variations) simply and comprehensively. Girard seeks to "take up an old problem [of the question of man]... and radically rethink it"<sup>529</sup> through questioning human desire: How does desire arise? What is

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<sup>527</sup> See Grant Kaplan, *René Girard, Unlikely Apologist: Mimetic Theory and Fundamental Theology* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).

<sup>528</sup> Girard, *TH*, 7.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

desire's role in the process of hominization? What prompts human violence (the desire to kill)? How does desire shape human action and culture? According to Girard, philosophy, psychology, and the life sciences have all missed the mark trying to answer these questions; they misguided inquiry into the origin of religion in particular.

Girard's mimetic theory begins with a look at the 'mimetic' origin and nature of desire, which generates a potent stew of rivalry, resentment, and conflict. These conflicts easily escalate into communal identity crises which resolve through the deceitful 'solution' of the 'single victim mechanism,' more commonly known as 'scapegoating.' The Judeo-Christian scriptures gradually unveil this lie, culminating in a 'subversion from within' of the sacrificial system by Jesus. Girard's anthropological critique of sacrifice has important implications for theology, which will be explored after the following explanation.

#### **4.1.1. Seeds of Conflicts: Desire as Mimetic**

The origins of desire, Girard reasons, are best explained by the human tendency toward imitation. Against the grain of literature since the Romantic period and of philosophy since the Enlightenment, Girard debunks the notion of a purely 'autonomous self' who is the origin of his own desires.<sup>530</sup> Under the heading of "Fundamental Anthropology" in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Girard cites Aristotle's *Poetics*: "Man differs from the other animals in his greater aptitude for imitation."<sup>531</sup> The human inclination to imitate orients and shapes not only desires and actions of individuals but all human relationships, religion, and culture: "[All] human relations are absolutely reciprocal, the worst as well as the best[.] What is that? It's imitation."<sup>532</sup> Girard often refers to this process of imitation by the term 'mimesis.'<sup>533</sup> This first

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<sup>530</sup> Cf. Girard, *DDN*.

<sup>531</sup> Girard, *TH*, 1. Reference is to Aristotle's *Poetics*, paragraph 4.

<sup>532</sup> René Girard, "Mimesis, Sacrifice, and the Bible," in Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart, eds., *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution: Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre

insight -- deceptively simple -- will offer profound explanatory power regarding violent behavior, particularly its escalation, which otherwise appears most irrational.

According to Girard this powerful impulse toward imitation/mimesis shapes all human activity: “there is nothing, or next to nothing, in human behavior that is not learned, and all learning is based on imitation. If human beings suddenly stopped imitating, all forms of culture would vanish.”<sup>534</sup> Imitation is more fundamental to human beings *than even* conscious desire or deliberate action. Imitation shapes not only behavior but desire -- a critically important point. At first unconsciously but then with greater deliberation, human beings are driven to imitate one another’s desires. We ‘learn’ and imitate not merely *to* desire but the desires for particular things *themselves* from other people. Again, this insight into the unconsciously *contagious* and ever-intensifying nature of desire becomes exceedingly important for explaining otherwise ‘irrational’ desires and behaviors, even as people become destructive of others or themselves.

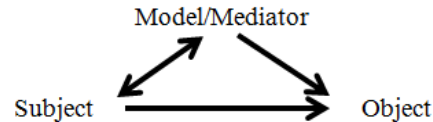
For Girard human desire is neither merely animal nor determined by conscious willing alone. Desire is “grafted onto” biological needs and appetites (respiration, food, physical safety, procreation). When a subject observes the desire of someone else (designated a ‘model’ or ‘mediator’) for a particular object, the subject acquires the model’s desire for oneself. Action taken by the model communicates or ‘mediates’ a particular desire and imparts a judgment of value. Girard employs the image of a triangle to describe the relations among a subject, the model, and the object of desire:

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Dame, 2011), 43. Though not highlighted as such by Girard, the human desire *to be imitated* expands the implications of mimetic theory still further.

<sup>533</sup> “Rather than the exhausted word *imitation*, then, I chose to employ the Greek word *mimesis*.... The only advantage of the Greek word is that it makes the conflictual aspect of mimesis conceivable.... [whose] cause... is rivalry provoked by an object, the acquisitive mimesis which must always be our point of departure.” Girard, *TH*, 18.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



The desire of a model for an object (downward right arrow) communicates to the subject (upper left arrow, between model and subject) a similar desire for the given object (bottom arrow).

When a given desired object is available in abundance, relations between the subject and model can remain benign: both can enjoy possession and enjoyment of the object, and the model is no obstacle. Imitation of a model often progresses from mere appearance to belongings and actions; Girard calls this ‘external mediation.’

This tendency toward imitation of models and their desires can be for good or ill; the result of envy receives so much emphasis in Girard that imitation of the good is often overlooked. When imitation according to ‘external mediation’ occurs toward an abundant material good or a transcendent good (such as virtue), ‘good mimesis’ is operative. According to Girard human beings never escape mimesis altogether, but mimesis can become occasion for moral good.

An important element of this insight is the *contagious* nature of desire, which is often transferred without the conscious consent or decision of the recipient. An object becomes attractive simply when a model is already attracted to it, and this desire intensifies (even unconsciously) as subject and model see each other attracted by it. No prior deliberation or decision must precede the transfer of desire; in fact, the desire is transferred first and only subsequently subject to deliberation, which may not entirely extinguish the desire either.

#### **4.1.2. Growth of Conflicts: Rivalry and Identity Crises**

What perhaps begins as admiration, however, can turn sour very quickly. When the mutually desired object is (or becomes) a limited commodity -- actually or perceived as such --

then the disciple and model begin competing against each other. The disciple's desire makes the model intensify his own desire and action, such that now the model is now imitator of the disciple. The model is no longer the sole origin and owner of the desire, but among a pair of competitors who learn from each other how to acquire the object more successfully. Such competition engenders joy at personal success and *Schadenfreude* at the other's failures. A person's desire to imitate the model acquires such intensity that the subject has a 'metaphysical desire' to acquire the other's very *being* -- desiring to *become* the model oneself, eliminate the other, and regain security. This is 'internal mediation' of desire and the birth of rivalry.

In such a rivalry, the subject strives to surpass the model, thereby imitating him; the model, conversely, becomes more like the subject as he likewise becomes a competitor who fends off another to possess the object for himself. While "not sinful *per se*, it is ... a permanent occasion of sin."<sup>535</sup> Sights, whether perceived or real, become exaggerated; their mutual imitation becomes so overpowering it becomes more accurate to say the rivalry possesses *them*. Their interactions -- whether appearing to be courteous or openly violent -- get rationalized as serving justice.

Such "exasperation of mimetic rivalry" Girard calls 'scandal' (Gk. *skandalon*), "a very common inability to walk away from mimetic rivalry which turns it into an addiction.... [such as] drugs, sex, power, and above all morbid competitiveness, professional, sexual, political, intellectual, and spiritual, especially spiritual."<sup>536</sup> Models become scandals (obstacles) to subjects as they prevent subjects from obtaining their desire. The frustration of desire that subjects experience is likewise a 'scandal' which both attracts and aggravates the subject all the more.

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<sup>535</sup> This statement exemplifies the kind of theological statements Girard makes from his anthropological analyses. René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 198. Hereafter *Reader*.

<sup>536</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 198.

This mimetic process creates an ever-greater similarity between disciple and model and leads to an *identity crisis*, since all bases for differentiation disappear. The end result is far from benign: “Each becomes the imitator of his own imitator and the model of his own model.... Violence is generated by this process; or rather violence is the process itself when two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire.”<sup>537</sup> The impulse to imitate aggravates the fear of *loss* of identity or even life, which ‘justifies’ violence to secure superiority over the other. Confusion over what makes oneself different from the other gives rise to panic and violence.

Mimetic rivalries eventually draw their subjects and models into seemingly irresolvable conflict. The object that subjects and models both desire becomes either unattainable, too scarce, or a stimulus for envy; this is especially the case with ‘metaphysical desire’ to ‘become the other’ for oneself and in fact *eliminate* the ‘actual other’ entirely. The rivalry becomes obsessive, and yet they *need* each other as identifiable enemies who embody all that is detestable.

To make matters worse, such conflicts and crises between persons compound one another into the social relations of larger groups. Society becomes layered with mimetic rivalries, and *communal* identity crises arise. Furthermore, the desires we assimilate for ourselves are already tainted with rivalry and violence: humankind thus becomes enmeshed in structures of political, economic, and social evil. Against people’s expectations, the complete absence of differentiation leads not to unity but terror. Each member of the community becomes a rival and the object of envy or blame of some other; competition breaks out as each defends their own innocence and is ready to accuse others of grave offenses. Such a communal crisis (which

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<sup>537</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 9. Chapter is a reprint of René Girard, “Mimesis and Violence,” *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979), 9-19.



Girard also calls a ‘mimetic crisis’) generates anxiety and aggression to a climactic point that demands resolution. Society needs a cathartic outlet for its violence, some means of re-establishing peace. Societies can manage a degree of stability -- but at a steep price.

#### **4.1.3. ‘Resolution’: The Scapegoat Mechanism**

The best-known feature of Girard’s mimetic theory is what he calls ‘the scapegoat mechanism.’ Borrowing the scriptural image of the scapegoat (Lev. 16:7-10, 20-22) upon whom the sins of the community are placed on the Day of Atonement, for Girard a scapegoat is any chosen victim whose expulsion and/or death unites the rest of the community, to resolve its crises of identity. Upon such a victim a community discharges its violence, in a foolhardy attempt to be rid of the supposed contagion -- all the while perpetuating it.

##### **4.1.3.1. Murder of an Expendable Victim**

Girard says the means by which all groups resolve these identity crises -- indeed, the very foundation for all human civilizations -- is no less than murder. Murder both was committed (in the past, at humanity’s foundation) and is committed (in the present) against a single victim, in an all-against-one action.

When no ‘reasonable’ basis for distinction is available, a process that appears random or acting as ‘divine chance’ is employed to select the victim.<sup>538</sup> In truth however, the process is never random. One way or another, society chooses precisely a victim whose death will incur no reprisal, no perpetuation of violence: “All our sacrificial victims ... [have] one essential characteristic: ... [they] can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal.... The considerable importance of this freedom from reprisal ... [means] that sacrifice is primarily an act of violence

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<sup>538</sup> One might recall the ‘random’ selection of victims in *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson or, more recently, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins.

without risk of vengeance.<sup>539</sup> The powerless victim, deemed guilty, ‘substitutes’ as the collective guilt, contagion, or fault of the community. “Sacrifice.... is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves. The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from *its own* violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself.”<sup>540</sup> The innocent and defenseless victim, upon whom the community projects its guilt, *personifies* or embodies the evil to be expelled, often by being assigned a less-than-fully-human dignity, whether due to genetics, heresy, moral evil, supernatural forces, etc..

#### 4.1.3.2. Its Anthropological Purpose: Restoration of Unity

While demonstrated most visibly in the context of religious sacrifice, Girard argues that the scapegoat mechanism arises from simply human causes and meets human needs. The murder re-unifies the community by finding a victim that all its (other) members agree to exclude. Traditionally, the field of ethnology (in the works of Joseph de Maistre,<sup>541</sup> Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss<sup>542</sup>) described a sacrifice as a ritual in which an expendable innocent victim ‘pays for’ communal guilt with its life. For Girard however “There is no question of ‘expiation.’ Rather, society is seeking to deflect upon ... a ‘sacrificeable’ victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members, the people it most desires to protect.”<sup>543</sup> The scapegoat mechanism provides a ‘safe’ and justifiable catharsis of violence upon an artificially ‘guilty’ victim who ‘deserves’ the punishment. Moreover, while execution of the victim is perhaps

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<sup>539</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 82.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>541</sup> Cf. Joseph de Maistre, “Traite sur les sacrifices,” in *Les Soirees de Saint-Petersbourg* (Lyons, 1890); English trans.: Joseph de Maistre, “Elucidation on Sacrifices,” in *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993). Referred to in René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1977), chapter 1.

<sup>542</sup> Cf. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W.D. Halls (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). Referred to in Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred*, chapter 1.

<sup>543</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 73.

shameful, the *belief* that execution of this victim will certainly produce peace becomes unassailable. The peaceable end justifies the unseemly means.

The murder re-unites the community by replacing the unfulfilled desire-for-acquisition with a desire-*to-exclude* -- which, without fail, is fulfilled. “For the contagion that divides, fragments, and decomposes communities is substituted a collective contagion that gathers all those scandalized to act against a single victim who is promoted to the role of universal scandal.”<sup>544</sup> All this occurs for purely anthropological reasons, even if it carries a magical or quasi-religious aura with it. “Whereas mimetic appropriation is inevitably divisive, causing the contestants to fight..., mimetic antagonism is ultimately ... reunitive since it provides the antagonists with *an object they can really share* ... they can all rush against that victim in order to destroy it or drive it away.”<sup>545</sup> Since acquisition cannot satisfy desire, violence becomes justifiable and most practical because it alone reunifies a community. This action is regenerative for the community since, by the exclusion of the victim, the community renews and clarifies its sense of identity, if only by negation.

#### 4.1.3.3. Its Religious Disguise: Sacrifice

Since the guilt of its violent murder is difficult for a community to bear, the murder is given a holy disguise as ritual sacrifice. Religious justifications such as sacrifice rationalize the ‘need’ for exclusionary violence:

[The] sacrificial process requires a certain degree of *misunderstanding* [*méconnaissance*]. The celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act. The theological basis of the sacrifice has a crucial role in fostering this misunderstanding. It is the god who supposedly demands the victims; he alone in principle, who savors the smoke from the altars and requisitions the slaughtered flesh.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 21.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 13. Emphasis added.

<sup>546</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 76.

Mythic sacrificial rituals accomplish this misunderstanding by hiding from the community its own violent origins. Ironically, however, the community unconsciously affirms and perpetuates its *continuity* with those violent origins through its practice of sacrificial ritual.

Ritual sacrifices thus both conceal and reveal how any community establishes its identity by murder. Religious trappings of ritual, hierarchies, sacred realities and impurity all conspire to conceal and justify what is actually violence. Under a religious or memorial pretext, an act of violence is the community's foundation; furthermore, violent sacrifices re-establish communal security. Thus, as Girard famously states, "Violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred."<sup>547</sup> Whether in a religious or secular context, the scapegoat mechanism manifests itself as a sacrifice: "Sacrifice is the resolution and conclusion of ritual because a collective murder or expulsion resolves the mimetic crisis that ritual mimics. What kind of mechanism can this be? .... a scapegoat effect."<sup>548</sup> Such sacrificial pretexts are especially vivid when an identity crisis raises the question of 'who are the true believers?' An intolerable *lack* of difference or pecking order turns insignificant details into radical threats that require violent action.

Sacrifices -- religious or secular -- always come with rationalizations to justify the violence they incur. Girard, however, steadfastly upholds the innocence of all sacrificial victims: "Violence is frequently called irrational. It has its reasons, however, and can marshal some rather convincing ones when the need arises. Yet these reasons cannot be taken seriously, no matter how valid they may appear."<sup>549</sup> The supposed guilt of the victim is always a fiction, a fabricated lie. Despite its rationalizations -- religious or otherwise -- the scapegoating process has no basis beyond preservation of power.

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<sup>547</sup> Girard, *VS*, 31.

<sup>548</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 11.

<sup>549</sup> Girard, *VS*, 2.

The scapegoat mechanism is virtually unstoppable: “When unappeased, violence seeks and *always* finds a surrogate victim.”<sup>550</sup> The combination of the communal identity crisis, the failure to possess the desired object, and the aggression these instigate becomes too much for communities or institutions to withhold its violence any longer. The community becomes a frenzied mob of all-against-one.

#### 4.1.3.4. Effects of Scapegoat Mechanism: A Deceitful ‘Peace’

The scapegoat mechanism appears to achieve peace within the community: it resolves identity crises, restores unanimity, and cathartically removes aggression. This peace, however, is due to a ‘double transference’ by the persecutors. First the victim is deemed guilty of some offense, usually from a formulaic list of ‘worst possible’ crimes: infanticide, cannibalism, rape, witchcraft, and sodomy.<sup>551</sup> Next, since the victim’s guilt unites the community, the victim is revered -- even deified -- for how it facilitated reconciliation. All the while, violence is further justified and solidified within the life and history of the community. The scapegoat mechanism “permits [a community] to escape their own violence, removes them from violence, and bestows on them all the institutions and beliefs that define their humanity.”<sup>552</sup> Such peace, however, is fraudulent; its participants are only enmeshed all the more in violence and guilt.

Even aside from the physical violence it inflicts, the scapegoat mechanism has several detrimental effects that might otherwise go unnoticed. The mechanism justifies murder, whether of individuals or nations. Scapegoating leads people to abdicate responsibility, blaming others for fabricated offenses and bestowing an impersonal state with authority to kill. Any trait or

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<sup>550</sup> Girard, *VS*, 2. Emphasis added.

<sup>551</sup> Girard treats ‘persecution texts’ at length in *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), chapters 1 and 2. Hereafter *Scapegoat*.

<sup>552</sup> Girard, *VS*, 306.

category by which people can be differentiated from the rest becomes a potential means of scapegoating a powerless minority.

Scapegoating also involves its participants in a twofold process of victimization: first one's *own* person or group is deemed a victim (or, the potential victim of a threat), and then some *other* (whether within or outside the given community) is deemed a 'guilty' sacrificial victim fit for expulsion or death. The first victimization does away with personal responsibility, the second does away with the bothersome 'other.'

#### **4.1.4. The Scandalous Cost of Forsaking Sacrificial Violence**

As simple and noble as the solution (withdrawing from scapegoating and violence) appears, it entails the greatest cost. One who protests against sacrificial violence immediately stands out as an isolated prospective victim, upon whom violence could fall and receive no retribution. To expose and refrain from scapegoating demands a total wager: Girard says "in order not to inflict violence, one must be prepared to submit to it.... I must resign myself to suffering if I am going to avoid becoming a persecutor myself."<sup>553</sup> There is no 'neutral' locus from which to live nonviolently; in a violent world, withdrawal from violence invites it upon oneself. The ethical response demanded by nonviolence is costly to one's ego, calling for what Scott Cowdell describes as "the self-sacrificial refusal of sacrificial violence."<sup>554</sup> This steep cost calls for a martyr's courage and commitment. Compounding this ethical challenge is that failure to question, call out, or interrupt the scapegoat mechanism *complies* with the status quo. Innocent or neutral bystanders are as mythical as the guilty victim: they do not exist. Prophetic peacemakers, however, make convenient victims.

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<sup>553</sup> René Girard, "Mimetic Violence and Sacrifice," in *The One By Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (East Lansing, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2014), 71-72. Hereafter *TOBWSC*.

<sup>554</sup> Scott Cowdell, *René Girard and the Nonviolent God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 70. Hereafter *RGNG*.

This extended analysis and critique of violence and sacrifice functions simply on an anthropological level, and operates with or without religious forms or justifications. It exposes the deep-seated desire both to lie and to kill with which people comply without awareness. It nonetheless carries strong implications for theology, particularly interpretation of Scripture, soteriology, and liturgy.

## 4.2. Theological Applications of Mimetic Theory

We now move from Girard's anthropological analysis to theology, using statements by Girard and some 'Girardian' theologians. First, the crossing of this boundary from anthropology into theology must simply be noted: Girard himself makes several theological claims even while admitting he is not a theologian. Within the theological context of this dissertation, we deliberately seek to draw such theological conclusions, and so welcome such input from Girard and others.

Mimetic theory contributes keen insights into interpretation of scripture for theology in general and soteriology in particular. First, the Gospels unveil the satanic nature of the scapegoat mechanism (4.2.1.). Next, various thinkers transpose the insights of mimetic theory into theology for a distinctively Girardian soteriology of atonement. These constructive theological adaptations of Girard's anthropology employ, quite interestingly, important elements from the Letter to the Hebrews, which Girard initially criticized vehemently. Such elements include the unity of Jesus Christ as 'priest in the order of Melchizedek' and Victim; Jesus' 'learning obedience through his sufferings'; and atonement as a *liturgical* action done at God's gracious initiative, which purifies gift-giving of its sacrificial trappings. Raymund Schwager interprets Jesus' subjection to the scapegoat mechanism as its *subversion* rather than the epitome or embodiment of sacrifice (4.2.2.). Within an explicitly liturgical context, James Alison notes

how the Letter to the Hebrews portrays Christ's death as an act of self-giving *to* those being atoned, not as a sacrifice meant to appease a wrathful God whose justice must be upheld (4.2.3.). Robert Daly relates Christ's unique act to broader systematic issues concerning the Trinity and liturgical celebration of the Eucharist (4.3.4.).

#### **4.2.1. The Satanic Nature of the Scapegoat Mechanism**

While Girard calls the scapegoat mechanism “a purely human abomination,”<sup>555</sup> its insidious nature transcends the limits of ‘anthropological’ terminology: scriptural testimony concerning Satan, the devil, expose its evil most effectively. In turn, Girard's analysis sheds light on the logic of these problematic passages, which occur more often than many people realize yet are often dismissed as mythological. In conjunction with scripture's testimony, mimetic theory describes the evil from which God offers redemption especially well.

Summarizing Girard, James Williams says that though the scapegoat mechanism has anthropological causes, “this entire single victim process is [for Girard] the work of Satan. Indeed, it is Satan.”<sup>556</sup> In scripture Satan is the accuser, the deceitful offerer of transcendence or ‘salvation’, to become like God and take God's place -- the ultimate metaphysical desire. Satan is the false counterpart to the Holy Spirit, who is the Advocate and Spirit of Truth (cf. Jn. 14-16). In Girardian terms, Satan is first a ‘model’ who mediates desires (i.e., to disobey God, cf. Gen. 3) and thus seduces or tempts people into transgression. He is also an ‘obstacle’ and adversary, the rival who prevents people from obtaining the true good they desire.<sup>557</sup> As the principle of *disorder* Satan “diverts human beings from God for the sake of rivalistic models”<sup>558</sup>; as a

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<sup>555</sup> René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 119. Originally published as René Girard, *Je vois Satan tomber comme l'éclair* (Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1999). Hereafter *ISSF*.

<sup>556</sup> James G. Williams, in Foreword to *ISSF*, Kindle Location 63-64. The boundary between the anthropological and the theological appears, for Girard, irrelevant.

<sup>557</sup> Cf. Girard, *ISSF*, 32-33.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



principle of *order* he incites communities to violence against a single innocent victim: “Satan is the violent contagion that persuades the entire community, which has become unanimous, that [a victim’s] guilt is real.”<sup>559</sup> Less a mythical figure than a social phenomenon, Satan is neither an actual person nor a metaphysical substance: “The devil’s ‘quintessential being’ . . . is the violent contagion that has no substance to it. The devil . . . has no being at all. To clothe himself in the semblance of being, he must act as a parasite on God’s creatures. He is totally mimetic, which amounts to saying *nonexistent as an individual self*.”<sup>560</sup> Such an understanding recognizes scapegoating as ‘work of the devil’ without the cartoonish depictions of the devil in popular culture.

In the Gospels, questions concerning Jesus’ authority lead to accusations that he works by the power of the devil; Jesus himself also spoke of and confronted the work of Satan in his public ministry (Mk. 3:23-26; Mt. 12:23-28). According to Girard, use of the scapegoat mechanism is the attempt of Satan to drive out Satan: an evil threat is ‘driven out’ by violent and deceptive means, only to remain in a more deeply hidden form. Satan *is* in fact divided against himself -- quite purposefully -- in order to deceive. Conversely, Jesus says “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God is upon you” (Lk. 11:20). Jesus’ withholding from the reciprocation of violence reveals the love of the Father and inaugurates a Kingdom, not of force and power, but of non-rivalrous desiring and living.

Girard says the satanic nature of violence helps explain why Jesus calls those who want to kill him “children of the devil” (cf. Jn. 8:39-45). Having nothing to do with anti-Semitic

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<sup>559</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 35.

<sup>560</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 42.

demonization of Jews (according to Girard),<sup>561</sup> such children of the devil are those “taken into the circle of rivalistic desire and who, unknowingly, become the playthings of mimetic violence.”<sup>562</sup> All people (including Christians, historically and hypothetically) of any era or race who would expel a messenger of truth are ‘children of the devil,’ who “was a murderer from the beginning.... is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44-45).

As we have seen, Girard uses ‘scandal’ (Gk. *skandalon* -- ‘stumbling block’) to describe the ‘exasperation of mimetic rivalry,’ when communities “desperately, if unconsciously, seek the public substitutes upon whom to unburden themselves.”<sup>563</sup> The burden is so great that truth becomes irrelevant: “In the Gospels, Satan’s power is his ability to make false accusations so convincing that they become the unassailable truth of entire communities.”<sup>564</sup> Contagions of suspicion and accusation escalate quickly beyond the capacity to stop short of scapegoating. The satanic nature of the scapegoat mechanism finds its supreme example when Caiaphas prophesied ‘it is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed’ (cf. Jn. 11:49-53).<sup>565</sup> Girard says “Caiaphas is the incarnation of politics at its best, not its worst. No one has ever been a better politician. . . . Caiaphas is the perfect sacrificer who puts victims to death to save those who live.... every real cultural decision has a sacrificial character (*decidere*, remember, is to cut the victim’s throat).”<sup>566</sup> Such logic *continues* within the cultural and political ‘machinery’ that rules over human beings, from which the gospel liberates us.

Such observations are helpful for describing the evil dynamics of the scapegoat mechanism, the systemic violence -- an important element of ‘the sin of the world’ -- from which

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<sup>561</sup> “It is true that this text is a historical source of Christian anti-Semitism, but one can show that it is only because the text is completely misunderstood by the Christians.” René Girard, “The Evangelical Subversion of Myth,” in *Politics & Apocalypse*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2007), 32.

<sup>562</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 40.

<sup>563</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 200.

<sup>564</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 201.

<sup>565</sup> Cf. Girard, *Scapegoat*, 112.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

Christ's disciples are meant to withdraw. Girard's insights unveil the 'logic' of evil that otherwise appears as unpredictable and unreasonable madness. The scapegoat mechanism deceives because it proposes resolution of identity crises by means of someone else's death.

#### **4.2.2. Salvation Through Imitation of Christ**

In truth however, "There is only one transcendence in the Gospels, the transcendence of divine love that triumphs over all manifestations of violence and the sacred by revealing their nothingness."<sup>567</sup> This transcendence -- salvation -- occurs through imitation of Christ, in at least two senses.

Imitation of Christ first entails imitation of his nonviolence and obedience to his teaching. Just as important for proper relationship to God is imitation of Christ's relationship of 'distance' from the Father, wherein he submits to the Father's will and even experiences abandonment by the Father. Even amid this abandonment, Christ remains faithful to the Father's loving will and does not resort to self-protective violence. This fidelity to loving reveals what a sanctified relationships is, as opposed to a reciprocal relationship which coerces God in his relationship to human beings. Contrasting Christ's 'withdrawal relationship' to the Father with the worldly reciprocity, Girard states: "The *relationship* [of Christ to the Father] *sanctifies* while reciprocity sacralizes by creating ties that are too strong."<sup>568</sup> For Girard the archaic sacrificial process 'sacralizes,' creating a relationship of the divine toward the human which borders on contractual obligation, a false and idolatrous relationship.

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<sup>567</sup> Girard, *Scapegoat*, 194.

<sup>568</sup> Cf. René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre*, trans. Mary Baker, Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture, series ed. William A. Johnsen (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010), 123. Emphasis added. Hereafter *BE*.

The sanctifying relationship between Christ and the Father is part of what differentiates Christ from Satan, who also mediates ‘imitation of God,’ but in a perfectly rivalrous sense.<sup>569</sup> By contrast, Christ’s fidelity amid the abandonment by the Father reveals the transcendence of the Father and the extent to which we are called to love. The revelation of such divine love, precisely amid the scapegoat mechanism in action, is the reason Jesus underwent the Passion, as we see next.

#### **4.2.3. Jesus’ Subversion of Sacrifice: The ‘Original Liturgical Reform’**

From a Girardian view, redemption is a matter of revelation: exposure of the scapegoat mechanism’s deception, cruelty, and vanity. The wisdom of Christ crucified (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25) may appear to *exemplify* expiation by Jesus’ sacrificial death, but in fact it saves humanity by *subversion* of violent ritual sacrifice. This interpretation, first proposed by Raymund Schwager and endorsed by Girard,<sup>570</sup> has been expounded by several theologians since.<sup>571</sup>

##### **4.2.3.1. First Stage: The Kingdom of God Challenges the World’s Order**

With his proclamation of the Kingdom of God and offer of salvation in his deeds, teaching, and person, Jesus interrupted the sinful and violent world order operative since its foundation (cf. Mt. 13:35; 23:35). By means of exorcisms, healings of ‘unclean’ outcasts and

<sup>569</sup> Cf. René Girard, *ISSFLL*, 32-46, esp. 44-46.

<sup>570</sup> Cf. Raymund Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*, trans. James G. Williams and Paul Haddon (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999). Girard expressed his endorsement of Schwager’s proposal in a letter dated October 30, 1991, concerning Schwager’s “Mimesis und Freiheit,” presented at the symposium *Myth, Literature, and the Bible*, Provo, Utah, November 12-16, 1984. Cf. *René Girard and Raymund Schwager, René Girard and Raymund Schwager: Correspondence 1974-1991*, eds. Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, Joel Hodge, and Mathias Moosbrugger, trans. Chris Fleming and Sheelah Treflé Hidden (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 182-184. Hereafter *RGRSC*. Cf. Raymund Schwager, “Mimesis und Freiheit,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 107 (1985), 365-376. English edition: Raymund Schwager, “Mimesis and Freedom,” *Contagion* 21 (2014), 29-45.

<sup>571</sup> Examples of variations on Schwager’s soteriological interpretation include James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), hereafter *BVS*; Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), hereafter *VU*; Stephen Finlan, *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005). Theological implications of Girard’s thought for the theology of sacrifice are explored by S. Mark Heim, *Saved From Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006); Erin Lothes-Biviano, *The Paradox of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2007); Robert Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

Gentiles, and proclaiming the need to forgive even one's enemies, Jesus inaugurated a kingdom 'not of this world' (cf. Jn. 18:36) but according to the Holy Spirit. This kingdom did not abide by the familiar stabilizing categories of Jew/Gentile, saint/sinner, clean/unclean, even when established by the law of Moses ('it was said.... But I say to you,' cf. Mt. 5:21-48) or ties of blood ('Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother;' Mk. 3:35). This proclamation of radical mercy called existing religious institutions -- not least the sacrificial system -- into question. Schwager notes that Jesus "proclaimed salvation precisely for sinners and outlaws. In Qumran they awaited a liberation from sin through a stricter practice of the law, while Jesus showed how *even the apparently just* are still completely entangled in sin."<sup>572</sup> The self-righteous are exposed as such by their hostility to Jesus and his invitation of sinners into the Kingdom of God (cf. Mk. 3:6).

Moreover, Jesus' proclamation "broke with the religious thinking of Israel to the extent that with him salvation and repentance exchanged places, and he offered the sinner God's forgiveness, irrespective of whether the sinner was willing to repent or unprepared to do so."<sup>573</sup> Questions concerning Jesus' authority and identity thus arose, provoking suspicion and hostility (cf. Mk. 2:1-3:30). Thus, even while Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God offered forgiveness for those who welcomed his message and person, it also (in Girardian terms) created many kinds of identity crises, predictably activating the scapegoat mechanism.

#### 4.2.3.2. Second Stage: The World's Judgment on the Word

The gospels depict Jesus facing opposition from very early in his ministry: from the scribes and Pharisees (Mk. 3:6), Satan (Mt. 4:1-10; Lk. 4:1-13), and Nazarenes (Lk. 4:16-30) to name a few. As noted above, Caiaphas gave voice to the worldly logic (cf. Jn. 11:49-53) which

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<sup>572</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 105. Emphasis added.

<sup>573</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 55.

would expel the divine Word. Historical-critical biblical scholarship poses Jesus' provocative cleansing of the Temple (Mk. 11:15-18) as a 'tipping point': "[B]y his judgment sayings [Jesus] ... triggered off a process which struck back at him ... : he became the victim of the sins of others, a scapegoat."<sup>574</sup> The Jewish and Roman authorities conspired to do away with Jesus' message and person, activating an all-against-one scapegoating mechanism.

The betrayal by Judas further exemplifies sacrificial logic: as 'betrayer' (*paradidous*: 'giver-over') offering a substitute victim (Jesus) for a substitutionary value (money) for sacrifice, pleasing the chief priests (Mk. 14:11).<sup>575</sup> "Those who [put Jesus to death] want to silence, suppress, and expel the word, but they unwittingly confirm it because the Word talks about its own suppression and expulsion."<sup>576</sup> By seeking to arrest and execute Jesus, his opponents genuinely intend and attempt to get rid of a social contagion: *they* desire to sacrifice Jesus for the common good.

#### 4.2.3.3. Third Stage: Christ's Nonviolent Fidelity to His Mission Unto Death

Though betrayed by his own disciple and subjected to violence by Jewish and Roman authorities, Jesus neither escaped this violence nor reciprocated it. He confronts and undergoes the contagion of violence inflicted by his enemies in order to subvert it and expose it as a lie. According to the gospel accounts, Jesus was fully aware of both the hostility of his opponents and the violent death which awaited him in Jerusalem (cf. Mk. 8:31 et al.) yet remained faithful to his mission.

While Jesus' opponents, the crowds, and his disciples fall prey to mimetic rivalry and violence, Jesus alone withstands the mimetic crisis; he refrains from imitating or reciprocating

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<sup>574</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 93.

<sup>575</sup> Cf. Williams, *BVS*, 224.

<sup>576</sup> Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "An Introductory Essay," in *Politics & Apocalypse*, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2007) 46.

the violence others inflict on him. This is a critical step, for at the moment the world expels him, Jesus' self-restraint -- maintaining a 'distance' from inflicting violence -- allows him to retain full agency, subjectivity, and love (cf. Jn. 13:1), acting for his oppressors' true good even though they inflict evil. Girardian theologian Scott Cowdell coins the term 'overaccepting' to describe this redemptive intention of Christ amid both a sinful world and, in this instance, the evil perpetrated against him in his betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion.<sup>577</sup> Neither despair, nor resignation, nor utter passivity in the face of evil, 'overacceptance' is a subversive *use* of others' oppressive actions or a situation against its intended evil purpose. Jesus "did not pay back the lying judgment and violent attack with the same coin, but he turned around the intensified evil and gave it back as love redoubled."<sup>578</sup> Overcoming even his own spontaneous will to self-preservation, Jesus surrenders to the will of the Father (cf. Mk. 14:32-42), who will eventually raise him from the dead.<sup>579</sup>

Jesus' unique response amid this all-against-one effort proves decisive for the salvation of sinners, as he transforms death into a means of salvation from sin. Jesus created a unique solidarity between himself and not only other victims but also their *persecutors*. Jesus' love unto death thus opens for all, through the Holy Spirit, the opportunity to repent and choose the same kind of self-giving kenotic love. With reference to Maximus the Confessor, Schwager proposes that "Christ on the cross altered the 'use of death' .... [meaning] that death, which was brought by God after the fall into the garden of Eden as *punishment against human nature*, was transformed by the crucified one into *a means of salvation from sin*."<sup>580</sup> Jesus accomplishes "the

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<sup>577</sup> Cf. Cowdell, *RGNG*, 173-201, 206-209, 235-237.

<sup>578</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 117.

<sup>579</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Banished From Eden*, 108.

<sup>580</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 187. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Thal.* 61 (PG 90: 633AD, 636 CD).

transformation of passivity through his surrender.... Suffering which is affirmed becomes a new form of activity” -- a self-emptying and loving identification with sinners.<sup>581</sup>

As Jesus is being put to death on the cross he nonetheless intercedes for his executioners: ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing’ (Lk. 23:34), even though they commit evil. Amid his own apparent weakness and passivity, Jesus’ petition reveals both his own innocence and redoubled love for his executioners, who “were more victims [of the contagion of violence] than agents;”<sup>582</sup> since they do not comprehend what they do they “are victims of their own crime.”<sup>583</sup> By accepting the place of the victim (‘Here I am’ -- cf. Heb. 10:7), refusing to retaliate, and asking the Father for the forgiveness of his persecutors, Jesus identifies with sinners, albeit in a very specific way. Schwager states: “It is precisely as victim that he intercedes for his enemies, and he *identifies himself with them insofar as they are harmed by evil*.”<sup>584</sup> While in solidarity with sinners *as victims*, Jesus himself remains obedient to the Father’s loving will, himself never condoning evil, and thereby innocent and able to redeem.<sup>585</sup>

Though Jesus dies a representative redeeming death for sinners, the need for individual conversion nonetheless remains. Each person retains responsibility for conversion. “As a responsible doer of sin each one is an enemy of Christ, and as victim of evil each one is within the domain for his redeeming power.”<sup>586</sup> The ‘word of the cross’ (1 Cor. 1:18), judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart (cf. Heb. 4:12), offers the possibility of redemption. Jesus’ nonviolent intercession for his executioners shows he is “nearer to that desire of his enemies that want something good for themselves than they are to themselves.... [He] protects the life of his

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<sup>581</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 188.

<sup>582</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 171.

<sup>583</sup> Raymund Schwager, “Christ’s Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice,” *Semeia* 33 (1985), 119. Hereafter “Christ’s Death.”

<sup>584</sup> Schwager, “Christ’s Death,” 118. Emphasis added.

<sup>585</sup> Schwager, “Christ’s Death,” 121.

<sup>586</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 193.



enemies. So the free act of the non-violent one is more in accord with the actual will to life of the violent than the latter in their ostensible freedom.”<sup>587</sup> The ‘active passivity’ of Jesus’ loving act achieves *true* solidarity with his enemies (who are unwitting victims), a solidarity deeper than what they themselves desire or can achieve by their own violent action.

While appearing to exemplify self-sacrifice, the violence in Jesus’ crucifixion is directly willed by neither the Father nor Jesus. The violence originates from those who rejected Jesus, but “God Himself reuses the scapegoat mechanism, at his own expense, in order to subvert it.”<sup>588</sup> The self-giving Jesus demonstrates symbolically in the Eucharist and embodies on the cross becomes the source of true unity, even between Jesus and sinners, in the new covenant to which he draws all people: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (Jn. 12:32).

The cross becomes the revelation of truth concerning the innocence of victims, the deceit of scapegoating, and human complicity with scapegoating. Its revelation of these truths enables repentance and decision for what achieves true unity: forgiveness, self-giving, non-violence, recognition of others’ fully human dignity.

The final ‘word’ from the cross is not mere solidarity but Jesus’ giving-over of his spirit upon death.<sup>589</sup> Particularly in Luke 23:46, “Suffering here is understood unambiguously as surrendering and handing over the Spirit to the Father.... [which] means at the same time the fulfillment of the mission.”<sup>590</sup> Death’s finality was ‘used’ by Jesus, transformed into a perfect gift of self to the Father on behalf of sinners-as-victims: “The act of dying, the fulfillment of the

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<sup>587</sup> Schwager, *Banished From Eden*, 110.

<sup>588</sup> René Girard, “Mimetic Violence and Sacrifice,” in *TOBWSC*, 43.

<sup>589</sup> Jesus “breathed his last” (Mk. 15:37, Mt. 27:50); “Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last” (Lk. 23:46); “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (Jn. 19:30)

<sup>590</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 188. Lk. 23:46: “Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last.”

mission, and the handing over of the Spirit to the Father consequently come together in the one event described by the letter to the Hebrews as the sacrifice of Christ.”<sup>591</sup> With Jesus’ humble and obedient submission to this unjust situation “the loving Yes of Jesus replaces and encompasses the lacking or ambiguous Yes of” the first Adam and Eve, creating the opportunity of a new humanity.<sup>592</sup>

In sum, Jesus’ manner of death on the cross was “the conversion and transformation of evil action in love. *[Jesus] turned the radical delivering of himself to his enemies, as he experienced this in being executed, into a radical surrender to his Father.*”<sup>593</sup> Having completely undergone the world’s judgment upon him, Jesus entrusts himself to the Father, the True Judge (cf. 1 Pet. 2:23).

#### 4.2.3.4. Fourth Stage: Resurrection as the Father’s Judgment

While the nations raged against the Lord’s Anointed (cf. Acts 4:25-26; Ps. 2:1-2), crucifying him, nonetheless the Father raised him up (Acts 2:23-24, 32, 36). The resurrection vindicated Jesus’ person, life, and teaching, such that every knee should bend and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:6-11). Furthermore, Jesus’ return from the dead did not entail vengeful retribution toward either his enemies or his disciples but proclamations of peace (cf. Lk. 24:36; Jn. 20:19, 26). Thus, through the events of the paschal mystery the single victim mechanism was “reversed like a glove, exposed, placed in the open, stripped naked, and dismantled.”<sup>594</sup> With Jesus’ forgiveness and commissioning of the apostles, proclamation of the gospel invitation into the Kingdom of God was renewed, transcending reciprocity and retribution.

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<sup>591</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 188.

<sup>592</sup> Schwager, *Banished From Eden*, 110.

<sup>593</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 189.

<sup>594</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 151.

#### 4.2.3.5. Fifth Stage: Sending of the Holy Spirit

With the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost, the disciples are transformed from a timid band into bold missionaries of the crucified Messiah. Previous differences in religion, culture, economic status, and gender (cf. Gal. 3:27) were put aside as the community gathered and united (Acts 2:46) by the Holy Spirit so as to have “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). Instead of creating unity through a common enemy upon whom violence was inflicted, unity was sought through reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

From the standpoint of mimetic theory, the gift of the Holy Spirit creates the possibility of ‘good mimesis’ -- imitation of Christ’s self-giving, which is the gift of liberation: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). Fully able to be shared, the Holy Spirit is not rationed out by God (cf. Jn. 3:32) but available to all through faith.

#### 4.2.3.6. The Cause and Value of Jesus’ Death

If the events of Jesus’ paschal mystery unfolded as Schwager claims, a host of questions arise: for what reason did Jesus die upon the cross? Was Christ’s death ‘necessary’? Did the Father ‘will’ the death of His Son, ‘handing him over’ to death, or did the Son ‘offer himself’ to the Father on our behalf? As important as these questions have been for systematic theology and soteriology, Girard dismisses them since they turn attention away from the more important matter of where true guilt lies:

Medieval and modern theories of redemption all look in the direction of God for the causes of the Crucifixion: God's honor, God's justice, even God's anger, must be satisfied. These theories don't succeed because they don't seriously look in the direction where the answer must lie: sinful humanity, human relations, mimetic contagion, which is the same thing as Satan. They speak much of original sin, but they fail to make the idea concrete. That is why they give an impression of being arbitrary and unjust to human beings, even if they are theologically sound.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Girard, *ISSF*, 150.

According to Girard and Schwager, Jesus' death is never directly willed by Jesus himself or the Father: rather "It is absolute fidelity to the principle defined in his own preaching that condemns Jesus. There is no other cause for his death than the love of one's neighbor lived to the very end, with an infinitely intelligent grasp of the constraints it imposes. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (Jn. 15:13)."<sup>596</sup> In the Garden of Gethsemane, "When Jesus says: 'your will be done and not mine,' it is really a question of dying. But it is not a question of showing obedience to an incomprehensible demand for sacrifice. Jesus has to die because continuing to live would mean a *compromise with violence*."<sup>597</sup> Even when Paul writes that God made Christ 'to be sin' (2 Cor. 5:19-21) he speaks "neither of an anger of God toward his Son nor of a destruction of sin through him.... [Paul] characterizes reconciliation rather as not taking sin into account."<sup>598</sup> In no way was God the cause of Jesus' death: "*Men* killed Jesus because they were not capable of becoming reconciled without killing,"<sup>599</sup> God's mercy and power at work in Jesus turned it to a saving purpose. Christ's death was not 'necessary' in any sense that absolves human beings of their guilt and violence.

Conversely, the purpose which Jesus' death came to serve was instead the complete *reversal* of the origins of violence and sacrifice. God initiated a true reconciliation of the world to himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18), culminating in the gift of the Holy Spirit which reunites human beings to God and to one another. Jesus accomplished this reconciliation through three decisive moments: through the Eucharist (preliminarily), and (at his death) with his forgiveness of his executioners, and the completion of his mission through the handing-over his spirit to the

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<sup>596</sup> Girard, *TH*, 211.

<sup>597</sup> Girard, *TH*, 213-214. Emphasis added.

<sup>598</sup> Schwager, *JITDOS*, 165. 2 Cor. 5:19-21: "... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

<sup>599</sup> Girard, *TH*, 213. Emphasis added.

Father.<sup>600</sup> The events of Christ's paschal mystery interrupts history's dominant narrative of the guilty victim who deserves punishment; his solidarity with sinners opens a way of forgiveness, repentance, and conversion.

#### 4.2.3.7. Girard's Refined Stance on Sacrifice

Girard originally condemned sacrifice altogether, most forcefully in *Violence and the Sacred*<sup>601</sup> and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.<sup>602</sup> This rejection of sacrifice led to widespread suspicion by theologians, including Hans Urs von Balthasar, for whom Christ's kenotic self-sacrifice to the Father was central to soteriology.<sup>603</sup> Through collaboration with Schwager, however, Girard eventually affirmed a very precise notion of sacrifice and retracted his purely anti-sacrificial stance.<sup>604</sup> Jesus' way, demonstrated by his life and taught in his proclamation, reveals the way to be done with rivalries and (archaic) sacrifice: such renunciation of rivalries and sacrificial measures becomes the true 'sacrifice' of Christ.<sup>605</sup>

In Christ's death the world, in accord with Caiaphas' sacrificial logic (Jn. 12:32), intended to expel the Word by sacrificing Christ in a crucifixion, scapegoating him as a dangerous contagion and restoring peace. God, however, made use of this travesty to expose the lie of the mechanism, revealing Christ's innocence through the resurrection and the inefficacy of archaic sacrifice:

This is the essential theme, repeated time and time again, of Jesus' preaching: reconciliation with God can take place unreservedly and with no sacrificial intermediary through the rules of the kingdom. This reconciliation allows God to reveal himself as he is, for the first time

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<sup>600</sup> Cf. Schwager, *JITDOS*, 93-118.

<sup>601</sup> "Violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred." Girard, *VS*, 31.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. Girard, "The Sacrificial Reading and Historical Christianity," chapter 3 of *TH*, 224-262.

<sup>603</sup> Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol. 4: The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 268-310. Balthasar also critiques Schwager's theology in pages 310ff; it should be noted that Schwager's major text, *JITDOS*, was published five years later in 1999.

<sup>604</sup> Cf. René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*, trans. Joao Cezar de Castro Rocha and Pierpaolo Antonello (London: Continuum, 2014), 196-233. Hereafter *EC*. The correspondence between Girard and Schwager which led to Girard's changed stance is preserved in Girard and Schwager, *RGRSC*.

<sup>605</sup> Cf. René Girard, "Mimetic Theory and Theology," in *TOBWSC*, 33-45.

in human history. Thus mankind no longer has to base harmonious relationships on bloody sacrifices, ridiculous fables of a violent deity, and the whole range of mythological cultural formations.<sup>606</sup>

The archaic kind of sacrifice (which Girard always criticized) which justifies and directs violence against a third victim (it is “unable to escape violence without inflicting violence on others”) is nullified. Through the *very same* set of historical events, however, true Christian ‘sacrifice’ proves to be “renunciation of all egoistic claiming, even to life if needed, in order not to kill.”<sup>607</sup> The same term has its own history of different meanings in their different contexts. Girard finds life-giving sacrifice exemplified not only in Christ but in the story of two prostitutes contending over a child before Solomon (1 Kings 3:16-28). The woman who ‘sacrifices’ possession of the child out of compassion for its life, offering a sacrifice that refuses to do violence to another.

Life-giving sacrifice therefore has no recourse to violence toward others: it renounces one’s own desires to kill, lie, steal, or merely satisfy oneself or members of one’s own community to the exclusion of others. ‘Sacrificial’ theology, liturgy, piety, asceticism, or action must be examined and purified of the archaic-sacrificial elements which often disguise violence, whether to others or oneself. As it requires specification of the direct good intended or achieved by a ‘sacrificial’ action, and refusing to allow such a good to justify violent means, mimetic theory provides an important safeguard against unwittingly masochistic or sadistic forms of piety or asceticism.

Girard sees in the violent and sacrificial elements of Judaism as prefiguring the gospels’ refusal of violence; there is both continuity and a sharp distinction between the two.<sup>608</sup>

Hamerton-Kelly describes the paschal mystery as “a dialectical overcoming of sacrifice, which

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<sup>606</sup> Girard, *TH*, 183.

<sup>607</sup> Girard, *EC*, 215.

<sup>608</sup> Cf. Girard, *EC*, 218.

supersedes it while leaving it intact.”<sup>609</sup> While humanity (and some elements of Christian theology) thought it was sacrificing Christ for the sake of its own good in the crucifixion, God was, through Christ, leading humanity on an exodus out of sacrificial violence.

#### 4.2.3.8. *The Demands of Conversion and Discipleship*

The revelation and liberation Christ inaugurate, however, demand a cooperative response by disciples. “The Gospels, of course, are interested not in the intellectual operation they enable, but in the ethical change that they can possibly, but not necessarily, trigger.”<sup>610</sup> The paschal mystery reveals the Triune God “whose demand is for nonviolence rather than sacrifice.”<sup>611</sup> Through the *existential* changes brought about by repentance, Baptism, and adoption by the Spirit, disciples are grafted onto/into Jesus’ body, becoming the new creation, the new humanity. Disciples receive participation in this new life, as members of the ecclesial body of Christ, through Christ’s gifts of his body, blood, and spirit. In light of mimetic theory, conversion includes: a) recognizing the innocence of Christ; b) recognizing one’s complicity with the same systems of violence that condemned Jesus; and c) withdrawing from involvement in personal and social violence. Such living is radically insecure by worldly standards: “the Kingdom of God ... does not represent for men an unmitigated blessing.... It brings men face to face with their hardest task in history,”<sup>612</sup> namely, to convert away from mimetic rivalry and violence. Conversion is difficult because the nonviolent refusal of retribution “looks like total impotence to those who live under the regime of violence.”<sup>613</sup> One soon finds how withdrawal from the world’s violence risks inviting the same resistance Jesus encountered: “one can renounce sacrifice in one sense—sacrifice of another, violence against another—only by assuming the risk

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<sup>609</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *SV*, 60.

<sup>610</sup> Girard, *Scapegoat*, 202.

<sup>611</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 18.

<sup>612</sup> Girard, *Scapegoat*, 192.

<sup>613</sup> Girard, *TH*, 220.

of sacrifice in another sense—the sacrifice of Christ, who died for all who were dear to him.”<sup>614</sup>

These demands, particularly amid a world saturated with violence, are indeed very great.

If conversion entails turning away from violence, toward what does it turn? Girard responds, “mimetic desire *per se* is not to be done away with, but it is to be fulfilled -- transformed, ‘converted’”<sup>615</sup>; following what the New Testament points out as “a more positive way of uniting human beings based on non-rivalrous striving towards God.... [D]iscipleship does not produce conflict.”<sup>616</sup> Imitation continues for disciples, but a deliberate imitation of Jesus and of the Father: “[What] Jesus advocates *is* mimetic desire. Imitate me, and imitate the Father through me.... Jesus seems to say that the only way to avoid violence is to imitate me, and imitate the Father.”<sup>617</sup> Furthermore, as Kirwan describes, Girard understands conversion “entails both a turning away from oneself, but also ... a withdrawal from the baneful influence of others.... [It is] victory over a self-centeredness which is other-centered.”<sup>618</sup> Imitation of -- or obedience to -- Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit is what liberates from the deceitful and violent tendencies we too often imitate.

As suggested before at the anthropological level, such discipleship under Christ is most demanding, since it calls for imitation of Christ’s total fidelity unto death: “disciples are bound to share Christ’s fate, becoming scapegoats and victims themselves, becoming martyrs.... They die for the truth, as a repetition of the Cross.”<sup>619</sup> As much as the paschal mystery provides forgiveness of sins, in no way does Christ’s death ‘substitute’ for the disciple’s death; direct

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<sup>614</sup> Girard, *TOBWSC*, 43.

<sup>615</sup> René Girard, “Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard,” *Religion and Literature* 25:2 (1993), 23.

<sup>616</sup> Kirwan, *GT*, 34.

<sup>617</sup> Girard, *Reader*, 63. Originally in Girard, “Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard,” *Religion and Literature* 25:2 (1993), 23.

<sup>618</sup> Kirwan, *GT*, 299.

<sup>619</sup> Girard, *EC*, 198.



participation in Christ's sufferings -- in one's own flesh -- becomes all the more *likely* as a prophetic witness against scapegoating.

This Girardian reinterpretation of the paschal mystery and the demands it makes upon discipleship put an end to the notion of Jesus' death as a sacrifice demanded by either the Father or divine justice (or honor, etc.). It removes violence from within the Godhead and places it firmly within the realm of the sinful human refusal of grace. Most practically, it reveals the true innocence of victims, who are no longer to be sacrificed outright for the sake of a common good.

#### **4.2.4. Worship in a Violent World: The Lamb of God Reconciles the World to God**

Beginning with the writings of Saint Paul, the Church interpreted the meaning of the events of the paschal mystery to speak of the atonement or reconciliation achieved by Christ. Across the centuries the Church generated summary notions for atonement, for example ransom (cf. Mk. 10:45), recapitulation (Irenaeus, 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), or satisfaction theory (Anselm, 12<sup>th</sup> cent.), which has proven very influential. These theoretical lenses shape preaching, imagination, and piety in important ways.

James Alison, however, proposes that with atonement theory, the nature of atonement as *event* is too often lost. Instead, liturgy more accurately presents the paschal mystery to the faithful, for "the whole purpose of a *liturgy* is that it is something that people *undergo* as something is done for, towards, or at them,"<sup>620</sup> it is meant to be transformative. Furthermore, appreciation of the liturgical context of Jesus' actions as he approached his own death is essential for understanding the radical meaning of the paschal mystery. By recognizing the parallels and differences of Jesus' action with what we know of the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

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<sup>620</sup> James Alison, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice - An Introduction to Christianity for Adults*, Kindle Edition (Glenview, IL: DOERS Publishing LLC, 2013), 234.

sacrifice, the radically loving and transformative nature of Jesus' action are properly restored to prominence.

#### 4.2.4.1. Yom Kippur: Atonement Within the Jewish Liturgical Context

According to scholarly reconstructions of the Jewish First Temple atonement sacrifices (cf. Lev. 16), the liturgy enacted a reconciliation between heaven and earth.<sup>621</sup> First, a high priest offered a bull or calf in sacrifice in expiation for his own sins (cf. Heb. 5:3, 7:27). He then put on a seamless white robe and phylacteries bearing the name of the Lord; he thus became the angel of the Lord, one of whose names was 'son of God.' Of the priest was sung 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (Ps. 118:26); only he could enter the Holy of Holies. He brought two goats or lambs, chosen by lot, one to be offered in sacrifice to the Lord (the 'lamb of God'), the other, representing Azazel (the devil), upon whom the sins of the people would be placed, to be driven out into the wilderness. With the blood of the sacrificed lamb of God, the high priest sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, symbolic of the dwelling place of God outside created time and space. Then putting on a robe of the same material as the veil over the Holy of Holies, the high priest emerged to sprinkle the rest of the Temple and the people, setting them free from their sins. "This action symbolized the Lord coming forth to purify the creation human beings had made impure: God was taking the initiative, and the people were the beneficiaries."<sup>622</sup> As a result, earth was reunited with heaven.

Most importantly, this Jewish sacrificial context understood the Lord as coming forth (from his realm 'beyond creation') *on his own gracious initiative* in order to purify and restore creation -- and *not* as an angry deity demanding appeasement by sacrifice. James Alison

<sup>621</sup> Alison cites as his source Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2004). In James Alison, "God's Self-Substitution and Sacrificial Inversion," in *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*, eds. Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, Foreword by Willard Swartley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 166-179, esp. 168-169. Hereafter "God's Self-Substitution."

<sup>622</sup> Alison, "God's Self-Substitution," 169.

summarizes this redemptive action as “God overcomes our violence by substituting himself for the victim of our typical sacrifices.”<sup>623</sup> Precisely within the *liturgical* realm, wherein heaven and earth are meant to coincide, God is depicted as taking corrective initiative on behalf of the people.

#### 4.2.4.2. Jesus’ Saving Death as a Liturgical Atonement

The loving initiative of God becomes even clearer in light of the paschal mystery of Christ. According to Alison, the Letter to the Hebrews (which portrays Jesus’ saving death as the fulfillment of the Yom Kippur liturgy) shows how “God overcomes our violence by substituting *himself* for the victim of our typical sacrifices. This opens us up to be able to enjoy the fullness of creation as if death were not.”<sup>624</sup> This inversion of the archaic notion of sacrifice (in which humans try to ‘appease’ God by sacrifice) proves vital for a proper understanding of the events of the Last Supper and the paschal mystery, which shape the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Unlike the former high priests who first offered sacrifice for their own sins and then sprinkled the blood of sacrificial animals, “when Christ came as a high priest ... he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11-12). In the language of mimetic theory, Christ put himself in the place of the sacrificial victim. Thus through the paschal mystery “we have redemption through [Christ’s] blood” (Eph. 1:7): despite humanity’s violent refusal, God gives his life to us. God thereby “has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to [God’s] good pleasure that he set forth in Christ” (Eph. 1:8-9). In Christ the “fullness of God” dwelt, and “through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20).

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<sup>623</sup> Alison, “God’s Self-Substitution,” 166.

<sup>624</sup> Alison, “God’s Self-Substitution,” 166. Emphasis added.

According to Alison, Jesus' nonviolence leading up to his death (as well as after the resurrection) shows that God is "entirely without vengeance, entirely without substitutionary tricks.... [Jesus] was giving *himself* entirely without ambivalence and ambiguity for us, towards us, in order to set us 'free from our sins' -- 'our sins' being our way of being bound up with each other in death, vengeance, violence and what is commonly called 'wrath.'"<sup>625</sup> Jesus never sought out or desired a self-sacrifice (as shown above by Schwager), but remained faithful to his own message unto death in hopes of converting his opponents away from violence and sin. Jesus was giving himself for the sake of *communion with* those he desired to save -- namely, his executors. By posing *liturgy* as the paschal mystery's proper context, Alison restores the primacy of reconciliation and communion as the proper goal of the atonement, rather than regarding a sacrificial action (immolation of a victim) as either a necessary means or end of the atonement.

#### 4.2.4.3. *The New Covenant Liturgy: The Last Supper*

The properly liturgical context for the paschal mystery is likewise essential for proper understanding of the synoptic gospels' depiction of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The institution narrative of the Last Supper reveals still further how Jesus was acting to unveil and undo the usual sacrificial logic and its scapegoating.

According to anthropological study and mimetic theory, the most primitive forms of sacrifice were human sacrifices; gradually animals were sacrificed in their place. Sacrificial gifts became still more symbolic, as grain, bread, or wine; sacrifices both hid violence and perpetuated it. Amid the context of the Jewish Passover, Alison argues that Jesus' actions and words at the Last Supper exposed this fact:

Jesus ... was *substituting himself for a series of substitutions*.... Jesus takes exactly the inverse route [of sacrifice]; and he explains to us that he is going in the inverse route.... [He] substituted a human being back into the *centre* of the sacrificial system *as the priest*, thus

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<sup>625</sup> Alison, "God's Self-Substitution," 175. Emphasis added.

showing what the sacrificial system was really about, and so bringing it to an end. He was the Great High Priest giving portions of himself as Lamb to his fellow priests.<sup>626</sup>

Jesus thereby enacted “an exact inversion of the sacrificial system: he goes backwards and occupies the space [of the victim] so as to make it clear that [sacrifice] is simply *murder*. And it *needn't be*.”<sup>627</sup> Jesus' self-giving aims at both communion and an exposure of sacrificial violence so such sacrifices might be brought to an end. His disciples, similarly, are to put an end to the victimization of others, and are through Christ to “continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb. 13:15). Alison's analysis reveals the *existential* step involved for Jesus to expose the innocence of victims, commit himself in self-gift, and put an end to sacrificial violence.

In the celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist, the body of Christ is presented and proclaimed as ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.’ Christ is presented as ‘the forgiving victim’: the risen and victorious Lamb of God is presented in a gesture of reconciliation which permits *metanoia*, for recognition of violent desire within oneself and conversion to and imitation of this loving initiative of Christ.<sup>628</sup>

#### 4.2.4.4. Eucharist/Mass

In light of this analysis, certain aspects the liturgy of the Eucharist take on heightened importance, emphasizing a ‘full, conscious, active participation’ in the love Jesus demonstrated. The celebration is not a means of ‘obtaining’ God's presence through a kind of local proximity of substances “but rather, our obedience to Jesus' instruction to invoke him, to do this in memory of him, so that we find ourselves transported into participation in the ‘heavenly banquet.’”<sup>629</sup> It

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<sup>626</sup> Alison, “God's Self-Substitution,” 172-173. This notion of the Eucharist as the reversal of archaic sacrifice is also noted in Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *The Gospel And The Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 44.

<sup>627</sup> Alison, “God's Self-Substitution,” 173.

<sup>628</sup> Alison has developed an adult catechesis around this theme of Jesus as the forgiving victim: James Alison, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice - An Introduction to Christianity for Adults* (Glenview, IL: DOERS Publishing LLC, 2013).

<sup>629</sup> Alison, “God's Self-Substitution,” 176.

celebrates Christ the Lamb of God, “the high priest emerging out of the Holy of Holies, giving us his body and blood, as our way into being a living priesthood.”<sup>630</sup> The *Sanctus* acclaims the advent of the Holy One to the assembly in a reunification of heaven and earth. The one ‘who comes in the name of the Lord’ is pronounced blessed and petitioned to grant salvation (‘Hosanna in the highest!’). Alison says we are “being turned into the new Temple by receiving the body and blood of the victim, who is already victorious.... We are called out of ourselves into it. We are being called ‘through the veil’ *into participation*,”<sup>631</sup> into being grasped and impelled by the love of Christ (cf. Phil. 3:12; 2 Cor. 5:14) to decide to give of one’s own life, even in the same way as Christ.

#### 4.2.4.5. The Love Behind the Gift

Not least among the obstacles to receiving God’s gifts are the limits of our own language and imagination, to which Alison calls attention. Even St. Paul had great difficulty expressing the love God shows in Christ; our Eucharistic participation in the paschal mystery -- with the body and blood of Christ visible only as bread and wine -- likewise defies not only expression but understanding and appreciation. Alison’s reflects upon the need for contemplative recognition of God’s loving and generous desire *that we might live it* in our own lives:

What we are given [by the forgiving victim] is a sign of something that has happened and been given to us. What is difficult for us is ... to imagine the love that is behind that. Why on earth should someone bother to do that for us? ... ‘What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?’ St. Paul is struggling to find language about the divine generosity. That is the really difficult thing for us to imagine. We can imagine retaliation, we can imagine protection; but we find it awfully difficult to imagine someone we despised, and were awfully glad not to be like -- whom we would rather cast out so as to keep ourselves going -- we find it awfully difficult to imagine that person generously irrupting into our midst so as to set us free to enable something quite new to open up for us. But being empowered to

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<sup>630</sup> Alison, “God’s Self-Substitution,” 176.

<sup>631</sup> Alison, “God’s Self-Substitution,” 176. Emphasis added.

imagine all that generosity is what atonement is all about; and that is what we are asked to live liturgically as Christians.<sup>632</sup>

Alison's reflection is very important, for it first specifies the *love*, the 'divine generosity' which must be understood as the primary motivation behind God's reconciliation of the world to himself through Christ. Without adequate reflection upon the love which motivated the divine action and transcended reciprocation of human violence -- by both initiating reconciliation of the world to God and raising Jesus from the dead -- Christ's death becomes merely *the Father's* imitation of *human* violence, a retaliation depicted as an outpouring of divine punishment upon sin, even if also upon the Son of God. This approach locates violence within the Godhead producing an idolatrous understanding of the God of Jesus Christ. Reflection upon and recognition of the *loving desire* which motivated Jesus' final actions is critical for both fuller appreciation of the gift and fuller recognition of the desire into which *we* are called to participate if our reception of the gift is to reach its fullest.

The Eucharistic gifts (in particular) express this divine loving initiative in their own unique way, as they express Jesus' intention -- his desire -- in advance of his own death. They reveal and call us to accept God's own loving desire 'as it is given:' as an expression of love and as a desire by which to live. They are gifts that call us 'out of ourselves' and 'into participation' in God's loving, which transcends reciprocity or the desire for return-gift, making a radical claim on our lives, our sense of self, our body and blood. The gift is both gracious and scandalous, calling us to risk everything we consider our own, but which in fact always 'belongs' to God.

Alison's Girardian reinterpretation of Jesus' actions according to the Letter to the Hebrews accentuates Judaism's and Paul's basic insight into God's saving initiative at work, completely reversing the archaic notion of sacrifice criticized by Girard, which so often is ours:

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<sup>632</sup> Alison, "God's Self-Substitution," 179.

that God needed (or needs) to be ‘appeased’ by sacrifice. This fundamental and critically important insight into the self-giving love that underlies the act of redemption both aligns with the prophetic critique of sacrifice and does away with sacrifice-as-appeasement.

#### **4.2.5. Sacrifice Reappropriated**

Another theologian appropriating Girard’s insights is Robert Daly. In *Sacrifice Unveiled* Daly incorporates Girard’s mimetic theory into the categories of systematic theology: creation, the fall, redemption, and trinitarian theology. Also, through research on sacrifice, editing the works of Edward Kilmartin, and encountering the thought of Girard, he came to a new understanding of the properly *Christian* notion of sacrifice rooted in Christ’s unique self-giving.<sup>633</sup> In the process Daly recasts sacrifice in thoroughly relational terms that unveil the core truth, beauty, and purpose of sacrifice, in terms that are directly applicable to celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>634</sup>

##### **4.2.5.1. Reframing Creation and Sin**

While Girard himself usually stays within anthropological categories that do not discuss sin, Girardian theologians appropriate insights of mimetic theory to frame the origin of sin in terms of desire rather than as pride or disobedience. God the Creator *and Giver* of all we are and have (Gen. 1-2) created human beings in God’s image and likeness (1:26) as the culmination of God’s creative work; and God saw all that he had made and “indeed, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Daly recognizes the relationship humans have (as creatures) with the divine Giver shapes the nature and obligations of human beings: “God can give everything to human beings *except*

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<sup>633</sup> Robert Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen*, Studies in Christian Antiquity, 18 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1978); Robert Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Cf. Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998). Hereafter *EW*.

<sup>634</sup> Robert Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009). Hereafter *SU*.



that they don't owe. We *are* receivers of gifts."<sup>635</sup> As creatures we exist and live only within a relationship of obligation to God.

Within this context, sin is the refusal of what one is, with the desire to be someone else (or have something) *else*. The serpent tempts Eve first with *acquisitive* desire for the one thing she is not permitted (the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil -- cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1), then with *metaphysical* desire ('you will be like God' -- Gen. 3:5). Even more than pride, then, Daly says "Original sin, therefore, is the sin of *non-receptivity*,"<sup>636</sup> of not accepting what God gives (including our very selves). Instead of accepting our condition as dependent creatures, we remain caught in incessant desires, both to have more and become autonomous and powerful over others. Violence, along with all kind of justifications of it, serves the egotistical desire of individuals and (particularly) communities.

The Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly address desire as a fundamental human problem. Desire runs amok when Cain slays Abel out of envious desire (cf. Gen. 4:1-16), an early instance of scapegoating, unleashing cycles of escalating violence. The Torah's injunctions and prophets' warnings against idolatry safeguard the primacy of right relationship to God above all other desires (cf. Dt. 6:4-6). The Ten Commandments explicitly forbid coveting (Ex. 20:17) as well as murder, adultery, theft, and lying -- in other words, the fruit of violent, lustful, greedy, and deceptive desires.

#### 4.2.5.2. Recasting Redemption

Girardian analysis tends very strongly to redemption as a replacement of desire: sinful mimetic desires (acquisitive and conflictive mimesis) are replaced with imitation of the virtues and devotion of a model, but without the 'metaphysical' desire to become (that is, replace) the

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<sup>635</sup> Daly, *SU*, 209-210. Daly's statement affirms theologically something very similar to what Marion expresses phenomenologically through his notion of the human as most fundamentally recipient, 'gifted,' *l'adonné*.

<sup>636</sup> Daly, *SU*, 209-210. Emphasis added.

model. For disciples of Christ, such ‘good mimesis’ is either of the Father or of Jesus. In the synoptics Jesus directly addresses sinful desires of the heart as the root of evils (cf. Mk. 7:21-23; also Mt. 5:28, 6:23), and promises the vision of God for the pure of heart (Mt. 5:8). Similarly, the Johannine writings repeatedly depict a stark contrast between ‘the will of the Father’ (or ‘the one who sent’ Jesus) and desires that are ‘of the world.’<sup>637</sup> All the while, the primacy of Christ remains unassailable: “You have one teacher, and you are all brothers” (Mt. 23:8).

Jesus Christ embodies the good by both refusing to imitate satanic desire (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13) and praying that the Father’s will be done (Mk. 14:36). Jesus teaches imitation of the Father’s graciousness (Mt. 5:43-48) or mercy (Lk. 6:36), and prayer that the Father’s will be done (Mt. 6:10). In the Johannine gospel he exhorts his disciples to imitation of his service (Jn. 13:34) and love (Jn. 15:9-12). Paul likewise attests to how Christ is the perfect image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. Heb. 1:3), the icon of the invisible God (Col. 1:15); he is therefore the ideal model whose ‘mind’ we are called to ‘put on’ (cf. Phil. 2:2-11). For these reasons, Daly says, redemption amounts to “imitating the desire of Jesus”<sup>638</sup> (receptive and transformative mimesis). The desire of Jesus is recounted in scripture as the desire to do the will of his Father: “I have come not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me” (Jn. 6:38). Importantly, this replacement of desire occurs precisely through the dynamics of gift-giving: in Christ, Daly says, we are presented with “the *gift/offer* of transformative mimesis,”<sup>639</sup> an other-worldly gift from someone not bound by violent mimetic desire.

Daly leaves the dynamics of this radical and salvific gift unspecified, but clearly names God as its source. Furthermore, the saving gift is love, not Christ’s suffering *per se*: “Although

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<sup>637</sup> E.g., 1 Jn. 2:16-17: “all that is in the world -- the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches -- comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.”

<sup>638</sup> Daly, *SU*, 220.

<sup>639</sup> Daly, *SU*, 220.

we have in fact been ‘redeemed by the blood of Christ,’ as the traditional Christian formulation puts it, it was not, in the most precise sense, the suffering of Christ that saved us. Rather, what saved us is the love with which he suffered.”<sup>640</sup> Daly specifies the love which both motivated Christ’s action and extended forgiveness to sinners is what redeems, not the immolation of Christ’s body *per se* as a discharge of divine violence which restores a balance of honor.

In traditional theological terms, the Girardian model of redemption tends toward an ‘exemplar’ soteriology of moral influence, rather than redemption by an ontological or metaphysical change in human beings.<sup>641</sup> Christ is a supreme moral example who ultimately *inspires* people toward repentance and right action; he changes the will of people rather than their being. This is considered a great weakness in Girardian theology according to many theologians, as will be discussed below in the scholarly reception of Girard’s thought.

#### 4.2.5.3. Sacrifice According to Christ’s Image

Given the Girardian critique of Christ’s sacrifice, questions arise concerning the nature of sacrifice within a Eucharistic context: In what does Eucharistic sacrifice consist? What does it accomplish, and how? Church tradition and official teaching from the Council of Trent have understood the Eucharist so firmly as sacrificial that these questions cannot be ignored. For his answers Daly turns to the thought of Edward J. Kilmartin, who arrived at a notion of sacrifice very conducive to the use of mimetic theory in theology.<sup>642</sup> Very importantly for this dissertation, Daly answers questions on sacrifice -- Christ’s and Eucharistic -- with relational terms and categories.

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<sup>640</sup> Daly, *SU*, 237; cf. 106.

<sup>641</sup> For an overview of traditional models of soteriology, cf. Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A.G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>642</sup> Cf. Kilmartin, *EW*, particularly 339-385.

Kilmartin (like Alison) noted that Christian sacrifice differs from world religions' sacrifices through the divine initiative: atonement begins with God reconciling the world to himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), not with offending humans offering appeasement sacrifices. Christian sacrifice is thoroughly trinitarian in its origins, culminating in humans' participation by charity in relationship with the triune God. Christian sacrifice is first of all "the self-offering of the Father in the gift of his Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relationship with the Father."<sup>643</sup> *Gift* therefore is the principle of sacrifice, and its origin is of critical importance: not in an offender's need to appease, but in the offended God's reconciling gift of the Son in the Incarnation (cf. Jn. 3:16). Furthermore, God is not only the principle of sacrifice (as Giver) but the gift given. God's loving *self*-gift reveals how no *thing* or other person substitutes as the gift; much less are victims essential to sacrifice.

Secondly, Christ the Son embodies the 'return-self-giving' to which human beings are called, remaining faithful to love of the Father and of other human beings to the end (cf. Jn. 13:1). His gift of self without self-preservation or reciprocation of violence simply offers the love than which there is no greater (cf. Jn. 15:13), it does not inherently involve death or destruction. The will of the Father to which Jesus is obedient (cf. Mk. 14:36) does not 'demand' self-sacrifice *per se*; it 'demands' loving, to which humanity responded by torturing and executing Jesus.

Thirdly, Christian sacrifice derives not from individual actions but from *relationship*: covenant relationship with the triune God by virtue of Baptism. Baptism enables the Christian's share in the priesthood of Christ, and so becomes capable of the same kind of loving or 'sacrifices.' Christian sacrifice by disciples likewise primarily concerns *self*-offering, not objects

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<sup>643</sup> Kilmartin, *EW*, 381-382.

or items.<sup>644</sup> Moreover, Daly says Christian sacrifice “*totally excludes that sacrifice can mean something is done to something or, even worse, that something is done to someone. It sees sacrifice as a totally personal -- indeed the person-constituting event par excellence -- interpersonal event.*”<sup>645</sup>

The Eucharistic sacrifice similarly requires a certain reinterpretation in light of revelation of the scapegoat mechanism operative in archaic notions of sacrifice. Traditionally the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ (transubstantiation) is understood analogously as an immolation. Immolation, however, is no longer an essential element of the religious offering or transformation taking place. What is most essential is the self-giving enabled or taking place through the symbolic reception and giving of gifts. The offering of Christ’s Body and Blood to the Father in the Eucharistic liturgy does not change God’s mind or appease His anger; the change is among the assembly, to become more fully the ecclesial Body of Christ, animated by one heart and one mind.<sup>646</sup> The change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is at the service of a more important change: that the liturgical assembly may become more fully the Body of Christ.<sup>647</sup>

Girard’s anthropological insights provide a clarification of several aspects of community life, including their hidden consequences. We may imagine gift-giving always results in pure gratitude and more peaceful community relations, but can rather stir up jealousy and envy. To give a *desire* to be imitated and/or obeyed is to sow a seed of either rivalry (in the gift of an object, or if stirring up competition) or -- in the case of imitation of the good -- aspiration for a transcendent good which truly unites a community.

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<sup>644</sup> Cf. Daly, *SU*, 5.

<sup>645</sup> Daly, *SU*, 21; cf. 228-229.

<sup>646</sup> Cf. Daly, *SU*, 21.

<sup>647</sup> Cf. Daly, *SU*, 20.

### 4.3. Critical Reception of Girard's Contribution

In the following I offer my own observations about Girard's mimetic theory and its use in theology. Then after Girard's impact, strengths, and weaknesses as noted by the scholarly community, I propose applications of Girardian thought to Eucharistic theology.

#### 4.3.1. Girard's Contributions

##### 4.3.1.1. Clarifying Christ's Unique Sacrifice

Girard's critique of sacrifice, which distinguishes Christ's 'sacrifice' from all others, even anthropologically, is a major contribution. The Church values and upholds sacrifice without explaining it sufficiently; as a result archaic notions of sacrifice get superimposed upon Christ's Paschal Mystery which are then transposed into Christian theology and piety. Even with 2,000 years of the Church's theological reflection, Christian sacrifices -- Christ's, the Church's, and those of individual believers -- have had no official definition or magisterial teaching. Sacrifice-related terms (e.g., sacrifice, offer/offering, oblation, etc.) are essential enough to be included in each of the Roman Church's Eucharistic Prayers, yet magisterial teaching uses terms equivocally for Christ's Paschal Mystery, Temple sacrifices, the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church, and penitential practices offered by the faithful. This unwittingly undoes the exposure of the scapegoat mechanism and baptizes it under a Christian guise. Too often the necessity for sacrifice is simply repeated without explanation of either its functioning or its purpose; this is unhelpful in a postmodern age when the rationale of sacrifice makes less and less sense.

Girard, with the help of Schwager, Alison, and Daly, clarifies the salutary core of Christian sacrifice: not *what* is sacrificed but the *existential, personal* self-giving loving (and often, reconciling) initiative toward the violent/offending other, even at the risk of one's own life. Christ's 'sacrifice' is shown to be a matter of *forgiveness* (cf. Lk. 23:34), of loving and *reconciling* initiative, self-giving for the good of the other. This is the obedience to the divine

loving and merciful will that is ‘better than sacrifice’ (cf. Pss. 40:6-8, 51:16-17). Instead of misrecognizing and eliminating others as threats and victims to be sacrificed, it recognizes and eliminates violence *within oneself* as the true threat. Particularly with the help of Daly, trinitarian self-giving becomes the proper foundation and principle for a correctly *Christian* notion of sacrifice. Incorporation of mimetic theory by these systematic theologians also corrects problematic depictions of intra-trinitarian relations which portray violence within the Godhead, e.g., for the sake of ‘appeasement’ of the Father by a discharge of wrath upon the Son.

Sacrifice is an important concept, but it is not the proper starting point for either Eucharistic theology or piety: only God’s loving self-gift, which initiates the new covenant *relationship* in which Christians live, provides the proper context for discussion of sacrifice. Acts of religious sacrifice, when isolated from the love which is meant to animate them, soon devolve into substitute obligation-fillers that presume love but do not foster resentment instead.

#### 4.3.1.2. Restoring the Gospel Challenge of Nonviolence

Amid a culture immersed in scapegoating, ceaseless competition, and images of violence (even as entertainment), mimetic theory fulfills a prophetic task of exposing how deeply our logic is rooted in rivalrous desire and violence. Its connection between violence and Satan is a helpful hermeneutic for scriptural texts on Satan, demonic possession, and exorcisms. Its exposure of violence as satanic revives the gospel’s teachings on nonviolence, which are often too challenging and thus suppressed or dismissed as idealistic.

Girard’s interdisciplinary approach -- even as it offends academic methodology -- reveals important connections between the scriptures, anthropology, and ‘real life;’ thus it helps concretize and specify the work of conversion. It helps bring theology into more meaningful

dialogue with lived experience, including how speaking or acting against systemic violence usually results in persecution of the messenger, since it challenges the status quo so forcefully.

#### 4.3.1.3. *Relating Desire and the Holy Spirit*

Language of desire and of gift opens a clearer and more prominent place for the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Girard's anthropological insights, together with Schwager's considerations in systematic theology, create fertile ground to explore how desire -- be it charitable or envious -- operates among a community.

For several possible reasons -- the Enlightenment's association of subjective matters with what is unscientific or unreal, theology's traditional emphasis on metaphysics, suspicion of desire as concupiscence, the commodification of grace as an entity, or others -- theology has neglected meaningful discussion of desire in either systematic or liturgical theology. Girard's concern with questions of human desire and the relational dynamics his analyses expose provide an important correction for theology to relate life-and-death issues with Christian reflection on charitable desire, a fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). In particular, through theological use of mimetic theory, pneumatology can be brought more concretely into discussion of soteriology and ecclesiology.

#### 4.3.2. *Shortcomings*

##### 4.3.2.1. *Weak Soteriology*

The chief problem for Christian theology that incorporates the insights of mimetic theory is its relatively weak soteriology. It accounts for merely a 'moral influence' soteriology, which makes conversion dependent upon the subjective disposition and committed action of the converted. (Furthermore, the vast difference between cognitive awareness of the sacrificial mechanism and a sustained moral conversion which does not resort to sacrificial action is all too



often overlooked.) Since mimetic theory's question centered upon the workings of imitation and desire, its answer remains limited within matters of imitation and desire: which is plenty, but still not the sum total of the problems of the human condition. Desire is also an ephemeral and transitory thing, a very weak hinge for salvation. While Schwager intends a soteriology more substantial than psychological or subjective, it remains insufficient for explaining how salvation would occur for those with defective knowledge or willpower (children, those who never encountered the gospel, etc.).

'Ontological' or metaphysical soteriologies have the merit of proposing how all can be saved (by virtue of God's action), but these often take inadequate account of human freedom and responsibility in response to the process of sanctification. Metaphysical soteriological models fail badly to account for the struggle of lifelong conversion and sanctification; they have very little to say concerning the ongoing responsibility and labor of conversion. They tend toward a morality animated by fear of punishment and hope for reward rather than *becoming* Christian lovers. So neither metaphysical ('Christus Victor,' satisfaction) soteriologies nor those of Schwager and Daly (moral influence, imitation) are alone sufficient; both are needed for a properly full account of conversion, sanctification, and redemption. Metaphysical models uphold divine initiative and action properly, and moral influence models uphold the responsibility for some kind of cooperation with inspirations of the Holy Spirit in one's thoughts, decisions, actions, and lives. Moral influence models remain necessary (along with metaphysical models) to explain, direct, and sustain the individual's attention and intention toward the good.<sup>648</sup>

#### 4.3.2.2. Categorizing All Archaic Sacrifices as Murderous

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<sup>648</sup> David Turnbloom has written on the value of exemplary soteriology within a Thomistic approach. Cf. David Farina Turnbloom, *Speaking with Aquinas: A Conversation about Grace, Virtue, and the Eucharist*, Kindle Edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017).

In his early work Girard considers all archaic sacrifices, even thank-offerings, to have sprung from an original murder.<sup>649</sup> Girard's rejection of *all* archaic sacrifice is a stumbling block to wider acceptance of mimetic theory, particularly as contemporary notions of sacrifice extend far beyond either acts of slaughter or even religious contexts.

Secular 'sacrifices' (such as for self-discipline) are necessary for progress in human flourishing (education, physical development, etc.). There is still need in the Christian life for decision, asceticism, perseverance (e.g., Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 12:1-12; Rev. 2:1-3:22). Decisions cut away all possibilities but one; the merchant in search of pearls sells all he has to obtain one pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45-46). It therefore remains to distinguish: a) Christ's self-gift from archaic sacrifice; b) participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice by the laity; and c) wise ascetical commitment from notions of sacrifice which thwart authentic human flourishing.

#### 4.3.2.3. Developments Needed

Since it was only toward the end of his life that Girard made a positive assessment of Christ's death as a (particular kind of) sacrifice, it is left to interpreters of Girard to integrate this change into the rest of Girard's work. The fuller anthropological and theological implications of this change, which could integrate that were previously rejected, need articulation for a broad audience.

Also in need of development is a much fuller notion of *good* mimesis, of the imitation of Christ (or, for that matter, any model of the good) in anthropological terms. (This is not to create two kinds of mimesis, for as Girardians note, there is simply one mimesis dynamic, tending toward either good or ill.<sup>650</sup>) Devotional works which exhort imitation of Christ have existed for

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<sup>649</sup> Cf. Girard, *THFW*, 1-83, 105-125. Unwittingly, Girard thereby imitates the Church, which relates many notions of sacrifice to Christ's self-gift, as long as something is invoked as such.

<sup>650</sup> Cf. Sandor Goodhart, "Criticism, Critique, and Crisis in Assessing the Work of René Girard," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 45:3-4 (2016), 6-15; esp. 11-12.

centuries, but these (including Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*) typically presume an archaic notion of Christ's sacrifice and foster a notion of imitation that romanticizes suffering as a good since it can draw us to Christ. As important as Girard's exposure of sacrificial logic was, it needs to be complemented by a positive proposal of the solution: based on good redemptive mimesis of Christ, not an archaic notion of Christ's sacrifice or depictions of romanticized suffering. If the workings of imitation and desire are as complex as Girard proposes, the anthropological workings of charitable desire and its transmission need further clarification.

### **4.3.3. Others' Critiques**

#### **4.3.3.1. Impact**

Dubbed by fellow *immortel* and Stanford professor Michel Serres "the new Darwin of the human sciences," Girard's thought has garnered attention worldwide in a wide variety of fields.<sup>651</sup> In 1983 the symposium *Colloque René Girard* in Cerisy-la-Salle, France, studied his thought from an interdisciplinary perspective.<sup>652</sup> The International Association of Scholars of Mimetic Theory, since 1990, have sponsored an annual Colloquium on Violence and Religion<sup>653</sup> and published the journal *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*; Michigan State University Press publishes the *Studies in Violence, Mimesis & Culture Series*. The University of Innsbruck, where Raymund Schwager taught, holds a database of worldwide publications related to mimetic theory.<sup>654</sup> Michael Kirwan summarizes the scope of Girard's impact:

René Girard has completely modified the landscape of the social sciences. Ethnology, history of religion, philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology and literary criticism are explicitly mobilised in this enterprise. Theology, economics and

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<sup>651</sup> Cynthia L. Haven, *Evolution of Desire: A Life of René Girard*, Studies in Violence, Mimesis & Culture, ed. William A. Johnsen (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2018), 226. Hereafter *ED*. Cf. Michel Serres, *Atlas* (Paris: Julliard, 1994), 219-220.

<sup>652</sup> Proceedings were published: Paul Dumouchel, ed., *Violence and Truth: On the Work of René Girard* (London: Althone, 1988).

<sup>653</sup> Accessible at <https://violenceandreligion.com>.

<sup>654</sup> Accessible at <https://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/mimdok/>.

political sciences, history and sociology – in short, all the social sciences, and those that used to be called moral sciences – are influenced by it.<sup>655</sup>

Girard's impact within theology is suggested already in the writings of Schwager, Alison, and Daly above; several other theologians can be added.<sup>656</sup>

Billionaire investor Peter Thiel, a student of Girard's, was an early major investor in Facebook precisely because he saw how social media would function according to mimetic theory.<sup>657</sup> Thiel's foundation is a major donor of The Imitatio Foundation which supports the Colloquium on Violence and Religion.<sup>658</sup> Lonergan scholar Robert M. Doran, S.J., is producing a systematic theology which incorporates the insights of Girard's mimetic theory.<sup>659</sup> Upon his death obituaries appeared in more than 15 countries, including such publications as *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*.<sup>660</sup>

#### 4.3.3.2. Strengths

As one might expect from such an impact, praise for Girard's work is effusive. For James G. Williams it offers "the basis of a new Christian humanism,"<sup>661</sup> and for Gil Bailie "the most sweeping and significant intellectual breakthrough of the modern age."<sup>662</sup> Daly considers it "one of the great intellectual achievements of the late twentieth century -- a comprehensive

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<sup>655</sup> Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, Religion Today (London: Darton Longman Todd, 2010), Kindle Locations 117-121. Hereafter *DG*.

<sup>656</sup> Note 55 above has already mentioned James G. Williams, Gil Bailie, Stephen Finlan, S. Mark Heim, Erin Lothes-Biviano; in addition the Lonerganian scholar Robert Doran, Wolfgang Palaver, Scott Cowdell, Joel Hodge, Mathias Moosbrugger, and still others.

<sup>657</sup> Quentin Hardy, "René Girard, French Theorist of the Social Sciences, Dies at 91," *The New York Times*, November 10, 2015. Accessed on January 31, 2019 at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/11/arts/international/rene-girard-french-theorist-of-the-social-sciences-dies-at-91.html>. Hereafter "Girard Dies at 91."

<sup>658</sup> Accessible at <https://violenceandreligion.com>.

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Robert M. Doran, S.J., "A New Project in Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 76 (2015) 243-259. Doran notes he will also employ Robert Daly's *Sacrifice Unveiled*. Also cf. Robert M. Doran, S.J., "The Nonviolent Cross: Lonergan and Girard on Redemption," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 46-61.

<sup>660</sup> Cf. Erik Buys, "In Memoriam: RIP René Girard (1923-2015)," *Mimetic Margins*, November 8, 2015. Accessed on January 31, 2019 at <https://mimeticmargins.com/tag/rip-rene-girard/>. Links to these obituaries can be found here.

<sup>661</sup> Williams, *BVS*, 6.

<sup>662</sup> Bailie, *VU*, 4.

vision of the ... processes of sin and redemption.”<sup>663</sup> Among the strengths of mimetic theory is its explanatory power in a wide variety of academic disciplines as well as popular culture.

Some of the strengths (4.3.1.) and weaknesses (4.3.2.) of mimetic theory for theology are noted above. Additionally, mimetic theory offers a way to understand why the crucifixion of Christ took place without ascribing the origin of violence to the Godhead. Whether writers agree or disagree with Girard (and/or his theological interpreters), his concerns and questions have shifted the theological landscape to deal with matters of violence in the Bible and in society and how disciples ought to respond.

#### 4.3.3.3. Critiques

By no means, however, does Girard’s thought escape scholarly criticism. Girard “has been accused of everything from being too religious to being too secular; he is apparently too Protestant, too masculinist, too pessimistic, too hopeful, too modern, too premodern, and too postmodern.”<sup>664</sup> His methodology and interdisciplinary ‘grand-narrative’ approach come under suspicion as well. Rather few address Girard’s theological statements, implicit or otherwise. Most notable among Girard’s theological critics was Hans Urs von Balthasar.<sup>665</sup>

For Balthasar, several problems in Girard’s thought stem from a lack of metaphysics. Balthasar considers Girard’s soteriology exclusively psychological, an insufficient and unreliable change in human beings: salvation derives not so much from the tragic death of Christ as in its

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<sup>663</sup> Quoted on the back cover of Girard, *Reader*.

<sup>664</sup> Jacob Sherman, “Metaphysics and the Redemption of Sacrifice: On René Girard and Charles Williams,” *Heythrop Journal* LI (2010), 50. [45-59.] Hereafter “Metaphysics.”

<sup>665</sup> Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume IV: The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1994), 297-314. Hereafter *TD:IV*. Balthasar published the original German text in 1980. It includes a critique of Schwager, which could not have taken account of Schwager’s later publication *JITDOS* in 1999. On June 27, 1979, Schwager wrote Girard that Balthasar had decided to give Girard a “*place of honor*” in his forthcoming book. Given the critique Balthasar published, his remark to Schwager may have been meant ironically. *RGRSC*, 75.

effect in others.<sup>666</sup> It only changed things on an anthropological or social level, the cross “concerns only men’s attitude to the Crucified, as if God’s attitude to him did not exist”<sup>667</sup> -- but changed nothing in the divine-human relationship. Similarly, the fact that the world burdens Jesus with the sin of the world (instead of the Father) attributes too much redemptive initiative to human beings.<sup>668</sup> The theological end result, according to Balthasar, is that Girard’s non-metaphysical revelation of Christ is remarkably similar to Karl Barth’s completely other-worldly revelation.<sup>669</sup> Similarly, John Milbank goes so far as to place Girard in continuity with the positivist social science tradition, unwittingly reinscribing pagan sacrificial logic as ‘scientific.’<sup>670</sup> Mark I. Wallace thinks Girard’s claim -- especially in the post-Derridean era -- that the gospels are uniquely revelatory risks becoming a postmodern biblicism.<sup>671</sup> One sees from these critiques how Girard gets interpreted as modernist and nearly fundamentalist at the same time.

For Balthasar, the categories of the ‘Old Covenant’ -- sacrifice, expiation, punishment, wrath -- provide both an important continuity with God’s covenant with Israel.<sup>672</sup> Therefore it is problematic when Girard’s Jesus “takes their meaning ..., uncovers [sacrifice], completes it and radically reverses it.”<sup>673</sup> Also Girard’s view also entails “the complete purification of the image of God from all traits of violence. Violence is forbidden to man because the heavenly Father does not employ it; his kingdom will be a kingdom of love, not of ritual institutions and

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<sup>666</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 300.

<sup>667</sup> Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 312.

<sup>668</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 314.

<sup>669</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD: IV*, 308-309.

<sup>670</sup> Cf. John Milbank, “Stories of Sacrifice,” *Modern Theology* 12:1 (1996), 54 [27-56.], and John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 397.

<sup>671</sup> Mark I. Wallace, “Postmodern Biblicism: The Challenge of René Girard for Contemporary Theology,” *Modern Theology* 5:4 (July 1989), 311 [309-325].

<sup>672</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 307-308.

<sup>673</sup> Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 298.

interdicts.”<sup>674</sup> For Balthasar, such a revision is too sharp a break between the old and new covenants.

Demythologizing violence out of the Old Testament notion of God will not do for Balthasar, who maintains the demands justice makes on God to punish and for sinners to be punished. Balthasar complains Girard’s Father is ‘power-less’ and ‘does not ask’ for a sacrifice on the part of the Son,<sup>675</sup> and similarly, Schwager’s God “forgives without requiring anything in return, without requiring satisfaction.”<sup>676</sup> In response Balthasar asks, “Why the Cross, if God forgives in any case? .... either [God] *wills* to burden [the Servant] with sins, or [God] *allows* it.”<sup>677</sup> In sum, Balthasar does not see much value in the critique of sacred violence. He writes poetically of the unity of divine omnipotence, apparent powerlessness, and the gift, made visible by Christ on the cross.<sup>678</sup> Yet according to this logic, Girard’s non-retaliatory God, who makes unlimited self-gift without threatening violence, presents itself as more ‘powerful.’ The Girardian Christ does away with categories of retribution and exchange, and instead opens the way of a God who is *free to forgive*. The cross of Christ remains necessary nonetheless, to demonstrate back to humanity the violence of its scapegoat mechanism, and to prompt repentance, confession, and conversion at seeing the fruits of its work.

It is unfortunate that Balthasar’s critique, written in 1980, came before both Girard’s agreement with Schwager on a revised notion of sacrifice (in 1991, published in 1996) and Schwager’s publication of *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation* (1999). Girard’s revised stance on sacrifice (section 4.2.3.7. above) answers Balthasar’s criticism by redoubling the original point: “Christ became a scapegoat [in the eyes of the world] in order to desacralize those who came

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<sup>674</sup> Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 306.

<sup>675</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 309-310.

<sup>676</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?*, 211. Quoted in Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 311.

<sup>677</sup> Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 312.

<sup>678</sup> Cf. Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 325-332.

before him and to prevent those who come after him from being sacralized.... [This corrects] the colossal but inevitable error of holding God responsible for purely human violence.... *God is love.*”<sup>679</sup> For Girard, Christ saves not *through* an archaic sense of sacrifice but *from* such a sense. This stance of both distinction and continuity between archaic and Christian sacrifice, however, Jacob Sherman finds “profoundly ambivalent,” as Girard does not succeed at clarifying how this would be possible.<sup>680</sup>

Despite Girard’s retractions and corrections, the perception among scholars persists that Girard’s view proposes an inherently violent ontology. In 1996 John Milbank noted that culture, violence, and sacrality are all “co-terminous” for Girard, who pins violence on “intersubjective” desire, which means desire has an “ineluctably poisoned character.”<sup>681</sup> For all Girard points out concerning the workings of violent desire, his proposal for what constitutes the kingdom of God or ‘good’ desire remains insufficient.<sup>682</sup> Agreeing with Milbank, Hans Boersma adds that for Girard the *love* of God (or of Christ on the cross) does not *redeem* human beings so much as so much as simply expose and reject violence.<sup>683</sup> Girard, Boersma asserts, shares Derrida’s “preoccupation with violence,” neglecting the positive message the gospel proclaims.<sup>684</sup> Girard’s lack of a doctrine of creation which could account for an ontology of hospitality is problematic as well; Boersma also questions whether desire can never arise from objects (without imitation of someone else).<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Girard, “Mimetic Theory and Theology,” in *TOBWSC*, 44.

<sup>680</sup> Sherman, “Metaphysics,” 52-53.

<sup>681</sup> John Milbank, “Stories of Sacrifice,” *Modern Theology* 12:1 (January 1996), 42. [27-56.] Cf. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>682</sup> Cf. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 395-402.

<sup>683</sup> Cf. Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 141-142. [133-153] Hereafter *VHC*.

<sup>684</sup> Boersma, *VHC*, 145.

<sup>685</sup> Cf. Boersma, *VHC*, 144-145, 149-150.



The perception of an inherently violent ontology also applies to Girard's notion of desire. While Girard clarified in a 1993 interview that desire is not inherently evil,<sup>686</sup> his interlocutor Rebecca Adams noted in a subsequent article Girard's mimetic theory still lacks a clear account of how good (or 'creative') desire precedes violent mimesis.<sup>687</sup> Furthermore, the gulf between God's non-violent loving desire and the world's violent mimesis raises questions as to how God's desire could be imitated by human beings. Similarly, for Sarah Coakley (in 2009) mimetic theory "positively bristles with theoretical problems .... in its insistent evocation of a *primary* violence deeply encoded in the roots of human nature."<sup>688</sup> Girard's reluctance to employ metaphysics may keep matters on a practical or anthropological level, but it also hinders deeper exploration and expansion of his theory. The scholarly community is clearly demanding a fuller metaphysical exposition of mimetic theory, while a 'Girardian' might respond that such exploration is a further delay or evasion of the conversion demanded by the insights of mimetic theory.<sup>689</sup>

For other critics Girard's theory resembles a Gnosticism of 'those who know' the 'real' meaning of Christ's gospel.<sup>690</sup> Similarly, Fergus Kerr notes mimetic theory cannot become divorced from the gospel narratives, or else it "might ... easily become one more abstract

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<sup>686</sup> Cf. Rebecca Adams, "Violence, Difference, and Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard," *Religion and Literature* 25:2 (1993), 9-33. Excerpt reprinted as "The Goodness of Mimetic Desire," in René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 62-65. For another statement by Girard on 'good' mimesis, cf. "A Return to Imitation," in René Girard, *When These Things Begin: A Conversation with Miguel Treguer*, trans. Trevor Cribben Merrill (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 43-48.

<sup>687</sup> Cf. Rebecca Adams, "Loving Mimesis and Girard's 'Scapegoat of the Text': A Creative Reassessment of Mimetic Desire," in *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford PA: Pandora Press, 2000).

<sup>688</sup> Sarah Coakley, "Sacrifice Regained: Reconsidering the Rationality of Christian Belief," An Inaugural lecture by the Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity given in the University of Cambridge, 13 October 2009 (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 2012), 12. Hereafter "Sacrifice Regained." For an argument that Coakley has misread Girard, cf. Chelsea Jordan King, "Girard Reclaimed: Finding Common Ground between Sarah Coakley and René Girard on Sacrifice," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, 23:1 (Spring 2016), 63-74.

<sup>689</sup> In light of Girard's theory, his own corrections, and others' critiques, it is interesting that no commentary is given on either Genesis 8:21 (God declares 'the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth') or Mark 7:21 (Jesus says 'For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come').

<sup>690</sup> Cf. Douglas Hedley, *Sacrifice Imagined: Violence, Atonement and the Sacred*, Kindle Edition (New York: Continuum, 2011) Kindle Locations 2493-2494.

theological theorem.”<sup>691</sup> Boersma questions how Girard can claim Christianity both failed to heed its own message of nonviolence *and* can be responsible for producing Western democracy’s concern for victims, justice, and rights.<sup>692</sup>

Girard’s eccentric interdisciplinary methodology is *causa honoris* for some<sup>693</sup> and leaves others crying foul.<sup>694</sup> As a literary critic exploring ethnology turned biblical scholar and semi-theologian, Girard is (according to one colleague at Stanford) “ruthlessly undisciplined. He’s still not forgiven.”<sup>695</sup> Hypotheses such as Girard’s concerning the origins of culture are simply unverifiable scientifically. Mimetic theory’s contributions within theology, however, concerning the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice, nonviolence as essential to Christ’s teaching, and opening a greater role for discussion of the Holy Spirit, outweigh concerns about academic methodology and scope.

#### **4.4. Applying Mimetic Theory to the Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Mimetic theory within theology that is dramatic (Schwager), liturgical (Alison), and relational (Daly) highlights the nature of Christ’s unique sacrifice which scripture tells us both put an end to sacrifice (cf. Heb. 9:26) and established a new covenant (cf. Lk. 22:20; Heb. 10:12,14).<sup>696</sup> Christ thus *founded a new community*, the Church, which bases itself on imitation of Christ’s desire which, through his example, commands, and gift of the Holy Spirit, he sought to give to his disciples.

##### **4.4.1. Liturgy of the Eucharist as a Gift of Desire**

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<sup>691</sup> Fergus Kerr, “Rescuing Girard’s Argument?,” *Modern Theology* 8:4 (October 1992), 398. [385-399]

<sup>692</sup> “Girard cannot have his cake and eat it, too.” Cf. Boersma, *VHC*, 148-149.

<sup>693</sup> “[Girard’s] effort was probably naïve on a methodological level, but courageous and full of potential on a theoretical one.” Pierpaolo Antonello and Joao Cezar de Castro Rocha, “Introduction,” in Girard, *EC*, 6.

<sup>694</sup> For a detailed narrative of the critical reception of Girard’s writings in France until 1978, see Benoît Chantre, “René Girard in France,” trans. Willam A. Johnsen, *Contagion* 23 (2016), 13-62.

<sup>695</sup> Quotation of Robert Pogue Harrison in Haven, *ED*, 2.

<sup>696</sup> Heb. 9:26b: “[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. 10:12,14: “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, ‘he sat down at the right hand of God.... For by a single offering [Christ] has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.’”

In light of mimetic theory and its appropriation by theologians, the liturgy of the Eucharist can be appreciated anew, in ways that illuminate both the theory and the liturgy. With an eye toward Daly's notion of Christ offering us 'the gift of transformative mimesis,' the following proposes the liturgy of the Eucharist as precisely the ritual space and time in which this gift is celebrated, given, and received.

#### 4.4.1.1. *The Gift of Christ's Loving Desire*

The liturgy of the Eucharist originates from Christ's paschal mystery, and so we begin there. With the cross, Christ's loving fidelity exposed the deceit of scapegoating, the innocence of victims, and the violence embedded in all levels of society. Christ's resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost revealed God's forgiveness of human beings, even while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). Christ's Paschal Mystery revealed both the gift of forgiveness and the truth of the world's complicity with violence and sin. These call for responses of confession of that complicity, and conversion through acceptance of God's gift and living according to Christ's desire.

This conversion demands both deliverance from violent mimetic desire and the gift of 'good desire' -- which humans cannot provide for themselves. Insofar as mimesis of rivalry is the root of evil, there is need of a gift of good desire through a model-mediator to be imitated. Christ provides these gifts. He serves as a proper model for relationship to the Father through his deference to the will of the Father (cf. Jn. 6:38), most dramatically in humble acceptance of the abandonment by the Father upon the cross. He does not enter into rivalry with his disciples but calls them "friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (Jn. 15:14-15). With the Father he sends the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 23:46; Jn. 16:7-16; 20:21-23; Acts 2:1-4, 33) which liberates (2 Cor. 3:17), writing the new covenant (cf.

Lk. 22:20) on human hearts (cf. Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 37:14). Through these actions Jesus is presented to us as the forgiving victim (Alison) whose grace precedes and creates the possibility of repentance and deeper conversion.<sup>697</sup> Through the gift of faith, as Robert Hamerton-Kelly notes, the result is that

Christ lives in me because I imitate him in the sense of his desire becoming my desire (1 Cor. 2:16b), and my desire becoming his, in the sense that 'he loved me and gave himself for me' (cf. Gal. 2:20). Thus I love myself in Christ and as Christ loves me. Christ lives in me and I live in him because we share the same desire, and thus acquisitive and conflictual desire becomes generous and consensual desire.<sup>698</sup>

These gifts of covenant relationship, gift of the Holy Spirit, and communion with Christ are mediated to human beings through the sacraments of the Church.

#### 4.4.2.2. *The Gift of Christ's Loving Desire in the Liturgy of the Eucharist*

The Eucharist most clearly specifies the gift of God's love which is meant to constitute members of the Church, bringing about a communion not only of 'body and blood' but of will and desire. Most directly in the institution narrative, yet more broadly from the liturgy of the Eucharist as a whole, God's gracious and scandalous gift of desire is offered to its participants.

Without use of the term 'desire,' the gift of God's desire nonetheless finds most direct verbal expression in the Institution Narrative. Citing the words attributed to Jesus to in a proclamation of his loving fidelity-unto-death (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26), the liturgy celebrates Jesus' prophetic sign and expression of the self-giving he will fulfill upon the cross.

This 'gift of desire' is by no means to be confined to the Institution Narrative, as if the *items* of the consecrated host and wine 'contain' or delineate the desire being given. Rather, several aspects of the liturgy offer and foster adoption of God's loving desire for oneself. The prayers of the community (collect, prayer over the gifts, closing prayer) petition God for a closer

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<sup>697</sup> Cf. Schwager, *JITDOS*, 56.

<sup>698</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *SV*, 117.

union of will. The liturgy's rites (e.g., penitential), prayers (Gloria, Our Father), and Creed all shape attention and intention toward unified recognition of God's truth and desire. In particular, the *Our Father* ('Thy will be done') requests that God bestow his loving desire to become active in one's own person and life. The prayer before the sign of peace (along with the sign itself) acknowledges the peace Christ came to give and seeks to establish among us.

In public celebration of "the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us ... [making] known to us the mystery of his will" (Eph. 1:7-9), the liturgy of the Eucharist re-presents *and receives* ritually the expression of Christ's gift which, when received as such, delivers from self-protective, egotistical, violent desire. Through this understanding of the liturgy as a gift of God's desire, the 'love behind the gift' (Alison) re-emerges to the foreground, *both* as a gracious gift and as a scandalous gift that impels us to look to God for our desire and to speak and act with love amid a violent world.

The Eucharistic gift expresses and bestows God's love to us. Its gift *of desire* (in an objective sense) emphasizes the *existential* transformation this gift enables and demands of us ('Do this in memory of me'); this transformation occurs -- even if ephemerally -- by living *according to the loving desire* the gift manifests. *This* is full, conscious, active participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist: union not just of body and soul but *also* conscious human desire with God's loving desire; such unity is precisely the *res* of the sacrament, without which full, conscious, active participation does not take place.

As Marion noted, Christ's radical -- indeed 'impossible' -- gift of his body and blood reveals the 'givability' of one's life. No less is Jesus' loving desire 'givable' -- and receivable; such a decision and desire needs to be present for the gift of one's body and blood to occur in

charity.<sup>699</sup> In light of seeing this possibility opened up by Jesus' gift -- and the *commandment* to do so embedded within the institution narrative itself -- the full possibility and mandate for the *recipient* to imitate this self-giving emerge. Christ's gift makes the giving of our own lives in charity both possible *and* demanded of us: "Love one another as I have loved you .... "Greater love no one has than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn. 13:34; 15:13).

For pastoral reasons, the Eucharist needs to be understood as a personal gift of love much more and far more than a dramatic spectacle of miraculous transubstantiation of items on an altar. Transubstantiation occurs, but it happens *for the sake of* recognition and acceptance of love *which transform the recipient*, not just 'metaphysically' or 'ontologically,' but *to desire to become a living embodiment* of Christ's loving desire amid one's own historical situation.

Desire is not a secondary matter; it animates and characterizes actions as loving. Theological use of mimetic theory offers a way to address questions of desire within the relationship of Christ to his disciples. Through such full, conscious, active participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist we are enabled to acknowledge, as Saint Paul did, "It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20-21).

#### **4.4.2. Ritual Reversal of the Origins of Violence**

From a Girardian perspective, Christ's deeds in the paschal mystery and the words of the institution narrative of the Eucharist are a perfect reversal and correction of the origins of violence. Several aspects which constitute the scapegoat mechanism are reversed by Christ; each liturgy of the Eucharist implicitly celebrates this reversal. Since the 'ingredients' of a radical decision to love against the tide of violence are demonstrated and celebrated in the liturgy of the Eucharist, it functions as the *antithesis* of archaic sacrifice.

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<sup>699</sup> 1 Cor. 13:3: "... and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

In the following tables, the first column lists the elements constituting the scapegoat mechanism, the way of the world. The second column lists the elements as reversed by Christ in the Paschal Mystery (and/or Institution Narrative), reversing the origins of violence. The third column presents these elements in the symbolic memorial which re-presents and preserves this revelation, in the liturgy of the Eucharist. The fourth column presents ways participants in the liturgy are meant to bring Christ's loving desire and action 'beyond the liturgy' into the world. Considered as a reversal of the origins of violence, the liturgy of the Eucharist celebrates an instituted (and *embodied*) memorial of the divine loving initiative, meant to redeem humanity from its sinful and violent foundations.

<b><u>First Stage: Dynamics of Desire Amid a Community</u></b>			
<b><u>Scapegoating</u></b>	<b><u>Jesus: Paschal Mystery</u></b>	<b><u>Eucharistic Liturgy</u></b>	<b><u>Lives/Acts of Loving</u></b>
Acquisitive desire runs amok	Divine self-giving desire, saving initiative from God. Proclamation of Kingdom of God	Gift of God's gracious and scandalous desire proclaimed and given	Accepting and embodying God's loving desire, beyond the liturgy into the world
Mutual imitation creates communal identity crisis	Jesus' identity integrity (by blessing) and gift;	Gift of communion into body of Christ	Recognize givability of one's life
Competition, rivalries between subjects and models	Nonrivalrous mediation of the Father's will; petition to Father for forgiveness of the other	Nonrivalrous gift of desire: given and available to all	Recognize brethren/ icons /others
Rivalrous desire becomes murderous, imitated by all against one	Loving desire of one 'against' (or in the face of) all	Expression of God's loving desire for and to recipient	To give oneself in the chaotic violent world

Against the pattern of acquisitive desire which gives birth to rivalry and aggression, Jesus, secure in his identity as Son and living according to the will of the Father, maintains a loving and forgiving initiative, even when the world turns against him. The liturgy of the Eucharist re-presents this Word of the Father liturgically, particularly as expressed in the words of the institution narrative and the gift of Christ's body and blood for communion. This offers Christ's

desire to participants, who are themselves members of the ecclesial body of Christ and called to initiate loving as Christ did.

<b><u>Second Stage: Relation to the Other</u></b>			
<b><u>Scapegoating</u></b>	<b><u>Jesus: Paschal Mystery</u></b>	<b><u>Eucharistic Liturgy</u></b>	<b><u>Lives/Acts of Loving</u></b>
Projects violent/evil desire onto a single victim; unwittingly spreads violent desire among community	Recognizes other as victim of violent mimetic desire; 'Sacrifices' desire to reciprocate/initiate violence	Expresses God's loving desire for disciples and world: "My peace I give to you"	Called to live according to Christ's loving desire
The victim is deemed subhuman; other is condemned as threat; must get rid of victim to free ourselves of contagion	Christ recognized the violent other as victim of mimetic desire; forgives the other; enters willingly into place of victim	The participant is forgiven into repentance/freedom to love	Called to recognize violent others as victims of mimetic desire, as icon of the invisible Christ
Communal unity through violent expulsion/murder of victim	Covenant unity through self-gift and new covenant of forgiveness	Covenant unity through communion in the new covenant of forgiveness	Sent to imitate Jesus' self-giving desire in action
Selection of an other as victim; false accusation; renunciation of victim	Entering role of victim; renunciation of violent reciprocation; other as one to be loved/forgiven	Participating in new covenant by receiving gift of forgiveness and forgiving in turn (Our Father)	Entering 'trinitarian play'
Misrecognition of other as threat; inflicts violence	Recognition of violent other as the true victim of mimetic violence; offers forgiveness	Recognition of Christ the Victim as the Lamb of God	Recognition of others as icons of Christ, especially the poor, ill, oppressed, etc.
Seeks escape from violence/aggression by inflicting violence on victim	Christ refuses to reciprocate/escape violence; delivers self to his enemies in love	Re-presents Christ's action: "On the night he was betrayed...", offering covenant of forgiveness	Called to nonviolence

Instead of projecting aggression onto an innocent victim, Jesus recognizes the violent other's victimhood to mimetic desire and petitions the Father for their forgiveness. Instead of subjecting another to violence, Jesus enters the 'place' of the victim himself. Without reciprocating or escaping the violence as it closes in him, he turns his imminent death into a gift of his body, blood, and loving desire to and for his disciples. This bestows participation in the new covenant, which is offered to people through the sacraments of the Church. The liturgy of the Eucharist in



particular is the ritual expression of Christ's radical loving desire, calling contemporary disciples to a similarly radical decision to love in their lives, beyond the bounds of the liturgy.

<b><u>Third Stage: Ritual Actions and Their Effects</u></b>			
<b><u>Scapegoating</u></b>	<b><u>Jesus: Paschal Mystery</u></b>	<b><u>Eucharistic Liturgy</u></b>	<b><u>Lives/Acts of Loving</u></b>
Take / curse / break / silence the victim, to preserve a limited resource; celebration of a feast	Take / bless / break / give / speak the gift, giving away an abundant resource (love which redeems) through gifts of bread and wine	Re-presentation of Jesus' actions: take / bless / break / give / speak, giving away an abundant resource (love which redeems) through Eucharistic gifts	To take/bless/break/give/ speak in one's life; giving away an abundant resource with one's life/work/deeds
Makes violent desire contagious: 'gift' of violent desire among the community; commemorated by sacrifices	"Do this in memory of me": commands disciples to imitation; commandment to love "as I have loved you"	Gift of Holy Spirit; new covenant of forgiveness; 'Do this in memory of me'	Accept the claim/call/demand the covenant makes on our lives
<b><u>Scapegoating</u></b>	<b><u>Jesus: Paschal Mystery</u></b>	<b><u>Eucharistic Liturgy</u></b>	<b><u>Lives/Acts of Loving</u></b>
Violent process constitutes participants as murderers or complicit	Jesus reveals his identity as Son of God, initiating love amid a world turned violent	Strengthens recipients as living members of ecclesial body of Christ (Baptism constitutes them as such)	Loving action constitutes self as lover in 'trinitarian play'

In the context of the liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ's solemn actions in the institution narrative constitute an exodus from violence, in a radically opposite manner from the scapegoat process. Christ's gift is not merely the objects of the consecrated bread and wine but the gift of loving desire, which has its source in God and is (in principle) infinitely abundant and sharable. Jesus' forgiving gift brings about the new covenant, a community built on forgiveness rather than scapegoating; this fortifies its recipients as members of the body of Christ. Beyond the time and place of the liturgy, recipients are called to enter Jesus' 'trinitarian place,' embodying the loving action of Christ in the contemporary world. They do so in memory of Christ's gift ('Do this in memory of me').

<u>Nature of the Action</u>			
<u>Scapegoating</u>	<u>Jesus: Paschal Mystery</u>	<u>Eucharistic Liturgy</u>	<u>Lives/Acts of Loving</u>
Act of religious appeasement, initiated by guilty party (humans)	God reconciling the world to himself, by taking the place of the victim to forgive the guilty	Full, conscious, active participation in liturgy to receive the gift	Full, conscious, active living as member of ecclesial body of Christ
Ritual hides but perpetuates violence, which is justified as sacred	Paschal Mystery exposed the violent scapegoating process; subversion of the archaic sacred	Liturgy of Eucharist re-presents Jesus' subversion of sacrifice	Called to speak and live prophetically to end scapegoating, in memory of Christ's gift ('Do this in memory of me')

Christ's Paschal Mystery exposed what archaic sacrifice sought to hide, subverting the violent process and called disciples to live according to the same loving initiative.

The characteristics of *Christian* sacrifice emerge in light of this reversal. It is two parts confession, one part decision, and its final part action. There is confession of sin, *made possible* by Christ's offer of forgiveness, which forgives as it indicts; it is also a confession of faith, of surrender, self-gift and self-entrustment to God, clearing a space by which to receive the desire of God as one's own will.

#### **4.3.3. Gift of New Relations**

God's superabundant giving -- expressed most intensely in the Last Supper narratives and the Paschal Mystery -- is his reconciling action imparts new relationships to the persons of the Godhead and of the world.

In Girard's analyses, earthly models mediate desires to subjects: first 'their own' (which are in fact borrowed from others), then too often a rivalrous desire, springing from competition between model and subject. Model and subject become obstacles to each other, giving birth to rivalrous and 'metaphysical' desire to become the other. By contrast, Jesus mediates a proper relationship between human beings and the Father (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Jn. 14:6) and the desire to fulfill *the Father's* will. His filial distance from the Father, manifest most fully on the cross,

models the distance and obedience to which we are called as human beings. Christ's moral example can be desired as an ideal but is never imitated to a point of creating rivalry with the model. These relational aspects maintain a proper communion-and-distance between the subjects. Rivalry among disciples offends against the humility Christ exemplified and taught.

Since Christ gives his blood as 'the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for the forgiveness of sins,' Christ founds an utterly new kind of community rooted in forgiveness rather than violence. Membership is not for the elite but the contrite and humble of heart. Its members continue Christ's prophetic work of exposing the scapegoat mechanism, again in an inversion of the goal of archaic sacrifice.

With the help of Girard's analyses of desire amid a community, the dynamics for the foundation of a community emerge with greater clarity. By incorporating mimetic theory into an understanding of liturgy and Jesus' call to discipleship, Jesus' institution of the new covenant is given shape through a phenomenology of a 'gift of desire.' Gift and commandment are joined together so that reception and regiving are more clearly revealed (as Marion noted) as one and the same reality. This is not to reduce the gift(s) or liturgy to mere psychological phenomena or philosophical terms, but to offer a paradigm by which these essential elements of Christian life are kept (at least partially) intelligible. It helps relational Eucharistic theology attend to the persons, actions, and gifts in the relationships between God and human beings, as well as among human beings themselves, particularly in the foundations and principles of community life.

Having collected the major insights of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard for a relational approach to the Eucharist, the next section proposes a synthesis that brings the meaning of 'full, conscious, active participation' in the liturgy of the Eucharist to the fore.

## **V. Synthesis: Liturgy of the Eucharist as God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire**

### **5.1. An Approach to Desire**

#### **5.1.1. *A Notion of Desire***

#### **5.1.2. *Divine Desire***

#### **5.1.3. *'Gift of Desire'***

#### **5.1.4. *God's Loving Desire: 'Gracious and Scandalous'***

### **5.2. Celebrating the Eucharistic Giving: Remembering the Gift of God's Desire**

#### **5.2.1. *Contextual Elements of the Liturgical Assembly***

##### 5.2.1.1. Language, Word, Call

##### 5.2.1.2. Desire

##### 5.2.1.3. Assembling as the People of God

##### 5.2.1.4. Sacred Space: In the World, Not of It

##### 5.2.1.5. Sacred Time: Anamnestic, Present, Eschatological

#### **5.2.2. *Introductory Rites***

#### **5.2.3. *Liturgy of the Word***

#### **5.2.4. *Liturgy of the Eucharist (Proper)***

##### 5.2.4.1. Beginnings

##### 5.2.4.2. Preface Sanctus, Epiclesis

##### 5.2.4.3. Institution Narrative

##### 5.2.4.3.1. Christ Reconfigures Himself as Embodied Gift

##### 5.2.4.3.2. 'Do This in Memory of Me:' Repeat the Gift of Self-Giving

##### 5.2.4.3.3. God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire: Provoking 'Crisis'

##### 5.2.4.3.4. Resolution: Reconfiguration by Blessing, Overaccepting, Thanksgiving

##### 5.2.4.4. Memorial Acclamation, Anamnesis, Oblation

##### 5.2.4.5. Second Epiclesis & Eschatological Prayer

##### 5.2.4.6. Our Father & Sign of Peace

##### 5.2.4.7. Fraction Rite / Lamb of God

##### 5.2.4.8. Rite of Communion: 'Le Jeu Trinitaire'

##### 5.2.4.9. Closing Prayer and Dismissal

### **5.3. Liturgy of the Eucharist: Exchange Redeemed**

#### **5.3.1. *Gift of Desire***

##### 5.3.1.1. Expression of God's Desire for Us

##### 5.3.1.2. Gift of a Desire for Us to Embody for Others

#### **5.3.2. *Gift of New Relations***

##### 5.3.2.1. New Relations to Particular Subjects

##### 5.3.2.2. New Ways of Relating

#### **5.3.3. *Gift of Identity: 'Become What You Are'***

### **5.4. The Liturgy as a Whole**

#### **5.4.1. *Participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ***

#### **5.4.2. *Liturgy of the Eucharist as Celebration***

## **V. Synthesis: Liturgy of the Eucharist as God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire**

In this chapter I propose a relational account of the liturgy of the Eucharist which synthesizes and applies the insights of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard. I interpret the Eucharistic liturgy and participants' role in it through the root metaphor of gift, in particular as a gift of desire, which impacts participants' desires, relationships, and identities. While traditionally sacramental theology has emphasized a more metaphysical question of 'what is it?', I will be focusing on -- without discarding metaphysical ontology altogether -- the *liturgy's* structure as a dynamic *event* of *being encountered* by God's giving of the divine gift. My emphasis is on the *giving* of the desire, which occurs as an event, and reception of the gift through particular responses.

While catechesis rightly and most often proposes the profound goodness of the Eucharistic gift, there is 'more to the story.' Like the gospel itself, the liturgy of the Eucharist also confronts and provokes us with unsettling truths of the true nature of living, selfhood, desire, and proper relationships with others. For this reason I consider this Eucharistic gift of desire as 'gracious and scandalous': a gift that implies great *challenges* to our sense of self, the source of the good, and how to live our lives. Rather than omit these challenges to our commonsense notions of selfhood, the good, and living -- or consider the chief challenge a matter of the metaphysics of Christ's Body and Blood contained by the accidents of the bread and wine -- I call attention to these challenges to our sense of self, the good, and living. These challenges can precisely become the means by which the Eucharist transforms our identity, desire, and relationships. This close reading of the event of the liturgy -- a sort of *lectio divina* of the liturgy's phenomena of encounter, dialogue, giving, and receiving -- offers an interpretation of

the liturgy of the Eucharist which both nourishes and challenges participants intellectually, morally, and existentially.

The chief question of this relational approach to the Eucharist is “what is going on relationally in the Eucharistic celebration?” How does or ought this event impact recipients’ relationships? How does this impact take shape: what knowledge, faith, decisions, and actions does the liturgy elicit or require? To explain the relational impact of the liturgy upon participants more fully, the following questions will be kept in mind:

- How might the Eucharist impact our desire, relations, identity? (5.3.)
- How does or ought the liturgy of the Eucharist concern relationships between the participants and others? (5.3.2.)
- Does an understanding of the Eucharist as a gift of desire communicate any unique kind of participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ? (5.4.1.)
- What specifically does the Church celebrate in its liturgy of the Eucharist? (5.4.2.)

The questions are vitally important, and the answers are not obvious. To answer these questions, this approach pays close attention to the liturgy’s encounters and dialogues between God, the assembly, and members of the assembly with each other. It borrows the methodologies of the respective thinkers of the previous chapters: it is hermeneutical (concerned with texts’ narrative programs), phenomenological (attending to givenness, revealed in and through phenomena manifested and proclaimed), and speculative (accepting an implicit metaphysics). The insights of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard specify how the Eucharist challenges selfhood, desire, and relationships. This consideration of the Eucharist as ‘God’s gracious and scandalous gift of desire’ fosters the kind of ‘full, conscious, active participation’ for which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* sought to renew the liturgy. It seeks to arouse a lively sense, not merely of ‘the love

behind the gift' (Alison), but of 'the Lover behind the giving' and the call to live and love from the radical graced loving desire we receive in the Eucharist.

After outlining an approach to desire (5.1) suitable to the analysis described above, analysis of the liturgy of the Eucharist itself (5.2) follows. A synthesis of the insights of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard will facilitate exploring the Eucharist as God's gracious and scandalous gift of desire (5.3) and its impact upon participants' desire, relationships, and selfhood. Summary notions on the liturgy of the Eucharist as a whole (5.4) conclude the chapter.

## **5.1. An Approach to Desire**

Desire deserves a more prominent place in theology. An approach to discussion of desire, particularly through questions of ultimate concern and encounters (5.1.1.), takes a step in this direction. The mystery of divine desire (5.1.2.) is revealed in Christ as grace. Mimetic theory helps make the notion of a 'gift of desire' (5.1.3.) more intelligible, which is especially helpful for theological motifs such as the imitation of Christ, obedience to the Father's will, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's gift of loving desire, however gracious it is, is also scandalous and challenging to the ego (5.1.4.).

### **5.1.1. Initial Notions**

For several reasons desire -- even loving desire -- holds an awkward place in theology. Ephemeral, mysterious, by appearances altruistic one moment and driven by ulterior motives the next, desire is difficult to specify simply as an anthropological phenomenon. The fact desire can be (itself) either evil or good, 'of the flesh' or 'according to the spirit' (cf. Gal. 5:16-26) complicates further how theology should address desire. Theology's conceptualization of divine matters (such as grace or forgiveness) as *entities* through metaphysical abstraction -- i.e., as opposed to the more dynamic and eventual nature of liturgical *action* -- reveals a questionable

approach toward matters *vital* to living. Despite these (and other) difficulties, desire can and ought to play a stronger role, revitalizing theology without devolving into purely romantic, voluntarist, or nominalist categories.

Like the basic theological terms ‘grace’ and ‘love,’ desire is understood more accurately when evoked rather than defined. In Augustine’s *Confessions*, upon the death of a friend, desire manifested itself in the form of a *question* (‘*factus eram mihi magna quaestio*’ -- ‘I became a great question to myself’<sup>700</sup>). Augustine desired to know himself amid a time of crisis.

Questions of ultimate concern, I propose, offer a most direct path toward the nature of desire, particularly as an existential and interpersonal reality, rather than as an object-entity. Desire is a matter of relation of a self to something of value and/or concern: it never ‘simply’ concerns the object, it also pertains to the self.

Augustine’s classic statement ‘You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You’ (*Conf.* I.1.1.) evokes important truths of the Christian faith. Desire comes to rest only ‘in’ God: only the divine persons bring a person’s desire to fulfillment. Desire is thus necessarily interpersonal, and it is inherently *dynamic* and *ceaseless* outside of God’s fulfillment of it. Desires for lesser things, even if fulfilled, do not remain satisfied for long. Gregory of Nyssa’s notion of desire for God as ‘epektatic’ (cf. Phil. 3:14) suggests that even in beatitude there will be constant *renewal* of desire such that (as Stephen Lewis put it) “the capacity for God is constantly enlarged or dilated according to the measureless measure of ‘He who comes.’”<sup>701</sup> The status of desire in heaven, however, is soon reaches the limits of our imagination and reasoning. We do not know whether or how God ultimately fulfills or sustains

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<sup>700</sup> *Confessions*, IV, 4, 9, 13.

<sup>701</sup> Lewis, “Lover’s Capacity,” 239. Cf. Marion, *QCI*, 138.



desire for Him; for the moment we simply acknowledge God as the origin and goal of loving desire, of desire for *vita beata*.

We return to questions to keep the meaning of desire more accessible. Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* expresses the ultimate desires of the human heart in his series of concise questions: *What's the use? Does anybody love me? Can I love first?* As desire (according to Marion) is "the mode of thought of he who *becomes a lover*,"<sup>702</sup> this series of questions traces the path of one who is becoming a lover. This is very helpful for the relational approach to the Eucharist at hand, as 'becoming a lover' is a most concise and relatable way to speak of becoming more fully a member of the ecclesial body of Christ, which is the *res* of the Eucharist (in traditional theological terms). The *transformation of desire* involved in becoming a lover marks a way to speak in anthropological and existential terms of sanctification.

Due to the inevitably gradual and mysterious process in which persons reveal themselves to one another, *encounters* are both rife with questions (at least implicitly) and closely related to desire. Encounters are the starting points and means of renewal for every interpersonal relationship; they are thus central to the desire between lovers. Any true encounter with God is a mysterious discovery process, in which questions arise of their own accord, not only concerning God but the human being. Encounters both arouse desire (for closer union) and satisfy it (by being in the other's company). Relationships even lose their life when encounters are too infrequent; only reunion encounters revive them.

Remaining within a theological context, the nature of desire can be understood in correlation to grace. At the anthropological level human desire originates in a lack (usually only implicit) of awareness, understanding, appropriation, or re-giving of grace as gift, the self as

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<sup>702</sup> Marion, *ISP*, 101. Emphasis added. It should be noted how, according to this notion of desire, the charitable person (saint) knows more fully the nature of desire than the mere 'knower.'

givee, and God as Giver. Initially experienced as longing, want, or hunger, full recognition and acceptance of grace *transforms* desire from a matter of acquisition and protection to courageous self-giving which is vulnerable (and at peace with its lack) for the sake of loving. It becomes desire to embody loving ‘at all costs,’ of which the psalmist suggests when praising God that His “steadfast love is better than life” (Ps. 63:3).

### **5.1.2. Divine Desire**

God’s loving desire -- including loving desire for human beings -- ever precedes and surpasses human desire for God. First, the divine Son is eternally begotten of the Father’s loving desire; the love between the Father and the Son is itself the Holy Spirit. The desire of God is central to the Christian revelation that God not merely ‘has’ love or ‘is loving’ but *is* love (1 Jn. 4:8,16). The plan of salvation entails the revelation of God’s loving desire, the revelation of *grace*. “God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ -- by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4-5). Grace is God’s desire, and God’s desire is grace, “the eternal purpose that [God] has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11). To omit or neglect God’s loving desire as the context for creation, salvation history, and eschatology -- not to mention liturgy -- is neglect a fundamental tenet of revelation. This is important lest we imagine human desire must somehow bridge a chasm between earth and heaven: neither human desire nor capacity makes salvation possible, only God’s grace does (cf. Mk. 10:27).

### **5.1.3. ‘Gift of Desire’**

Traditional theology and mimetic theory already converge on several points concerning humans’ nature and behavior as imitators. Christians consider human beings to be created in the *image and likeness* of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), created to conform to -- imitate -- Christ the image

of God (2 Cor. 4:4) by putting on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11). As regards both their being (according to theology) and their desires (according to mimetic theory), human beings *are* imitators. To desire and act according to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26) and do the will of the Father (Jn. 6:38) who is love (1 Jn. 4:8,16) is the fundamental, never-finished task of every Christian. Imitation of Christ is a central task and feature of discipleship.

In particular, mimetic theory helps our discourse by revealing how desires are transferred -- often unknowingly -- between persons. Desires are highly contagious, and can be imitated consciously or unconsciously. This (empirical) fact gets us past the philosophically thorny problem of a 'gift of desire.' Human beings are already 'wired' to imitate -- i.e., receive -- the desires of others. Therefore, particularly when being given intentionally for imitation, desire can be given as a gift -- and received as such.

Encounters thus take on a central role in the intentional giving and receiving of desire. A model's desire for something of value -- particularly non-material values, like virtue -- proves very influential, for good or ill. Desires are in fact given and received all the time, even when never specified as such. So when Christ both exhorts and exemplifies fidelity to the Father's loving will, this is itself a 'giving' of desire, namely, the desire to give of oneself out of love for others; the question however remains: is this gift received?

#### **5.1.4. God's Loving Desire: 'Gracious and Scandalous'**

The nature of loving desire is at the heart of the gospel revelation, as demonstrated and commanded by Christ and taught by the writers of the New Testament. This loving desire, scripture tells, us motivated the Father's sending of His only Son (Jn. 3:16) that all might have eternal life. It was proven (Rom. 5:8) in Christ's fidelity to the Father unto death for sinners, to reconcile the world to God (2 Cor. 5:19).

God is love, but Christ's gift of love is not merely a superabundance of comfort and pleasure for an individual person. To share in God's love by receiving and giving it entails many things the ego finds abhorrent: receiving love as a gift, becoming a servant of others (Phil. 2:1-11), loving one's enemies (Mt. 5:44-45), forgiving others (Mt. 6:14), obeying God's will rather than one's own (Jn. 6:38). As comforting as the notion of loving desire may seem at first, the Christian revelation of love in Jesus Christ shows true charity is far more challenging -- even to receive -- than first imagined. Vis-à-vis God it seeks to receive all that God gives *and* give freely of oneself for God's sake, including to or for others. Vis-à-vis others it is a forgiving and reconciling desire.

As a celebration of Christ's gift of love, the liturgy of the Eucharist is therefore scandalous: it confronts us with unsettling hints of the true nature of living, selfhood, desire, and proper relationships with others. By reception of the Eucharist one is provoked toward reinforcing either a selfhood driven by ego (seeking to preserve autonomy as a self) or a selfhood understood as radically gifted: *l'adonné*; this is the 'ordeal of truth' from Marion's commentary on Augustine's *Confessions*.<sup>703</sup> To receive the Eucharist is implicitly to accept bodiliness (expressed as 'Body of Christ') and life (expressed as 'Blood of Christ') as gifts from God to be stewarded wisely, and therefore not matters for one's private possession. The disciple is called to deny oneself and do the (loving) will of the Father; this entails initiating loving beyond reciprocity and giving one's own body and blood to and for others in memory of Christ. For these and other reasons the Eucharistic gift of desire is 'gracious and scandalous': a gift that implies great *challenges* to our sense of self, the source of the good, and how to live our lives. The Eucharist gift reveals the true demands of loving (both receiving it and giving it), which are

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<sup>703</sup> Cf. Marion, *ISP*, especially 56-144. In this dissertation, cf. 3.2.5.3., 'Reading Augustine's *Confessions* on Desire.'

scandalous to one's ego. Reception of this gift is proven (verified) when lived out in one's own life: martyrdom in its most dramatic form, humble service through the work of one's life, particularly as spouse and/or parent.

## **5.2. Celebrating the Eucharistic Giving**

Throughout the liturgy of the Eucharist, the processes of gift-giving, confession, and imitation -- brought to new light by Chauvet, Marion, and Girard -- emerge to draw participants into an existentially new set of relationships: this is the often-slow, sometimes-radical work of sanctification. The liturgy is a structured dialogic encounter that trains the assembly in receiving and giving. Gifts and persons must be recognized by blessing and thanksgiving. If one yields to God's gift as it gives itself, one can 'be grasped by' the loving desire expressed there and decide to imitate Christ's graciousness in the world, even as doing so is scandalous to one's ego. One thus steps into 'trinitarian play' to return-give by loving one's neighbor.

God's gracious gift of the Eucharist scandalizes recipients with the challenge of an identity crisis: who am I if I am receiving Christ's body and blood? Who am I, given that I commune with the body and blood of Christ, the Son of the living God? Whose will shall predominate in me: my egoic will, or the gift of loving desire available to me through Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit? The liturgy of the Eucharist is the deliberate sacramental reproduction of a transformative 'identity crisis' that comes about from encounter with God's gracious and scandalous self-gift: a crisis resolved not by archaic sacrifice but the Christian 'sacrifice' of being reconstituted as 'gifted' by God's loving desire to step existentially into the 'Christic role' of embodying self-giving desire in the particularity of one's lived situation.

In light of the insights of Chauvet, Marion, and Girard, this analysis examines the liturgy of the Eucharist as an encounter with God who desires to express and bestow His own gracious

and scandalous desire. Contextual elements of the liturgical setting (5.2.1.) serve important roles to establish a sacred setting for participants to be transformed by God. The Introductory Rites (5.2.2.) are appreciated anew when examined relationally. The Liturgy of the Word (5.2.3.) draws participants toward existential encounter with God through narrative, to which the assembly responds with the Liturgy of the Eucharist proper (5.2.4.).

### **5.2.1. Contextual Elements of the Liturgical Assembly**

#### **5.2.1.1. Language, Word, Call**

The liturgy is structured very precisely by its symbolic/sacramental language which, recalling Chauvet, is a more precise model for speaking sacramental efficacy.<sup>704</sup> The liturgy's language is not simply declarative but performative, whereby the *relationship* between subjects changes by the act of communication, an 'illocutionary' effect.<sup>705</sup> Its language establishes or alters relationships between subjects, if simply through recognition of the other (which is a primary purpose of the liturgy). *Dialogues*, between members of the assembly as well as the assembly and God, yield *encounters* through which gifts are given and received. The prayer texts are informative, not for God but for human beings: precise scripted responses for participants to speak and appropriate for themselves. As the praying assembly makes its prayer to shape its *own* dispositions and relationship to God, "a relationship of filial and brotherly and sisterly alliance, that the sacramental 'expression' aims at instituting or restoring in faith."<sup>706</sup> Through this process, as Chauvet noted, members of the assembly receive themselves from God in Christ.<sup>707</sup> Language is also determinative in that the call of God has gathered the assembly, even if people appear to gather for other reasons.

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<sup>704</sup> Cf. chapter 2 above, 2.2.2. 'Symbolic Efficacy' of Language.

<sup>705</sup> Cf. Chauvet, SS, 131.

<sup>706</sup> SS, 140.

<sup>707</sup> Cf. SS, 140.

Within the liturgy, language has two chief roles: relating the narrative of salvation history, symbolically manifesting the actions and teachings of God (liturgy of the Word), and expressing the assembly's work of recognition, blessing, and thanksgiving, that the assembly 'might become what it receives' (liturgy of the Eucharist).

Within a cosmic context, the liturgy occurs in the linguistic context of the eternal Word spoken by the Father, his Son Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 1:1, 14). The liturgy of the Eucharist, itself the 'source and summit of the Christian life,' finds its source and summit in the Word of God. The Word brought forth creation (Gen. 1:3; Jn. 1:1), which in turn proclaims the glory of God (Ps. 19:1-4). This *logos* undergirds and orders creation and the process of redemption. Within such a cosmic context of dialogue (*dia-logos*), *confession* of truth takes on its proper potential, particularly regarding the formation of Christian subjects.

#### 5.2.1.2. *Desire*

The liturgy of the Eucharist therefore originates and occurs amid the cosmic context of God's loving desire (described above in 5.1.2.). God's will to create and redeem through the Incarnate Word and Holy Spirit are the ultimate origin of the world, salvation history, the Church, and development of the liturgy itself. The liturgy occurs precisely to celebrate and fulfill this loving desire, grace, by participating fully, actively, consciously in reception of God's gifts and preparing to give them again in one's own life. This desire is especially expressed within the Institution Narrative itself: "Do this in memory of me" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-25; Lk. 22:19).

#### 5.2.1.3. *Assembling as the People of God*

Gathered by the desire-call of God, the assembly forms part of the People of God: a public and *corporate* sacramental sign of God's present and active work in the world. The

assembly gathers because its members recognize themselves, at least implicitly, as recipients of God's gifts: *l'adonnés*. Assembly as a community is an embrace of Christian *embodiment*, a notion at the heart of Christian identity as the ecclesial Body of Christ. The assembly does not exist for itself but is in Christ 'like a sacrament' (*Lumen Gentium* 1), a sign for its own members and the broader world, directed beyond itself to God. Its members take on a variety of roles and ministries (sacristan, custodian, musicians, singers, servers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers) to cooperate with an ordained priest who is celebrant by virtue of his unity with the local bishop. The assembly's prayers for the pope, local bishop, the rest of the world, and the deceased express an all-encompassing unity and hope. Through all these forms of *service* -- inherently *referential* toward a greater purpose -- the assembly lives out its *symbolic and iconic* role before the world.

The liturgical assembly, however, is not limited to visible persons: all are gathered by and in the presence of the persons of the Trinity. The assembly will join the Communion of Saints and the heavenly host of angels by its praises of God in the *Sanctus*. The assembly's petitions for the faithful departed 'and all who have died' shape the assembly in a universal intention and outreach.

#### 5.2.1.4. Sacred Space: In the World, Not of It

The sacred liturgical space orders creation and labor toward the worship of God in its structures of stone, brick, wood, and other materials, along with its use of bread and wine (the 'work of human hands'), candles, and water. The craftsmanship -- simple or ornate -- of the vessels, tabernacle, statues, vestments, and furniture offers more ways this consecrated microcosm interrupts mere undifferentiated or utilitarian space.

The liturgical space needs to be a sufficient 'break' from profane space without an imagined *identification* with the sacred, which is idolization. Symbols visual (crucifix, altar,



vestments, etc.), audible (proclamation, song, etc.), tangible (sign of peace) and involving taste (consecrated bread, wine) permeate the space and the liturgy. To enter into and participate in this sacred space is to be placed into a different -- i.e., sacred -- context.

With its seating and sanctuary, liturgical space is ordered toward the altar, which is also (in some capacity) a table. This subtle blending of altar and table is suggestive of the nature of the event being celebrated, as Christ's atonement and reconciliation do *not* occur through (archaic) blood sacrifice but through the dynamics of a meal. In the setting of a meal, the synoptic gospels tell us, Jesus gave his body and blood in the form of bread and wine; the gospel of John has the same setting for Jesus' washing of the feet and giving of the new commandment (cf. Jn. 13:34). The liturgy is a ritual remembrance of the Eucharistic gift in the historical past, reception of the gift in the sacred present, and a foretaste of the heavenly wedding banquet of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 21:22-22:5). This liturgical space marks off an interruption of the world's logic of market exchange. Reconciliation and forgiveness -- not just between an individual attendee and God, but between all people as well -- are meant to be operative, rather than retributive justice or market exchange.

For Christian 'sacrifice' involves neither immolation nor anything 'done to' something or someone else (Daly), but a first-person *existential decision* by disciples to love one another as Christ has done and commanded, a decision verified in charitable action but never 'done with' or 'finished.' Archaic sacrifice was 'finished' by Christ on the cross, commemorated in the crucifix; but Christian *sacrificing* is an 'unfinishable' *activity* (not an entity) which cannot be made into a permanent state of being or living. It entails constant renewal of loving decision.

#### 5.2.1.5. Sacred Time: Anamnetic, Present, Eschatological

The sacred time of the liturgy occurs in its own cosmic context, between creation (which the liturgy brings toward fulfillment) and the Parousia (of which the liturgy is a foretaste). It is an act of remembrance (anamnesis) of the death of the Lord (past) in anticipation of when the risen Christ comes again in glory (future). The liturgy is commemoration, meal, and pledge of future glory; the Kingdom of God has come but not in its complete fullness. As noted in Chauvet's account of the Eucharist, the ritualized memory of the liturgy elicits a living existential memory -- i.e., a Spirit-guided desire -- among the ecclesial Body of Christ, the church.<sup>708</sup> In this sacred time the gifts of God will be presented again to the faithful, not merely that the assembly may cognitively remember these events from history but more importantly *be re-membered* by the gifts, that they may be built up as the ecclesial Body of Christ, living and active in history and in the world.

### **5.2.2. Introductory Rites**

After an opening hymn or entrance antiphon, the liturgy is rooted in recognition of the relational context of (quite simply) everything. The invocation by the priest (*'In the Name of the Father...'* etc.) and gesture (sign of the cross) by all is an acknowledgment and recognition that everything -- particularly what is done in this particular sacred time and place -- is from, sustained by, and directed toward the Triune God. This invocation re-establishes Christians in their Baptism. Finding its source from God and oriented to the glory of God, the liturgy is an expression of and training in acknowledgment, recognition, receiving, and giving. Through the liturgical action the assembly (at least implicitly) acknowledges God as 'source and summit' and participates in receiving his gifts in order that God may be glorified in all things (1 Pet. 4:11), not

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<sup>708</sup> Section 2.3.6.4. (Jesus' Gift in the Eucharist: From Ritual to Ethical/Existential 'Sacrifice'). Also section 2.3.5.4.4.2. (NP 2: First Epiclesis, Institution Narrative, Anamnesis).

least in the participants themselves. Through speech, song, gesture, movement, and silence the assembly is engaged in a communication, in receptivity and response, but for the purpose of directing thoughts, intentions, desires, actions, and lives toward the Triune God.

The assembly's response of 'Amen' is repeated throughout the liturgy, shaping participants in assent to and imitation of God's fidelity ('*emet*') and love. As minimal as such responses are, such *active* and *public* reception of the liturgy's stated intentions are essential beginnings of a more fully appropriated response to God's gifts and intentions for our lives. The greeting and response (*The Lord be with you -- And with your spirit*) express both recognition of others and an intention that God be with the other. Such dialogue and benevolence throughout the liturgy are simple yet necessary steps toward reconciling.

The liturgical encounter with and recognition of the Triune God who is truth (cf. Jn. 14:6) requires confession of sin to abide in His presence. The Penitential Rite acknowledges such humble truth, that the assembly may abide in truth and love it rather than reject and hate it.<sup>709</sup> Acknowledgment of personal sins, individual and communal, prepares participants for celebrating the sacred mysteries.<sup>710</sup>

Except during Lent, the Gloria echoes the song of the angelic host at the birth of Jesus, the reconciliation of those in heaven ('in the highest') and on earth ('people of good will'). Its words instill in the participant confession of praise of God: *We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory*. This praise of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world' is programmatic of the liturgy, which is a sacramental encounter with Lamb now risen and enthroned, yet coming to us (as the priest emerging from the Holy of Holies, but with his own blood: Alison) with forgiving grace.

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<sup>709</sup> Cf. Marion, *ISP*, 56-144.

<sup>710</sup> '*ut apti simus ad sacra mysteria celebranda*' -- literally, 'that we may become apt' for celebrating the sacred mysteries.

With ‘Let us pray,’ the priest invokes the Father ‘through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.’ Once again the assembly consents by saying ‘Amen,’ adopting the prayer’s intention as their own in a sign of unity.

### **5.2.3. Liturgy of the Word**

The Liturgy of the Word recounts events and teachings from divine revelation. This re-reading of scripture “*is an integral part of Scripture; access to meaning is constitutive of meaning, and reception belongs to revelation itself.*”<sup>711</sup> The primary task for the assembly is to listen, but they also participate by their responses (‘Thanks be to God,’ ‘Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ’). In particular the responsorial psalm engages the participation of the assembly, eliciting sung prayer of petition or praise. The gospel reveals ‘the word of the cross’ of Christ who fulfills the law and the prophets (cf. Mt. 5:17). The homily interprets the readings for the contemporary context.

The assembly recognizes in Scripture “the exemplar of its identity,”<sup>712</sup> itself a gift to which the assembly responds by celebrating the sacrament, which in turn establishes the foundation for ethics, the imitation of Christ. Receiving the gift of the word of the cross in the Scriptures, the sacrament will celebrate what is to be carried out in the ethics of everyday life. Together these elements (Scripture, sacrament, ethics) constitute the three fundamental elements of Christian identity (Chauvet).

To the word of the cross the assembly responds by professing the Creed, an initial step in ‘the obedience of faith’ which receives God’s promises as a grace (or gift -- cf. Rom. 1:16, 4:16). The Creed also reaffirms people in relation to the divine persons and the Church. The Universal

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<sup>711</sup> Chauvet, SS, 209.

<sup>712</sup> Chauvet, SS, 210.

Prayer ('Prayers of the Faithful') expresses petitions -- desires -- to God shaped by the teachings of Scripture. They are professed that they might impress themselves still further on the minds of the faithful as they ask God to fulfill them.

The liturgy of the Word finds its fuller interpretation through both sacrament and ethics: "The sacraments allow us to *see* what is said in the letter of the Scriptures, to *live* what is said ... [becoming] a command to make what is said real in everyday life."<sup>713</sup> The knowledge bestowed by the Word (Scripture) is celebrated as a gift (sacrament), generating the gratitude that motivates embodying charity in the world (ethics).<sup>714</sup> The liturgy of the Eucharist is a deeper training in receptivity of divine gifts, preparing the way for the re-giving which brings receptivity to fulfillment.

#### **5.2.4. Liturgy of the Eucharist (Proper)**

The liturgy of the Eucharist is a public work of worship by which the assembly might become more fully the ecclesial Body of Christ. The liturgy is a grateful remembrance -- thanksgiving -- for the absolute and committed self-gift of Christ for the sake of forgiveness of a world of sinners. It commemorates Christ's past gift of his body and blood, given in history; yet by its confession of Christ as Risen Lord and petition to the Father in the Holy Spirit, it is also graced with the same gift in the present. The liturgical assembly receives these gracious gifts without the opportunity for a (visibly) direct 'return-gift,' and so extends the 'giving it receives' by sharing it and living it out themselves in the contemporary world.

From a relational point of view, the liturgy of the Eucharist 'works' through its communications: prayers to God, proclamations or exhortations, symbolic gestures among the assembly. The liturgy is permeated by 'exchanges:' dialogue with verbal acknowledgments

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<sup>713</sup> Chauvet, *SS*, 226-227.

<sup>714</sup> Cf. Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 31.

(among the assembly, and the assembly with God), offering and reception, expression and acceptance, petition-and-reception. These actions of exchange aim to change first and foremost not any *objects* but rather the *persons* involved. The liturgy is an encounter with divine grace which transcends ‘market exchange’ to become a gracious recognition of persons: divine and human, visible and invisible, living and dead, present and absent. Each of these exchanges shapes the relationships between the persons involved, building a purer manifestation of the ecclesial Body of Christ in the world.

Through the liturgy’s address of God and remembrance (*anamnesis*) of God’s deeds, exhortations, and proclamation of the Church’s future hope, members of the assembly receive the gifts of God, most especially through holy communion. These gifts and instruction are given for the sake of the *transformation* of the members, more particularly of their desires, their selves, relationships, and actions. The liturgy orders people’s attention, desire, and intention toward God. Through such ordering, the liturgy disposes its members to receive God’s transformative desire that they might live by it themselves.

#### 5.2.4.1. Beginnings

With the Preparation of the Altar and the Offertory, the focus of the assembly’s attention and action shifts from the lectern to the altar. The offertory is a ritual presentation of the bread and wine by the faithful to the priest -- itself a symbolic gift-giving and exchange. In what is already a response to God’s many gifts, the faithful present a token representation of ‘the work of human hands’ in thanksgiving to God.

The blessings of bread<sup>715</sup> and wine<sup>716</sup> by the priest (and sometimes the assembly) liturgically recognize the divine Giver, the gift, and the assembly as the ‘givee’ -- fundamental

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<sup>715</sup> “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life. // Blessed be God forever.”

elements which will repeat and intensify throughout the liturgy. Thanking and acknowledging God as Creator for the humble and tangible gifts of mere bread and wine is itself preparation for the assembly's petition for, reception, and adoration of the Eucharistic gifts forthcoming. This reception-through-blessing is an essential step in redemptive action, namely the thanksgiving which the Eucharistic preface so often proclaims as 'our duty and our salvation.'

The priest's prayer upon adding water to the wine priest pours wine<sup>717</sup> reveals how reception of this gift and blessing of the divine Giver aims at sharing in Christ's divinity, not the mere transformation of substances on the altar. The priest's petition after the blessings<sup>718</sup> show the liturgy aims at the *self-giving by the assembly* to God. The assembly's sacrifice is not merely the Body and Blood of Christ on the altar but the persons of the assembly themselves (cf. Rom. 12:2). In the prayer with the washing<sup>719</sup> the priest confesses the need for purification from sin, which he cannot provide for himself; he asks for this as for a gift.

The Introductory Dialogue<sup>720</sup> elicits mutual recognition, expression of good will, and joyful offering of self to God. To the gift of the Word just proclaimed and given to them as givee, the assembly responds with thanksgiving -- *eucharistia* -- to the Giver. This response, which expresses awareness that thanksgiving constitutes right relationship with God, is a microcosm of the liturgy's training in recognition.

#### 5.2.4.2. Preface, Sanctus, Epiclesis

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<sup>716</sup> "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink. // Blessed be God forever."

<sup>717</sup> 'By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.'

<sup>718</sup> 'With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.'

<sup>719</sup> 'Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.'

<sup>720</sup> 'The Lord be with you.' 'And with your spirit.' // 'Lift up your hearts.' 'We lift them up to the Lord.' // 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.' 'It is right and just.'

The Preface and Sanctus constitute the first narrative program (NP 1 -- Chauvet) of the Eucharistic Prayer. It thanks God the Father for the gifts of creation and redemption, in particular through the gift of Jesus Christ in history. The texts of the prefaces are as varied as the feasts, people, and events they celebrate, yet a standard opening in nearly all prefaces<sup>721</sup> indicates that thanksgiving to God is a 'categorical imperative' of Christians. It is not merely the duty of believers but of the nature of *salvation* to give thanks to God, a conscious activity directed toward a person. The importance of the assembly's 'full, conscious, active participation' in this work comes to the fore; it is hardly an extraneous action from which Christians may dispense themselves.

The Preface confesses God's sovereignty as Creator and celebrates His advent as Redeemer, expressing and reinforcing right relationship with God. It is a 'hallowing' of God's Name in the language of praise, the only language proper for speaking about and to God (Marion). At the conclusion the assembly joins heaven's angels and saints in praising God, an initial step of doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

Joining heaven's praises of God as the Thrice-Holy (cf. Is. 6:3, Rev. 4:8), the assembly takes up the prophetic task of acknowledging God's authority over heaven and earth. The Thrice-Holy God is totally transcendent 'Other' who, because 'distant,' is able to be a true Giver. In the acclamation 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (cf. Ps. 118:26) the assembly anticipates in praise (if unwittingly) the advent of God; it anticipates and glorifies the divine Lover's 'advance.'

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<sup>721</sup> "It is truly right and just, our duty and salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord God, heavenly king, almighty and eternal God..." Exceptions are the Easter prefaces, Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary II, and Common Preface VI. Cf. Eph. 5:20: "giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."



The assembly kneels, embodying or ‘confessing’ bodily a posture of humility as it petitions God the Father to send the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine, that it may receive again the gifts of Jesus’ sacramental body and blood to fulfill Jesus’ command to ‘Do this in memory of me.’ With this petition for the Holy Spirit, the Father gives the gift of Christ in the present, no longer simply in the past; the Church joins Christ’s priestly intercession in heaven.<sup>722</sup> Transformation of (merely) the bread and wine, however, is for the sake of transformation of the *assembly* into a more unified ecclesial body of Christ (a *communio*), an intention specified in the post-institution narrative epiclesis.

#### 5.2.4.3. Institution Narrative<sup>723</sup>

The Institution Narrative recounts the gestures, actions, and words of Jesus in a critical moment of interpreting the meaning of his own death. With this narrative, the ‘fulcrum’ of the liturgy, the ‘radically other’ gift of Christ’s ‘word of the cross’ makes its advent, manifesting Christ’s consecration of himself in self-giving love. The liturgy’s recollection of the works and desire of God culminates in the Institution Narrative, which reveals God’s gift of His desire for communion with the human race. The rest of the liturgy is the assembly’s thanksgiving response, in which it seeks to be conformed to God’s loving desire, first within the liturgy but no less to conform all of life to it.

##### 5.2.4.3.1. Christ Reconfigures Himself as Embodied Gift

With slight variations the eucharistic prayers speak of Christ taking bread, giving thanks or saying a blessing, breaking the bread, and giving it to his disciples. In the English translation

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<sup>722</sup> Cf. Boris Bobrinskoy, “Le Saint Esprit dans la Liturgie,” *Studia Liturgica* 1 (1962), 47-49, 52. Cf. John H. McKenna, *The Eucharistic Epiclesis: A Detailed History from the Patristic to the Modern Era*, Second Edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2009), 181. Hereafter *EE*.

<sup>723</sup> The 2011 Editio Typica English translation reads: (over the bread): ‘Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you.’ Over the chalice: ‘Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.’

of the Roman Missal each of them narrate Christ's words in the precise wording: 'Take this, all of you, and eat of it: for this is my body, which will be given up for you.' After the priest's elevation of the host and genuflection, the prayer tells of Christ similarly taking the chalice of wine, giving thanks or saying a blessing, and giving it to his disciples with the words: 'Take this, all of you, and drink from it: for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.'<sup>724</sup> The narrative is structured by a pattern: Christ takes each gift, gives thanks (i.e., to the Father for the gift) or says a blessing, reconfigures it (e.g., by breaking the bread or assigning a new meaning to the wine), gives it to each, and speaks *identifying himself* with the gift, commanding disciples to both consume the gift and repeat the gift in remembrance of him.<sup>725</sup>

More than a consecration of the bread and wine, Jesus' speaking these words and freely giving these gifts which embody love express consecration of *himself to and for his disciples*. Christ's self-consecration aims at communion with his disciples.<sup>726</sup> The Institution Narrative describes the way Christ 'reconfigured himself' as an embodied gift of love. More than a miracle of transformation (or transubstantiation) of the bread and wine, this loving and self-consecrating desire of Christ calls for recognition: for Christ's giving this embodied gift of himself inspires the *gratitude* that enables abiding in his word and keeping his commandments, not willpower-motivated behavior modification. Thanksgiving -- 'eucharistia' -- finds its 'source

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<sup>724</sup> The text continues with Jesus' command 'Do this in memory of me,' which will be examined separately below.

<sup>725</sup> Cf. This pattern was proposed in 1945 in Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, new edition with an introduction by Simon Jones (London: Bloomsbury, 2005); esp. 48-70. Subsequent scholarly research has raised serious questions concerning the roots of this structure being found in the historical Jesus; cf. Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7; cf. 6-8. No claim is being made here for such a historical-critical standard.

<sup>726</sup> This communion is best expressed in the gospel without the Institution Narrative, John: 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.... Abide in me, as I abide in you.' (Jn. 14:23; 15:4)

and summit' in recognition, acceptance, and imitation of Christ's (God's) personal and embodied loving *desire*, not wonder at a miracle that transforms objects.<sup>727</sup>

5.2.4.3.2. 'Do This in Memory of Me: ' Repeat the Gift of Self-Giving

Christ's command 'Do this in memory of me' bestows several gifts. In its most literal meaning it is a command for his disciples to re-present ritually what Christ has just done, in honor of his memory. If the Last Supper occurred within a Passover context as the scriptures attest, Christ was redirecting the meaning of the unleavened bread and wine to refer to himself.

In another sense, the meaning of Christ's command goes much deeper: it is a command for his disciples to give of their own 'body and blood' in memory and honor of Christ, loving others as Christ has loved them. This is because Christ's radical gift changed the horizon of what is possible, not simply in a miraculous transformation/transubstantiation of the bread and wine. Christ's giving revealed that any person is capable, in some sense, of giving one's life, one's 'body and blood' in a loving gift to and for someone else. The Eucharist changes the horizon of what is possible, whether most realize it or not: the Eucharist is God's gracious and scandalous gift of His loving desire.

As full reception of a gift is verified in its being given again (Marion), so fullest reception of the Eucharist -- fullest possible expression of thanksgiving -- occurs through a 'full, conscious, active' gift of even one's 'body and blood: ' one's life, in grateful memory of Christ. The 'shape' of one's gift of body and blood can vary widely, according to one's vocation, historical circumstance, and so forth. Husbands and wives give their bodies to each other in their mutual commitment and sexual love. Parents give of their lives for their children; religious and

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<sup>727</sup> An opportunity for further study is to explore the Last Supper in the *Johannine gospel* as a gift of Jesus' loving desire. Does not the evangelist privilege the gift of Jesus' desire -- the Holy Spirit -- above any ritual action? The Johannine gospel does not have any institution narrative but tells of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples (embodying humble service), giving the commandment to 'love one another as I have loved you' (an imitation of desire, expressed in action: Jn. 13:34), and Jesus speaks more extensively than in any other gospel of the gift of the Holy Spirit, precisely in connection with his 'going to the Father.'

clergy give their lives for worship of God and apostolic work. Such a gift, born of thanksgiving for Christ's gift of incorporating us into his living ecclesial body, is possible for all and becomes a unique 'return gift' by each disciple.

To borrow from Marion's phenomenology, from Christ's example we learn that one's body and blood are 'givable' -- able to be given, at least in reconfigured ways, if not literally in martyrdom. Since we do not have anything that we have not received (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7), there is furthermore nothing we have that we are not called to give, for we are not even 'our own' (1 Cor. 6:19). Everything -- body, life, opportunity, etc. -- is grace, and everything is givable. Not only are we called to such giving that we may do so in love, but we can discover that living goes far beyond the bounds of 'ownership,' 'possession,' or exchange.

This goal of communion, moreover, is suggested most strongly by Christ's words: 'Do this in memory of me.' To 'abide in' Christ is neither a static nor purely contemplative action but the 'full, conscious, active' giving of self to and for others in memory of Christ, to love others as he has loved us (cf. Jn. 13:34, 15:12), namely, reconfiguring and dedicating ourselves to embody gracious loving action.

#### 5.2.4.3.3. God's Gracious and Scandalous Gift of Desire: Provoking 'Crisis'

Within the liturgy of the Eucharist the Institution Narrative is an advent/encounter of the Incarnate Word with the assembly. By citing Christ's direct address spoken in the first person, the assembly 'is cited' by the words of the Lord (Chauvet): "*by citing Jesus at the Last Supper, the church sees itself in fact cited by him, its Lord, cited to act....* This story is central for the church; it is the effective norm of its actions."<sup>728</sup> As, (according to the biblical texts), Christ gave of himself at the Last Supper in the historical past, so this encounter manifests Christ's self-giving *now, sacramentally*. This first-person address by the Lord to the assembly presents an

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<sup>728</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 134.

‘icon’ of Christ, meant to bring awareness that the assembly *is addressed*, *is being looked at* by an Invisible Other, the risen Christ. Members of the assembly are ‘dative subjects,’ addressees, *l’adonnés* of an anamorphosis (Marion). An encounter, a ‘crossing of gazes’ is occurring in which, not only is the assembly beholding the elevated host or chalice, but *is being beheld* as a ‘You’ by the divine ‘I.’ Such recognition of the Invisible Giver is essential to fuller celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist.

As Girard revealed, archaic sacrifice is a violent resolution of an identity crisis -- but *Christian* ‘sacrifice’ (‘anti-sacrifice,’ as Chauvet calls it) is radically different, the utter reversal of the sacrificial process. Christian ‘sacrifice’ begins with Christ’s ‘lover’s decision’ (Marion): not a decision to ‘do something to’ anything or anyone else (Daly) but to give and empty one’s self, reconfigured through charity and as an embodied gift. The risen Christ who reconfigured himself as the gifts of bread and wine to give his body and blood to disciples millennia ago now gives again his *sacramental* body and blood, again reconfigured as bread and wine, to present-day disciples. God ‘re-gives’ the gracious gift of loving communion with human beings.

This reconfigured and ‘impossible’ gift of Christ causes a crisis of its own, however, for the recipient: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn. 6:52) Neither logical understanding nor self-preserving ego can comprehend or accept this gracious gift, which is why it is also a *scandalous* gift. What does it mean to commune with the body and blood of Christ? What does this gift demand of me? Whose desire do I serve? As I receive Christ’s body and blood, who am I? Each recipient becomes, like Augustine in his crisis, ‘a great question’ to oneself, in the midst of an ‘ordeal of truth.’ The excessive gift of Christ’s body and blood raises questions that have decisive outcomes, in favor of either an egoic self or a self-as-gifted (*l’adonné*), that is, gifted with grace beyond what imagination, reason, or language can bear.

5.2.4.3.4. Resolution: Reconfiguration by Blessing, Overaccepting, Thanksgiving

The disciple's 'identity crisis' in light of the Eucharistic gift, however, is not resolved by violence but by a threefold work of blessing, 'overaccepting,' and thanksgiving. First, the liturgical work of blessing is the threefold recognition of the elements of a gift: the giver, gift, and self as 'givee' (recipient). Blessing enables 'full, conscious, active' reception of the eucharistic gift: recognizing God as the *giver* of the eucharistic *gifts* as an expression of love to *oneself*, personally. This recognition guides fuller awareness and acceptance that: a) *God* is giving the gifts; b) *the gifts are what Christ says they are*: his body and blood, the most precious 'things' imaginable; c) one's *self* is intended by God as a recipient of these gifts.

Second, the work of 'overaccepting'<sup>729</sup> is to 'take' or accept reality as it is, but also to take responsibility for transforming that reality and responding for good as one is able, through some embodied form, whether practical or symbolic. One accepts Christ's call to deny oneself (one's ego), take up one's cross, and follow after him; one stops wishing or waiting for another to correct a situation, reconcile, or become charitable, and does the correcting, reconciling, or loving oneself. Ritually or liturgically, this occurs in the reception of communion, offering one's own 'body and blood' at the service of God's loving desire amid the time, place, and situation in which one lives. (This will be covered in greater detail later.) This work includes *decision* to live existentially according to the gift one receives (the body, blood, *and desire* of Christ) and to step into the 'Christic role' of 'trinitarian play.'

Awareness and acceptance of these elements, brought about by the recognition work of blessing and 'overaccepting,' begets gratitude, *the loving desire* motivating the work of

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<sup>729</sup> 'Overaccepting' is a term coined by Girardian theologian Scott Cowdell, explained above in the Girard chapter (4.2.3.3. 'Third Stage: Christ's Nonviolent Fidelity to His Mission Unto Death'). As I describe it there, 'Neither despair, nor resignation, nor utter passivity in the face of evil, 'overacceptance' is a subversive *use* of others' oppressive actions or a situation against its intended evil purpose.' Cf. Cowdell, *RGNG*, 173-201, 206-209, 235-237.

thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), giving self, and loving others as Christ has loved us (cf. Jn. 13:34; 15:9-12). Thanksgiving, ‘re-giving the gift’ *by imitating Christ’s loving desire*, begins in the liturgy but is meant to continue beyond the dismissal, to encompass one’s vocation, relationships, and life. By reconfiguring oneself according to Christ’s gift, one *imitates* Christ’s decision and desire to embody self-giving charity, beyond a demand for reciprocity. Imitation of Christ is born of thanksgiving.

Moreover, full recognition of the gifts of Christ extends beyond what one might receive ‘directly’ through the sacramental gifts (of the consecrated bread and wine). For not only does the risen Christ give himself through sacramental communion but through *the rest of the assembly*, the gift of his ecclesial body, to be discerned and recognized as such lest one share in the meal in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-33). This is fuller recognition of the gift God makes of Christ’s (ecclesial) body, and again no less important for fuller celebration of the liturgy. Mutual recognition among the members is critical for a true sharing of Christ’s loving desire among one another; this is reinforced by recitation of the Lord’s Prayer which includes petition for forgiveness ‘as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ The assembly does this work of discernment and recognition, as Saint Paul teaches, along with each member’s discernment of their own behavior (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 11:27, 29) to let itself be judged and disciplined by the Lord ‘that we may not be condemned with the rest of the world’ (1 Cor. 11:32-33).

This result of an ecclesial body united by the Spirit of Christ is the exact opposite of archaic sacrifice, which does violence to another to reconfigure a community’s relationships: the result is an *existential* resolution of the crisis, to manifest charity more fully as a member of the body of Christ. Initiating charity beyond mere exchange or reciprocity in a violent world, one

witnesses to having *received the gift of Christ's loving desire*. This reception, however, is not a once-and-done event, it must be repeated, nurtured, and verified again and again. One is enabled to live according to such desire only by *remaining* incorporated into Christ's body by faith, the sacraments, and living out an ethics according to the gift one receives, God's loving desire. This desire does not seek its own interests (cf. 1 Cor. 13:5; Heb. 10:7; Rom. 15:3; Phil. 2:5-11) but does the will of the Father (Jn. 6:38), extending charity through embodied works of mercy (cf. Mt. 25:31-40; Gal. 5:6; James 2:14-26).

The rest of the liturgy, from the anamnesis to the dismissal, is the response which reconstitutes participants through 'overaccepting' and thanksgiving-by-conforming to Christ, living more fully, consciously, and actively as members of the ecclesial body of Christ. Together, the liturgy's *public work* ( '*leitourgia*' ) of blessing (recognizing the divine Lover, Love, and oneself as recipient), overaccepting (offering one's body to God: 'Here I am'), and thanksgiving ('re-giving' the gift), when done 'fully, consciously, actively,' *opens the self* to the gifts God seeks to give: Christ's body, blood, and loving desire, to be taken up existentially in one's own life. Such is the *res* of the sacrament, unity as the ecclesial body of Christ.

#### 5.2.4.4. Memorial Acclamation, Anamnesis, Oblation

The very first response after Christ's citation of the assembly and the priest's genuflections is proclamation of the 'mystery of faith,' the saving death of the Lord until he comes again (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26). It is memorial (*anamnesis*) of events in both the past (Christ's death and resurrection) and future (the Parousia), the sources of Christian hope; it is also an implicit blessing, with its first-person address of God, acknowledgment of the gifts of Christ's death and resurrection, and implicit recognition of ourselves as recipients of the grace from these gifts.



In light of such hope and gratitude for the Eucharistic gifts just received again, the assembly then offers oblation of the sacramental body and blood of the Lord in an immediate ‘giving again’ of the gifts. This is the closest the assembly can get to a ‘direct return-gift’ to the Lord, for the moment; its return gift must be made more fully beyond the liturgy in daily life. With the offering of the body and blood of the Lord, who is head of the Church, the rest of the (ecclesial) body is offered as well; oblation of the sacramental body implies oblation by the ecclesial body. The faithful offer the sacramental body as an act of worship and adoration; the offering will intensify further by the reception of communion and in going forth into the world to love as Christ has loved us.

#### 5.2.4.5. Second Epiclesis & Eschatological Prayer

As noted already, transformation of the gifts (alone) is not the final goal of the liturgy; the vital task remains for the assembly to “*become what it has just received ... and what it has received will be ritually completed in Communion.*”<sup>730</sup> Having just received and offered the sacramental body of Christ, the assembly prays that it become more fully the *ecclesial* body of Christ, the *res* of the Eucharist: the unity of the Body of Christ. This is meant to occur not merely within the time frame of the liturgical assembly but in lives witnessing to Christ.

In hope of enjoying eternal life with God, the assembly asks “participation by the *ecclesia* here assembled in the reign fully realized,”<sup>731</sup> praying for unity in charity with the Church throughout the world. Brief as it is, this section includes recognition of not only the pope and local bishop but all the deceased and the communion of saints, expressing hope of being granted the gift of praising God forever. The doxology and Great Amen, which continue the

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<sup>730</sup> SS, 271.

<sup>731</sup> SS, 271.

liturgical work of blessing/recognition and thanksgiving, conclude the Eucharistic prayer as such.

#### 5.2.4.6. *Our Father & Sign of Peace*

The assembly prays as Christ taught his disciples, in a prayer for fuller reception of God's loving desire. This prayer is its own instruction in what disciples ought to desire: recognition and address of the one heavenly Father of us all, honoring his name, seeking his kingdom and will, and asks for daily bread as a gift. Forgiveness of others is the *one* task the assembly takes up actively as a 'we,' indicating the primary importance of a humble and reconciling desire; Christ's new covenant founded in forgiveness of sins (referred to in giving the wine as his blood) is reinforced here. Recognition of all members of the assembly as brothers and sisters is implied as well.

Not least among what Christ desired for his disciples was the gift of peace, which comes from the Advocate whom the Father sends in Christ's name (cf. Jn. 14:26-27). On behalf of the assembly the priest asks God 'look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church;' this faith will find expression from the assembly soon after. Peace and unity are asked for 'in accordance with [Christ's] will,' an indication of Christ's desire with which the assembly is to be reconciled.

In an echo of the greetings at the beginning of mass and the eucharistic prayer, the priest says 'The peace of the Lord be with you always,' eliciting the response 'And with your spirit,' another sharing of good will. Signs of peace are exchanged, encouraging the kind of reconciliation Christ exhorted before presenting one's gift at the altar (Mt. 5:23-24) and the recognition of Christ present in the neighbor (cf. Mt. 25:31-40; 1 Cor. 11:27-33).

#### 5.2.4.7. *Fraction Rite / Lamb of God*

The priest's fraction of the host follows; it was upon the 'breaking of the bread' that the risen Christ was recognized (cf. Lk. 24:35). The *Agnus Dei* is sung, the assembly acclaiming and petitioning Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (cf. Jn. 1:29, 36), the title by which John the Baptist witnessed to Christ in the gospel according to John. Acclamation of Christ by this title is instructive, as it teaches all a *deeper recognition* of Christ. The Lamb of God is the chief image for the risen Christ in glory (cf. Rev. 5:6-8:1; 14:1-4; 19:7-9). The assembly is celebrating an exodus (cf. Lk. 9:31) wherein God himself provides the lamb for sacrifice (cf. Gen. 22:8), as He did not withhold His own Son that nothing might separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:32, 38-39). The 'Forgiving Victim' is manifested, having emerged from the Holy of Holies as in the Day of Atonement rites (Alison); this grace of forgiveness makes our repentance possible (Schwager). The assembly's humble *petitions* for mercy ('have mercy on us') and peace ('grant us peace') teach the assembly to recognize *themselves* as recipients of these *gifts*, from their source and *giver*, Christ.

After genuflection in adoration before the sacrament, the priest elevates a host and the paten with the acclamation again echoing John the Baptist: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.' It is a convergence of manifestation (elevation and presentation) and proclamation (of symbolic title and forgiveness) which give witness to Christ as the Forgiving Victim, the *vita beata* (Augustine, Marion), the wedding banquet of the Lamb (Rev. 22:9) when Christ will again drink the fruit of the vine (cf. Lk. 22:18). The goal of all desire is attested, lifted up (cf. Jn. 3:14), and presented in sacramental form, as an iconic gift of grace that all might be drawn (cf. Jn. 6:44) to it, desire it. All in the assembly are not only 'witnesses of these things' (Lk. 24:48) but engaged in a 'crossing of gazes' encounter in which all *are looked at, beheld by* an invisible Other

(Marion); they are called and empowered to be the Lord's witnesses 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

The assembly responds initially with words echoing the Roman centurion's profound faith: 'Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed' (cf. Mt. 8:8,10; Lk. 7:6-7,9). This is a dual confession (Augustine) of personal unworthiness and of God's power and glory, a posture of proper 'distance' and praise vis-à-vis God (Marion). Their response merely begins with such a confession, but will expand into reception of communion, entering the Christic place of 'trinitarian play,' and giving one's own 'body and blood' to Christ present in the world (cf. Mt. 25:31-40) in grateful remembrance of Christ's gift of love. This response includes a change of one's primary concern from an ego-centered 'Does anybody love me?' to an other-directed 'Can I love first?' The worldly universe of values -- egoic desire for self-preservation and pleasure, exchange-for-profit, and violence to protect them -- is overturned by the superabundantly gracious and scandalous embodied gift of God's loving desire.

#### 5.2.4.8. Rite of Communion: 'Le Jeu Trinitaire'

As Christ bade his disciples take and eat, so now the members of the assembly 'take and eat' to receive the gifts of Christ as he embodied them. In their own face-to-face encounter, the priest or eucharistic minister holds up the host with the affirmation that it is 'The body of Christ,' to which the recipient responds 'Amen.'

Eucharistic theology rightly prioritizes the gift Christ makes in communion, bestowing communion with his divine nature to the Church; too often, however, a proper response is not specified sufficiently. Fully understood and appreciated, this 'Amen' with the reception of communion is far more crucial than most imagine. This 'Amen' upon reception of communion

is best understood not as a metaphysical affirmation but as *confession* of an implicit ‘Here I am’ -- a *giving-of-one’s-body* to take up the work of charitable living, to take up loving service in memory of Christ. It is a critical moment for courageous confession-acceptance of responsibility to make a return-gift, of *ability to respond in embodied charity* through *one’s own* ‘body and blood:’ the disciple steps into a Christic role in trinitarian play. The recipient takes the responsibility to embody God’s loving desire in and through one’s own life of blessing (as threefold recognition), taking responsibility (‘overaccepting’ situations as they are), and thanksgiving (as embodied ethical service). In this way the recipient’s ‘Amen’ confesses assent not merely that the Eucharist is the body of Christ, but that the self has been joined to Christ’s ecclesial body and has *responsibility to fulfill loving desire in action*.

Earlier in the Eucharistic Prayer, the assembly offered the sacramental body as an act of worship and adoration; now by receiving communion they offer *themselves* to ‘give God a body’ in a very particular time and place, presenting their bodies as a ‘living sacrifice’ (cf. Rom. 12:1). This ‘return-gift’ is obligated by Christ’s gift, but redirected in work toward the needy and suffering of the world, ‘the least’ of Christ’s brothers and sisters (cf. Mt. 25:31-40). Each recipient of communion offers *God* his or her own ‘body and blood,’ in the service of charity within each person’s particular circumstances of place, time, and situation, in memory of Christ. As Christ has risen to the right hand of the Father, divine goodness and love therefore ‘take on a body’ in the recipient, for through acts of charity “the recipient donor becomes integrally and in person -- hypostatically -- a gift.”<sup>732</sup> A person takes on the likeness of the divine giver, who initiates creative and reconciling love.

The recipient, empowered by full recognition of the Giver, Gift, and self as ‘givee,’ now has the task of recognizing Christ as he is present among the hungry, poor, outcast, ill, naked,

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<sup>732</sup> Ibid., 168.

and imprisoned of the world, for “every face is given as an icon.”<sup>733</sup> To cease demanding reciprocal exchange from others but enter into a ‘Christic role’ of ‘trinitarian play’ by emptying oneself in embodied kenotic love: this verifies full reception of the gift, acceptance of oneself as ‘gifted’ (*l’adonné*) who desires to initiate love rather than remain within the slavery of reciprocity. This is a radical transformation in desire, made possible only by the gift of God’s own loving desire, which transforms one’s identity and relationships to oneself and with others. One’s body and blood become ‘givable’ to others, in grateful memory of Christ’s grace to us.

This communion with Christ in his sacramental and ecclesial body is also a reversal of the world’s ‘single victim mechanism’ of scapegoating, bringing about community through charity rather than exclusionary violence. The same affirmations occur with the gift of Christ’s Precious Blood (‘The Blood of Christ’/ ‘Amen’), a fuller sharing and reception of Christ’s embodied gifts.

#### 5.2.4.9. Closing Prayer and Dismissal

After the closing prayer and dialogue of recognition (*The Lord be with you -- And with your spirit*), a final blessing is given in the name of the Trinity. All that follows: activity and passivity, speech/song/music and silence, is meant to be ‘done’ as an expression of thanksgiving in *le jeu trinitaire*. The Christian is meant to step into the Christic role of embodying God’s loving desire for others, the self-giving love which alone opens relation, reveals meaning, creates, forgives, redeems, sanctifies. The reconfiguration of *disciples*, individually and collectively, the *res* of the liturgical celebration, comes to fruition.

### **5.3. Liturgy of the Eucharist: Exchange Redeemed**

The liturgy of the Eucharist accomplishes not merely transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ: it is also a transformation of the desire, relations, and

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<sup>733</sup> Marion, *GWB*, 19.

identity of its participants. These transformations occur through the dynamics of gift, both an initial gift and an imitative and transformative return-gift, which is not exchange but a broadening of recognition and alliance. The impact of the liturgy's gifts on desire (5.3.1.), relations (5.3.2.), and new reconfigured identity (5.3.3.) are explored below.

### **5.3.1. Gift of Desire**

As noted above in 3.4.4., the liturgy of the Eucharist is a 'gift of desire' in two primary senses: as the expression of God's loving desire for human beings, and as a gift of loving desire (in an objective sense) to take up existentially, imitating Christ's love with one's own life.

#### **5.3.1.1. Expression of God's Desire for Us**

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn. 15:13): the Eucharist is an expression of such love Christ -- i.e., God -- has for human beings. Through Christ, God does not merely give a material gift or opportunity of value but Himself, the paradigmatic gift (Marion), exceeding our capacity to understand (cf. Phil. 4:7; 1 Cor. 13:8) or receive in full. Offering communion and the life of God to sinners (cf. Rom. 5:8), this gift of love 'saturates' our imagination and concepts of meaning, but the basic core reality of the Eucharist as an expression of God's personal love must be kept in view. Through the Eucharist, God exceeds and advances past our usual notions of 'worthiness' to act in ways that are 'closer to our good than we are.' This love is greater than the desire to preserve one's own life, forgiving the other, taken hostage by the other in order to liberate, a lavish grace (cf. Eph. 1:7-8). It *hopes for* a reciprocal sharing of love for the sake of the other, but initiates loving action without the need, demand, or expectation of such reciprocity.

Encounter with and acceptance of this love God has for oneself can 'put to rest' the existential question, 'Does anybody love me?' The answer is yes: a divinely-affirmed and

demonstrated yes, in the past and in the present. By *blessing's* threefold acknowledgment -- the gift of God's grace (i.e., loving desire), oneself as the recipient, and God as the giver -- the *l'adonné's* predominant concern ('Does anybody love me?') is quieted, if not answered. An *ego*, however, is never satisfied or content, even with such an advent by God Himself: only as *l'adonné*, only as a 'me' grasped by Christ (cf. Phil. 3:12), as a servant member of *Christ's* body -- who now has *stewardship* but not 'ownership' of one's own body and blood -- can one receive and 'abide in' Christ, 'the true vine' (cf. Jn. 15:1-17). The challenge is that the self must surrender its endless pursuit of security and, through deciding to initiate loving, leave the self vulnerable, particularly when speaking prophetically against the world's deceit, violence, and indifference. This is the 'scandalous' element of the gospel, what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls 'the cost of discipleship.'

The only way to be 'capable' of paying that cost is to receive a gift of desire to love like Christ. The desire to love as Christ does is beyond the ego's capacity or willingness, so a surrender to the gift is required. This surrender -- "Here I am" -- is an existential step into the 'Christic role' of embodying God's love from one's own particularity.

#### 5.3.1.2. Gift of a Desire for Us to Embody for Others

A *sensus plenior* of the injunction 'Do this in memory of me' clarifies how the Eucharist is (in an objective sense) a gift of desire which the recipient is called to embody. Traditionally Jesus' injunction has been interpreted as a command to repeat the ritual he had just enacted. This is a correct but incomplete interpretation. When 'this' is understood not merely as 'break bread and share wine, repeating my words' but 'give of your own body and blood out of love for others,' the recipient shares existentially in the loving desire Christ has expressed.



With Christ's command to 'Do this in memory of me,' the disciple learns and receives from the Teacher the *desire to initiate* loving action. chief question for the recipient becomes 'Will I love first?' Can I reconcile, forgive, make peace first, without insisting on receiving something first in exchange from the other? Continuing to live according to this desire requires far more than benevolence: it entails love toward one's enemies, forgiveness of others' sins, seeking reconciliation, serving others, overaccepting imperfect situations and dealing with them responsibly. In these and similar ways, the disciples is closer to the other's good than the other is to himself, as Christ is.

While a 'gift of desire,' the Eucharist is not a 'gift of pure autonomy' -- if anything, it is a gift of even stronger communion and *dependence* upon God. It is fuller recognition of one's responsibility, stewardship, and accountability before God, not liberty at the expense of these. One is emboldened to begin taking incremental steps of initiating honesty, kindness, and concern toward others in imitation of Christ. This surrender to God's loving desire, practiced again and again throughout one's lifetime, is the *reconstitution of the self* as 'full, conscious, active' member of the ecclesial body of Christ, the resolution of the crisis, and the transformation of sanctification.

### **5.3.2. Gift of New Relations**

This section responds to the supplemental question given at the beginning of this chapter: 'How does or ought the Eucharist concern the relationships between the persons involved?'

#### **5.3.2.1. New Relations to Particular Subjects**

First and foremost, participants in the liturgy receive a gift of communion with the Body of Christ, becoming more fully the ecclesial body into which they were baptized. Chauvet pointed out how the liturgy of the Eucharist functions as a prime example of symbolic gift

exchange: not ‘this-for-that’ market exchanges but a ritual set of exchanges -- greetings, responses, shared acclamations -- for the sake of mutual recognition of subjects and strengthening of alliances. The gift of communion may be understood fruitfully in this way as well. Exchange of gifts verbal and tangible lead toward becoming as a social body what is received sacramentally: the body of Christ. This occurs through the sacramental gifts of Christ’s body and blood which express and mediate God’s loving desire, the Holy Spirit, the true source of unity. In addition to this ‘gift of desire’ are the gifts of new relationships and new ways of relating to others in the world.

Most of the prayers in the liturgy of the Eucharist is an address of God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit; the Penitential Rite, part of the *Gloria*, and just before the sign of peace are exceptions. The liturgy is more than sets of prayers to these divine persons, whom anyone could address in private prayer as well. By uniting as an assembly to receive anew God’s gifts, the participants express and embody their Christian identity as members of the ecclesial body of Christ, living out their adoption in Christ by praying in the Holy Spirit, ‘Abba! Father!’ (Gal. 4:6). As Marion showed in his commentary on Christ’s Ascension, it belongs to the Church to take up the Christic role of blessing the Father.

Christ’s eucharistic giving reveals a new way of relating to oneself, gifts, and others. Christ’s scandalous teachings, which already provoke serious questions about the nature of the self,<sup>734</sup> are reinforced in the Institution Narrative wherein Christ demonstrated the freedom to give one’s own body and blood. His own reconfiguration of his body and blood given as bread and wine revealed that one’s body and blood are ‘givable,’ calling the nature of the egoic self

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<sup>734</sup> “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?” (Mk. 8:34-37).

into question. This challenge to the ego turns out to be quite deliberate, to transform communities not through violent sacrifice but through reception and re-giving God's gifts.

Similarly, the scandal provoked by the eucharistic gifts is not to be resolved by intellectual discourse on transubstantiation occurring in an object but by *existential reconfiguration of self according to the gift*. The ego cannot abide the saturated phenomenon of the Eucharistic gift, only as a reconfigured *l'adonné* can one receive the gift, which is to say the gifts are only received by being given again through oneself. This 'existential reconfiguration of the self according to the gift' occurs through full, conscious, active participation in the work of reception of Christ's eucharistic gifts. These gifts are his body, blood, and desire (the loving desire of God), received through the work of *blessing* (recognition of Giver, Gift, givee), *taking responsibility* ('Here I am' from one's own body), and *thanksgiving* (re-giving through ethics, becoming a giver). Reconstitution of the Christian self therefore occurs through blessing, ownership of responsibility, and thanksgiving, but all these still remain fully dependent upon Christ's gifts. These three elements have their source in Christ's gifts and enable imitation of Christ. Christ's gifts bestow an agency according to the Holy Spirit.

#### 5.3.3.2. New Ways of Relating

Relations toward other people both within and beyond the Church also change, as the gospel includes an implicit call to end scapegoating or creating group identity through violence toward others. Within the Church, one is part of Christ's new covenant rooted in forgiveness rather than exclusionary violence. Others within and beyond the Church are icons of Christ, fellow sinners who themselves 'know not what they do' (Lk. 23:34) and need liberation from egoic autonomy, reciprocity, and violence. Forgiveness becomes a possibility beyond

relationship with God. To imagine initiating charity beyond reciprocal exchange, in a radical gift of self, creates new possibilities.

### **5.3.3. Gift of Identity: ‘Become What You Are’**

*If you receive well, you are what you have received.*

*Receive what you are.*

-- St. Augustine of Hippo<sup>735</sup>

With the work of receiving the Eucharist through blessing, overacceptance, and thanksgiving, one’s identity as a member of the body of Christ is thoroughly strengthened and confirmed. The ego’s scandalous ‘crisis’ brought about by Christ’s radical gift is resolved through a reconstituted as *l’adonné*, as ‘gifted’ with Christ’s body, blood, and loving desire: “In the measure in which the ethical life of service to others is lived as a response to this primary gift, and therefore takes its source in the sacraments, in that same measure it finds its Christian identity.”<sup>736</sup> As *l’adonné* one does not aim at permanent ownership or retention of gifts but at *becoming* one who gives these gifts to others, sharing further the gifts of recognition, alliance, and charity. Having learned from Christ’s loving example, one seeks to imitate his humility (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) and service (Mk. 10:45; Jn. 13:34). Moreover, the gifts of life -- physical, social, intellectual, etc. -- are held in stewardship, not possession. The liturgy is an exercise in reception-by-deciding-to-give-again, appreciating God’s gifts by full and contemplative recognition of the radical love with which we are loved and called to imitate. The assembly is there to receive stewardship of and be transformed by the gifts of God which include, not least of all, the gift of God’s loving desire.

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<sup>735</sup> Sermons 227 and 272 (PL 38: 1999 and 1247).

<sup>736</sup> *Sacraments*, 41.

The liturgy tells a story into which we are called to enter existentially. By doing so, one joins a creative initiative and service to redirect creation and history toward their divine end, to reintegrate the world toward a more divinely inspired order.

#### **5.4. The Liturgy as a Whole**

*I am carried by desire, not reason (desiderio feror, non ratione).  
-- St. Bernard of Clairvaux, SC 9.2, cf. SC 75.1*

The fundamental question guiding this inquiry into the liturgy of the Eucharist is ‘What is going on relationally in the Eucharistic celebration?’ The answer: the liturgy of the Eucharist offers a special gift of encounter through direct address, a radical call and gift: God’s gracious and scandalous gift of His own loving desire, which breaks from egoic autonomy, reciprocity, and violence into self-giving, responsibility, and grace. This gift is received in full by an existential reconfiguration *according to the gift*, occurring through specific ‘tasks’: blessing’s threefold recognition (of Giver, Gift, and givee), overaccepting one’s situation and responsibility, and re-giving the gift in thanksgiving. This enables imitation of Christ.

In light of this understanding we are better equipped to answer the other questions posed at the beginning of this chapter as well.

##### **5.4.1. Participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ**

*When Christ came into the world, he said,  
‘Sacrifice and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me;  
in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.  
Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God.’’  
-- Hebrews 10:5-7; cf. Ps. 40:6-8 (LXX)*

Understanding the liturgy of the Eucharist as a gift of desire helps express a rich kind of participation in the paschal mystery of Christ. It promotes an understanding and appreciation of love deep enough to dispossess itself and empty itself in embodied forms of charity, especially as

it calls participants to act with the same love themselves in their own lives. It emphasizes the need for an *embodied* response to divine grace, hopefully less from a mindset of moralistic obligation and more from a personal sense of gratitude, opportunity, and responsibility toward those who are suffering in one way or another.

Regarding the traditional mysteries of Christ's paschal event, this 'relational approach to the Eucharist' aims at more honest encounter with the *distance* and *absence* maintained by the sacrament even as it provides Christ's presence. In this way it incorporates the way Chauvet and Marion point to post-resurrection narratives as paradigmatic of mature faith: just as the risen Christ manifests himself in the breaking of the bread, he disappears (cf. Lk. 24:31); Mary Magdalene is not allowed to cling to the risen Lord (cf. Jn. 20:17); just as the apostles ask if the kingdom will now be restored, he ascends to heaven (Acts 1:6-9). In the same way, rather than speaking only of Christ's presence, the mature disciple accepts a call to take on an embodied Christic role, but with one's own body and blood; the mature disciple 'gives God a body' through which others can be served tangibly in the present world.

The liturgy of the Eucharist as a gift of desire aims at a mature acceptance of absence (Chauvet) *and responsibility, motivated by gratitude*, precisely through a lover's decision to 'love first' (Marion) with an indirect 'return-gift' of offering one's own 'body and blood' at the service of God's gracious and scandalous loving will. This participation is not verified by enthusiastic liturgical responses or the intensity of one's prayer during mass, but only occurs through 're-giving' the gift of love expressed and embodied; it emphasizes not the 'acquisition of grace' but decisions to love first, embodied in the particularities of one's everyday life. This kind of 'thanksgiving' sends disciples from the liturgy into the chaos of the world. One offers true Christian sacrifice through an interior decision to embody a grateful response to grace -- as

best one can -- through obedience to what is truly charitable, holy, responsible, compassionate, understanding, practical.

In sum, the tangible sacramental gifts of Christ's Body and Blood bestow mystical participation and communion in Christ. The assembly receives these as gifts: it is dependent upon God to bestow them, which cannot be claimed as rights, they are pure grace. It is pure grace, but *also*, by virtue of its very goodness, obligatory of the recipient to sharing in, imitating, and becoming like the loving it expresses. To be a member of a living body is to be active in charity in the world, thus communion with Christ means something greater, more abundant than mere membership in the Church.

#### **5.4.2. Liturgy of the Eucharist as Celebration**

Language of celebration (priest as celebrant, celebrating mass, etc.) often accompanies Church language concerning liturgy of the Eucharist, without it being especially clear what is celebrated or how. Specifically, what does the Church celebrate in its liturgy of the Eucharist?

The liturgy of the Eucharist is a celebration of Christ's own eucharistic giving -- *and* the 'love behind the gift.' It does so first by recognizing the divine Giver, Gift (which is God's self-gift), and the assembly as recipient of God's gifts. True and real acceptance of this gift assumes the responsibility to re-give that gift *through* one's own self, one's own life, one's own 'body and blood,' as thanksgiving and as sharing in the totally free loving it expresses in the first place. The liturgy gives Christ's body and blood sacramentally so that we might receive Christ's gift of desire existentially, embodying it in loving action in our own particular time and place in history.

In the proposed model, the liturgy is the public celebration of God's 'lover's advance,' the *encounter* -- gracious and 'scandalous' -- of the risen Lord Jesus with present-day disciples, made possible through the Holy Spirit and the generosity of the Father, the giver of every perfect

gift (James 1:17). Through proclamation of the Word and the response of re-presenting the sacrament, the celebration prompts this encounter with Christ and his self-gift in the Eucharist. The liturgy is also the reversal of violent sacrifice, transposing sacrificial action into decision for *loving* action, whatever form that might take. It is re-presentation and bestowal of the good loving desire we are meant to imitate.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

*Christianity in its explicit and full form is not merely an abstract theory, a reality that is thought of, ultimately, as objective and thing-like, and towards which one subsequently, as something extra, takes a position personally. Christianity really does understand itself, in its most distinctive essence, as an existential event: what we call a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.*<sup>737</sup>

-- Karl Rahner

As stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, the desired goal is to work toward a Eucharistic theology which is faithful to scripture and tradition, can dialogue with contemporary philosophy, and addresses existential questions. We seek to articulate a Eucharistic theology that can and ought to illuminate “God’s design for humans’ total vocation, and thus direct minds to that which is human.” To do just this, we looked at that which *relates* the divine and the human: how God acts by means of the liturgy of the Eucharist upon human desire, identity, and relationships: we attend to all that God gives through the liturgy. The theme of gift provides the root metaphor through which universal existential concerns and the deepest human desire can be offered reasons for gratitude, acceptance of responsibility, and self-giving, so as to participate ‘fully, consciously, and actively’ in God’s own loving. The theme of gift has also provided a means of access for discussion of the ‘I-You’ relationship between God and human beings.

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<sup>737</sup> *Foundations of Christian Faith*, p. 306, as quoted in and translated by Philip Endean, “Rahner, Christology and Grace,” *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 37, p. 298.



This effort hopefully changes the notion of what the Church celebrates through the Eucharist, that it might be not merely 'summit' of the Church's activity (as an end unto itself) but 'source' as well -- of our participation in the Paschal Mystery, namely, fuller participation in the divine loving to which we are called.

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