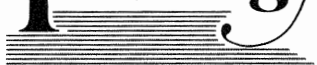


An
Introduction
To Catholic
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Alexandre Ganoczy

Translated by
Reverend William Thomas

with the assistance of
Reverend Anthony Sherman

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By Ganoczy, Alexandre
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Alexandre Ganoczy was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1928. He has earned doctoral degrees in theology and philosophy. From 1966 to 1971 he was lecturer in the theological faculty of the Institut Catholique, Paris, and at the University of Munster, in West Germany. Since 1972, Dr. Ganoczy has been professor for dogmatic theology at the University of Wurzburg, West Germany. He has been involved in Calvin research, receiving grants from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1966-1971) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (since 1973), has published numerous books, among which are: *Calvin, theologien de l'Eglise et du ministere* (1964), *Le jeune Calvin* (1966), *Ecclesia ministrans, Dienende Kirche und kirchlicher Dienst bei Calvin* (1968), *Devenir chretien* (1973), *Sprechen von Gott in heutiger Gesellschaft* (1974), and *Der schöpferische Mensch und die Schöpfung Gottes* (1976). Prof. Ganoczy is also (since 1969) a member of the editorial committee of the ecumenical periodical *Concilium*.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>LG</i>	“Lumen gentium,” Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
<i>AG</i>	“Ad gentes divinitus,” Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity
<i>GS</i>	“Gaudium et spes,” Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
<i>DV</i>	“Dei verbum,” Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
<i>OE</i>	“Orientalium ecclesiarum,” Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches
<i>AA</i>	“Apostolican actuositatem,” Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People
<i>PO</i>	“Presbyterorum ordinis,” Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
<i>SC</i>	“Sacrosanctum concilium,” Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

<i>OT</i>	“Optatam totius,” Decree on the Training of Priests
<i>GE</i>	“Gravissimum educationis,” Declaration on Christian Education
<i>UR</i>	“Unitatis redintegratio,” Decree on Ecumenism
<i>CD</i>	“Christus Dominus,” Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church

2. Other Texts

<i>Kus</i>	K. Rahner. <i>Kirche und Sakramente</i> , QD 10. Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1950.
<i>ChSG</i>	E. Schillebeeckx. <i>Christus, Sakrament der Gottesbegegnung</i> . Mainz, 1960.
<i>ThEu</i>	A. Gerken. <i>Theologie der Eucharistie</i> . Munchen, 1973.
<i>DS</i>	H. Denzinger, A. Schonmetzer. <i>Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum des rabus Fidei et morum</i> . Basel-Freiburg-Rome, 1976.
<i>NR</i>	J. Neuner, H. Roos. <i>Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung</i> . Regensburg, 1975.
<i>PL</i>	J. P. Migne (publisher). <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i> . Paris, 1844-1855, 221 vols.

- PG* J. P. Migne (publisher). *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*. Paris, 1857-1866, 161 vols.
- LThK* *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*. Published by J. Hofer and K. Rahner. Freiburg, 1957-1967, 10 vols.; supplementary volumes, *LThK-K*, Second Vatican Council. Documents and commentaries, 3 vols., published by *op. cit.*, 1966-1968.
- RGG* *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch fur Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*. Published by K. Galling. Tübingen, 1957-1965, 6 vols.
- ThWNT* *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT*. Founded by G. Kittel, published by G. Friedrich. Stuttgart, 1933-1973, 9 vols.
- ThQ* *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Tübingen, 1819 ff.
- ZNW* *Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*. Giessen, 1900 ff., Berlin 1934 ff.
- GuL* *Geist und Leben. Zeitschrift fur Ascese und Mystik*. Würzburg, 1947 ff. (before 1947 *ZAM*, Würzburg, 1926 ff.)
- WA* M. Luther. *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimarer Ausgabe). Weimar, 1883 ff.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to enable the reader to approach Catholic sacramental teaching in both its historical and its contemporary setting. Taking into consideration the needs of students of theology as well as other interested readers, I wish not only to give an introduction to the dogmatic tradition but also to create an awareness of the important problems involved in this tradition. Explanation and critical comment must go hand in hand; the nature of the material demands it. Seen historically, both the theological discussion about the Church's teaching office and ecclesial practice concerning Christian cultic celebration were always accompanied by a lively tension between what had always been believed and newly raised questions and insights. The background understanding of the New Testament authors certainly provided the basic orientation for the entire tradition, but among the theologians of later times—Tertullian, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Council fathers of Trent and Vatican II—each explained, accentuated and worked with a comprehensive theory of the sacraments in his own way.

Catholic sacramental teaching and practice of the Middle Ages found itself suddenly in a crisis as a result of criticisms made by the Reformers. This crisis had a central importance for sacramental history because it challenged the teaching office of the Church to an extraordinarily fruitful clarification process which resulted in the texts of the Council of Trent on both sacraments in general and the

seven individual sacraments in particular. The effectiveness of these documents has proven to be extensive. Yet, the systematic accomplishment of Trent was strongly influenced by an anti-Protestant defensiveness, and this has had a declining relevance over the last few decades. At the same time contemporary Catholic theology is influenced by the results of modern interconfessional exegesis. Thus there needs to be a comprehensive and constructive rethinking of the whole subject. This book especially acknowledges this important task by confirming the determinative role that the latest ecumenical Council gave to concrete expression of Church, liturgy and living witness in the world.

We can formulate the question which has confronted both the pre-conciliar and the post-conciliar Church in the following manner: How do sacraments function when both the concern which gave rise to them and the later conditions imposed by the experience and interpretation of those who have received them are taken into account? Such an interest stems from the level of personal understanding and must be included in this study so that it will be not only an introduction to current materials but will also treat concepts still in the process of becoming.

In Chapter One the term *sacrament* will be explained, keeping in mind its origins in the history of culture and religion. Its original form is to be found in the Greek concept of *mysterion*, an idea also used by the biblical authors. We will also treat under what circumstances this concept can be further transmitted by the Latin term *sacramentum* and how theologians, with their various systems of thought, have used this concept in their theories of Christian cultic practice. The main witnesses for this theological development will be Tertullian, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as the Reformers, with their critical questioning of tradition. Didactically—for this belongs to our stated goals as well—this first chapter is designed to awaken an understanding of the complexity of our material in its historical development: how cultic, cultural, and philosophical elements are assimilated into the genesis of a key

concept in both its pre- and inner-Christian history and how this process results in a more or less radical change within the concept.

Chapter Two expands the examination of the history of concept and theory in regard to the systematic of our *fundamental question*. The question concerning the effectiveness, the institution, the administration and the communication of the sacraments, as well as why there are seven, will be considered as necessary to a fundamental historical approach. Special attention must be given to the unavoidable variations in each era which the fathers in the patristic period, the theology of the Middle Ages, the Reformation and the Council of Trent, as well as more recent Catholic research, have offered in answer to this question.

A critique especially of contemporary approaches is helpful in this respect. The biblical basis for sacramental teaching, in its totality, offers several criteria for the formation of a judgment. Among other things the question of the legitimacy of presenting a tract on "sacraments in general" will be raised even though such a tract seeks to justly clarify the fundamental questions of seven sacraments factually quite different from each other. The expected pedagogical achievement of this chapter would be the reader's comprehension of the "magnificence and misery" of *theological systems* and their development. Whenever aspects of the Christian faith—which in any respect cannot be completely grasped rationally—must be reduced to a "common denominator," tensions arise; this is a basic theological given.

Convinced that one can only be introduced to Catholic sacramental teaching in a factually correct way when *all the individual sacraments* are portrayed in their unmistakable individuality, we have made this the theme for our third chapter. To make more prominent the differences in accent, which exist between a confessionally apologetic approach and an interconfessional scriptural and contemporary approach to the sacraments, the texts of the Council of Trent

and of the Second Vatican Council (with its representative group of theologians) will be placed in juxtaposition. In doing this, not only must the "personality" of each sacrament be presented, but also a classic example of the scope and limitation of the *new interpretations* of traditional teaching with regard to relevant ecclesiological and anthropological questions. In this relatively extensive third chapter it could be of didactic value that the reader become acquainted with the typical methodology and vocabulary of the teaching office in both the sixteenth and the twentieth century. Since a considerable number of texts are quoted at length, the material in this chapter may seem more demanding.

In Chapter Four a new approach will be offered (with hypothetical care) using "communications theory" terminology with a view to understanding the structure and foundation of the sacraments. This attempt was occasioned, in part, by reflection on the content of the Augustinian symbol theory, but more so by the understanding of modern existential-philosophical anthropology (K. Rahner and E. Schillebeeckx have made this contribution to the latest research), and above all by the approach of Vatican II, insofar as it approaches the sacraments from a primarily practical-theological view, which is therefore influenced by the humanities. It was not by chance that its very first proclamation was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

The possible lesson learned in these discussions might be the clarification of the necessary interdisciplinary character of the various branches of theology within itself and theology's relation to numerous non-theological sciences. Thus it seems that contemporary research in the field of Catholic sacramental teaching is headed in the direction of a modern form of theory-practice unity which possesses its origins in the struggle of the first Christian theologians with the novelty of the Gospel. This struggle was well documented in the New Testament.

An excess of *footnotes* and extensive scientific *bibliography* have been purposely avoided. *Quotations* and other

references are generally from a small number of works—which, by the way, I recommend as worth reading for a deeper understanding of this introduction, and for a point of comparison with it. The titles of these works are referred to in abbreviated form (see the list of abbreviations) and, for the sake of simplicity, directly in the text. A more complete list of references and literature for further reading are to be found at the end of this volume.

The author does not wish at this point to neglect a word of thanks to his co-workers, above all to his assistant Dr. Johannes Schmid for his valuable contribution to the quality of the text and his critical comments, and to Mrs. Christa Schor for the preparation of the final manuscript. Further I wish to thank Dr. Cornelius P. Mayer and Dr. Helmut Feld for their valuable suggestions.

Chapter One

THE CONCEPT OF SACRAMENT IN ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Both in its linguistic and theological history, the Christian concept of sacrament developed out of the pre-Christian mystery concept. Alone the observation that in the first Christian centuries the Latin word *sacramentum* was the most common translation of the Greek term *mysterion* does not suffice to explain the unusually rich religious conceptual complex to which both words belong. For this it is necessary to examine both terms in their own historical context.

1.1. *Mysterion* in Cult and Philosophy

When the average person in our modern industrial society speaks of something "mysterious," he refers primarily to something puzzling, hidden, incomprehensible, strange—to something that can fascinate him for a time, but that does not concern him at a deeper level. In contrast to this, people of classical antiquity tended to see in mystery something existentially definitive which touched the very foundation of being and raised the sphere of human existence to that of the divine.

The classical concept of mystery manifests itself in two particular areas, the one cult and the other philosophy, whereby the former was the primary in point of time. This concept contained already much of what was later to become a part of the Christian discussion concerning sacraments.

1.1.1. Mystery in Cult

The plural form *mysteria* designated, since the seventh century B.C., primarily a whole group of secret cults that had developed among the Greeks (Eleusis, Dionysius, Orpheus, Samothrace), and in the Hellenic Orient (Adonis, Attis and Cybele, Isis and Osiris, Mithras), usually on the periphery of the commonly practiced religions. (Cf. K. Prumm, "Mysterien," in *LThK*, Vol. 7, pp. 717-720.) These "mysteries" developed almost exclusively from ancient fertility cults. Their goal was the increase or the restoration of vitality. They were celebrated in that the story of a divinity or of a divine couple was ritually reenacted within the circle of the already initiated. These celebrations communicated the experience of a divine drama in order to enable an actual participation in it (Bornkamm, p. 810). Was the apostle Paul consciously referring to such a conception when he said that through baptism the candidate dies with Christ and rises with Christ (cf Rom 6:4)? There are scholars who hold this position.¹

Characteristic for the mystery cults was that only the consecrated and initiated were admitted to these celebrations. There were therefore rites of initiation by degrees into the fellowship of "mystics," as well as selected masters of these cults, the "hierophants" (esp. in Eleusis) and "mystagogues." These played, as it were, a priestly role. Whoever had been initiated enjoyed a brotherly solidarity with his co-mystics, was able to experience a security in their fellowship, and was at the same time strictly obliged to keep secret the particulars of the ritual. Whoever broke this obligation of secrecy, the so-called "arcanum," was considered guilty of sacrilege.

Only for the loyal was salvation (as in Christianity called *soteria*) promised or secure. Herein was the most profound root of their isolation from the mass of the initiated. They alone were privileged to have complete community of life with the divine precursors, beyond all suffering and death. They alone entered into the discipleship of the gods, who were themselves "redeemed saviors" moving in the polarity between life and death. However, the claim that the faith of Christians in their crucified Lord and in their communion with him in baptism and the Eucharist could be a variation of this mystery concept has been rejected by scholars. The gods of the mystery cults did not offer themselves freely for the whole world. They are themselves subject to a higher fate, whose dictates they suffer. They are subjected to the law of change, which, through their mediation, regulates the cosmic powers of death and rebirth (Bornkamm, p. 812). Here is to be seen the cyclical concept of the Greeks, their nature philosophy of the "eternal return of the same," which is decidedly opposed to the Jewish understanding of history as the possibility of creating the absolutely new.

Still the mystery cults sought a salvation that, in like manner, guaranteed an on-going development of life, both before and after death. Already in the present life the initiated experienced a communication of divine life-force; they called this (as did the Gnostics of their "illumination" and the Christians of their baptism) "new birth." And as reborn, they hoped for a hereafter where they would be granted, as the gods before them, "to pass through Hades without being destroyed" (Bornkamm, p. 813).

1.1.2. Mystery in Philosophy

Probably it was the great existential importance of the mystery cults that caused the classical Greek philosophers to liken their own efforts on the path toward the understanding of truth to the steps of the mystics on their path to initiation. We find such figures of speech especially with Plato. In

his book *Symposion*, the female character of Diotima appears in the role of a hierophant; she leads the seeking philosopher to a vision of pure being (*Symp.* 210a–212c; cf *Phaedr.* 249a–250c). This leading, this ascension from the visible, changing world of objects to the invisible, unchanging world of reality (which for Plato is the only true reality) takes on the form of a mystery initiation, of a “mystagogy.” The goal is of course beyond the cultic. It is epistemological and metaphysical. For Plato and the Platonists, it is a matter of that wisdom (*sophia*), which is able, in the visible objects of space and time, to comprehend the shadowy contours of the invisible One, Good, and Beautiful, and which is conscious of the symbolic, integrating function of the objects of world and nature. In the Platonic world-view, everything tangible becomes a *symbol* of the only truly real, heavenly, and divine Reality. The language of these symbols can be heard, and their hidden reality can be comprehended only by those who take leave of the sphere of the profane and are initiated into the philosophic mysteries (*Theaet.* 156a).

Here the question is no longer one of the secret rituals of a salvific cult, but of the secret teaching of a truth-bringing Wisdom. Not a plurality of suffering and redeemed deities is the attracting force, but the alone Real in its unspeakable and incomprehensible reality. And it is not the anticipated and reenacted process of death and life, but the invisible, unchangeable Divine to which the knowing sage climbs on the ladder of the visible replicas.

The history of Christian neo-Platonism, from Origen to the Augustinian sacrament theorists of the Middle Ages and the Reformation, demonstrates that this philosophical tradition has been more or less critically assimilated by Christian thinkers, not least of all with regard to the so-called sacraments of initiation with their emphasis on the profession of faith.

In many respects, the pre-Christian Gnostics certainly demonstrated a hybrid form of the cultic and philosophical mystery traditions. Here the term *mysterion* stood for the redeeming communication between the heavenly proto-man

and the "spiritual" man, the "pneumatic," who, through "rebirth," i.e., through a process of perception and assimilation, becomes a living and "perfect" replica of the redeemed Redeemer.²

In the context of our present analysis it could be further noted that already in the classical period the *mystagogic vocabulary* became a part of profane terminology. For example, sleep as a preliminary to "eternal sleep," human intimate relations, the secrets of the medical profession, and even secrecy of the mails were referred to by the term *mysterion* (cf Bornkamm, p. 817).

1.2. *Mysterion* as Biblical Term

1.2.1. For a right understanding of the Christian concept of mystery, it is important to note that already the Old Testament texts, which were written in the Hellenistic period (Wisdom, Daniel, Tobit, Sirach, 2 Maccabees), used the term *mysterion* more however in its philosophic or profane sense than that of the cultic. (Examples of its use in the profane sense: Tob 12:7, 11; Jdt 2:2; Sir 22:22; 27:16f, 21; 2 Mac 13:21.) Here we shall consider only two books with particularly rich theological content: Wisdom and Daniel.

Foundational is the statement in Wisdom 2:22 that the wicked "knew not the hidden counsels (*mysteria*) of God." This refers, of course, to the one, speaking God of Israel, Yahweh. He is the subject of the mysteries which are to be understood and which are completely hidden to the wicked—e.g., to such as follow pagan secret cults (14:15, 23; cf 12:5). Opposed to this, the mysteries of the one God are revealed to all who are open and seek after Wisdom, which is seen as a personified Mediatrix between God and man (cf 8:4). Wisdom reveals the divine secrets and is itself a secret which must be revealed—as later the case with the Logos in the Gospel of John. The just person must know her if he desires to know God. Therefore he attends to the words of the teacher of wisdom: