

## THE JOHANNINE SACRAMENTARY RECONSIDERED

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THE QUESTION of sacramentality through symbolism is one which deeply affects the interpretation of the fourth Gospel. Yet, in approaching this question, one seems to face all the perils of Scylla and Charybdis. On the one side, there is the antisacramental (or at least nonsacramental) school led by Bultmann and most of the German scholars. On the other, there is a type of ultrasacramentalism which sees a symbolic reference to some sacrament or other in virtually every chapter of Jn. This view is championed by Cullmann<sup>1</sup> and by many of the French and British scholars. To see how far this trend has gone, the reader need only consult the list that we have placed at the end of our article, a list of the Johannine passages that have been interpreted sacramentally.

Our purpose in this article is to re-examine the methodological principles behind the theory of Johannine sacramentality and, in particular, to distinguish relatively well-founded examples of sacramentality from the less-defensible suggestions. We believe that there is true sacramental symbolism in Jn; nevertheless, unproved applications of this symbolism have served only to bring the whole principle of symbolism into disrepute.

We recognize, of course, that in pursuing such an investigation we are to some extent dealing in categories and precisions that may be foreign to Jn. Whether we confine our study to baptism and the Eucharist, or include the complete sacramentary, we may be over-precise in the question we are asking, namely, are there references to the sacraments in Jn? For, would the author of Jn have precisely distinguished between sacraments and sacramentals?<sup>2</sup> His was a

<sup>1</sup> His *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst*, which appeared in 1944, has had tremendous influence through its translations. We shall cite it as *Early Christian Worship* (tr. by A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance; London, 1953). Cullmann's pupil, L. Bouyer, has popularized a sacramental view in *Le quatrième évangile* (3rd ed.; Tournai, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Henri Clavier, "Le problème du rite et du mythe dans le quatrième évangile," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 31 (1951) 287, thinks that in Jn we have a generalization of sacramentalism in the direction of sacramentals. He thinks that the Evangelist did not want to confine sacramental references to two particular rites like baptism and the Eucharist.

general insight that the life-giving power of Jesus was effective through the material symbols employed in the deeds and discourses of the public ministry.<sup>3</sup> Now we know that in the course of time some of those material symbols were recognized by the Church as permanently valid signs communicating Christ's grace (the sacraments), while others were recognized as having only a lesser or temporary significance. We shall take advantage of this distinction in our paper and confine ourselves to the sacramentary in the strict sense; yet, we must recognize that this precise delineation is more our own than the Evangelist's.

#### THE NONSACRAMENTAL VIEW OF JN

Those scholars who see a minimal sacramental interest in Jn have based their case on literary criticism. Bultmann<sup>4</sup> finds three clearly sacramental passages in Jn 3:5 with its reference to water, 6:51b-58, and 19:34-35 (passages referring respectively to baptism, Eucharist, and to both sacraments together). Otherwise Jn does not mention the institution of the sacraments, and places all emphasis on a personal union with Jesus. For Bultmann,<sup>5</sup> then, Jn basically ignores the sacraments and serves as a corrective to that tendency in the early Church which would see the sacraments as a means of salvation. The three sacramental passages are additions made by the Ecclesiastical Redactor, a censor postulated by Bultmann who made additions to the Gospel to conform it to the Synoptic tradition and Church usage.

While many have rejected Bultmann's view of Jn as basically anti-sacramental, there has been a wider acceptance of at least a non-sacramentality or of a peripheral sacramentality. Eduard Schweizer<sup>6</sup> doubts whether or not one can prove that the three sacramental

<sup>3</sup> The Johannine concept of miracle as a "sign" borders closely on this. If men could really see and believe the revelation of Jesus portrayed in a material "sign," they could receive life eternal.

<sup>4</sup> *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (16th ed.; Göttingen, 1959). See also *Theology of the New Testament* 2 (tr. by K. Grobel; London, 1955) 3-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Das Evangelium*, p. 360: "Man kann sich also den Tatbestand wohl nur so erklären, dass sich der Evglst mit dem kirchlichen Brauch von Taufe und Herrenmahl zwar abfindet, dass dieser ihm aber infolge des Missbrauches verdächtig bleibt, und dass er deshalb davon schweigt. In Wahrheit sind für ihn die Sakramente überflüssig."

<sup>6</sup> "Das johanneische Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl," *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952-53) 341-63.

passages are redactionary. In any case, their sacramentality is merely anti-Docetic and merely helps to show the reality of the Incarnation. In Jn there is no stress on the sacraments in themselves, but only as witnesses to Jesus, and sacraments are not a central thought. Helmut Köster<sup>7</sup> maintains that even if 6:51b-58 and 3:5 ("water") are secondary, there is already a cultic and sacramental element in the other parts of chaps. 6 and 3. Yet, the Evangelist is interested in sacramentality only in so far as it leads back to the reality of Jesus. In Jn there is nothing like the metaphysical viewpoint that characterizes the sacramentality of Ignatius of Antioch.<sup>8</sup> Eduard Lohse<sup>9</sup> agrees with Bultmann that the three sacramental passages are redactionary and that the original Gospel had no sacraments. But this does not mean that the Evangelist was antisacramental. Rather, the Evangelist's interest was centered on *martyria*: he wished to emphasize contact through witness with Jesus, and this main purpose did not call for any sacramental stress.

Despite certain disagreements, most of the above-mentioned discussions<sup>10</sup> are focused on the three sacramental passages singled out by Bultmann. The question of wider sacramental symbolism is, for the most part, regarded as unproved and almost unworthy of detailed rebuttal. The underlying methodological principle seems to be that if the Evangelist had intended sacramental significance, he would have expressed it more clearly.

<sup>7</sup> "Geschichte und Kultus im Johannesevangelium und bei Ignatius von Antiochien," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 54 (1957) 56-69.

<sup>8</sup> Gunther Bornkamm, "Die eucharistische Rede im Johannes-Evangelium," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 47 (1956) 161-69, maintains, on the other hand, that the interpolation 6:51b-58 is much more sacramental than the rest of chap. 6 and much more Ignatian. Wilhelm Wilkins, "Das Abendmahlszeugnis im vierten Evangelium," *Evangelische Theologie* 18 (1958) 354-70, tries to refute Bornkamm's arguments and to show that the passage is truly Johannine and not an interpolation. Yet, he agrees with E. Schweizer on the anti-Docetic, peripheral character of Johannine sacramentality.

<sup>9</sup> "Wort und Sakrament im Johannesevangelium," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960-61) 110-25.

<sup>10</sup> Köster, *art. cit.*, 66-67, treats of the possible sacramental significance of (a) the foot washing in chap. 13, in which he sees no baptismal significance but only a symbol of unity through love—the failure of Judas shows that there is no magical union with Jesus by sacramental means; (b) the vine passage of chap. 15. Here there may be Eucharistic significance, but the primary unity with Jesus is still a moral one (15:7, 10).

## THE ULTRASACRAMENTAL VIEW OF JN

This school approaches Jn from another standpoint. Albert Schweizer<sup>11</sup> maintained that the exegete had to consider the whole *NT* ethos. The theory that *OT* prophecy had a fulfilment in the *NT* created a sensibility to typology. Therefore, it was natural for Jn to present Jesus' words and actions as prophetic types of the Church's sacraments, and the significance of these types would be easily recognizable to the Christian readers of the Gospel. Schweizer began a trend; it was for Cullmann to go through Jn in detail and establish the case for sacramentality. Cullmann stresses that we know something of baptism and the Eucharist as essential parts of early Christian worship. Therefore, he maintains, both the Evangelist and his audience must have been familiar with these sacraments. Since the Evangelist's purpose was to ground the community's faith in the historic Jesus, what more natural than for him to show a basis for the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist in Jesus' words and works? Of course, this sacramental reference would be understood only in the postresurrectional period in which the Evangelist and his audience were living. As Cullmann proceeds through Jn incident by incident, he seeks to find some internal indication that sacramental symbolism was intended by the Evangelist. In fact, however, he often seems to fall back on the principle that since a passage could have been understood sacramentally, it was intended sacramentally. His treatment was answered incident by incident by Wilhelm Michaelis,<sup>12</sup> who maintained that in virtually every case Cullmann had not proved the existence of sacramental symbolism.

The Swedish scholar Alf Corell<sup>13</sup> also takes a deeply sacramental view of Jn, although he does not see as many sacramental references as Cullmann does. Corell believes that just as there is a strong influence of the Jewish festal liturgy on Jn (in the direction of replacement), so there is influence of the Christian sacramental liturgy, i.e.,

<sup>11</sup> *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen, 1930) pp. 345 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Bern, 1946). This excellent work, since it appeared in mimeographed form due to postwar conditions, never got the attention in American circles that it deserved. A similar skeptical view of Cullmann's arguments was taken by Philippe-H. Menoud, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Neuchâtel, 1947) pp. 53-56: "Dans le détail, l'exégèse de O. Cullmann ne force pas la conviction."

<sup>13</sup> *Consummatum Est* (Swedish ed., 1950; English ed., London, 1958).

baptism and the Eucharist. As Protestants, Cullmann and Corell would confine the sacramental references to just these two sacraments; the Catholic scholar Bruce Vawter<sup>14</sup> would enlarge the sacramentary. He suggests the possibility of a reference to a sacramental anointing, similar to extreme unction, in the anointing of the feet (Jn 12), and to matrimony in the Cana scene (Jn 2).

The British commentaries on Jn have tended to be more prosacramental than the German. Edwyn Hoskyns<sup>15</sup> presents some interesting researches into Church history and liturgy to back up the sacramental interpretations of the narratives of the healing of the blind man (Jn 9) and of the washing of the feet (Jn 13). Even the more critical commentary of C. K. Barrett<sup>16</sup> states "... there is more sacramental teaching in John than in the other Gospels." He traces this to several Johannine categories of thought which are favorable to sacramentalism, e.g., symbolism and emphasis on the material circumstances of Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

Paul Niewalda<sup>18</sup> has given us the most recent and complete defense of sacramental symbolism in Jn. He frankly admits that by the ordinary means of exegesis one cannot prove that the Evangelist intended to refer to the sacraments by means of material symbols. And so he suggests a different exegetical approach. Niewalda shows that a dependence on some type of symbolism or deeper meaning was in vogue in all types of literature at this time, and that our earliest Christian records (liturgy, Church art, the Fathers) witness to the use of fixed symbols for the sacraments. Therefore, he maintains that when these traditional symbols are encountered in the *NT* and, in particular, in Jn, they should be interpreted as references to the sacraments. The author of Jn was a child of his time: symbolism would have been part of his literary technique, and he would have used the same symbols as his contemporaries. Rudolf Schnackenburg<sup>19</sup> objects

<sup>14</sup> "The Johannine Sacramentary," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 17 (1956) 151-66. David M Stanley, S.J., has also shown himself very favorable to ultrasacramentalism in his series of articles in *Worship* 32-35 (1957-61).

<sup>15</sup> *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; London, 1947) esp. pp. 363 and 443. R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (Oxford, 1956), also accepts much sacramental symbolism in Jn.

<sup>16</sup> *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1958) p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Clavier, *art. cit.*, p. 287, has the same view; for, he asks, how could Johannine thought ignore sacramentalism (i.e., the use of exterior form as a means of grace) when it makes a fulcrum of the Incarnation?

<sup>18</sup> *Sakramentssymbolik im Johannesevangelium* (Limburg, 1958).

<sup>19</sup> "Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium," *Sacra pagina* 2 (Paris, 1959) 235-54.

to this principle on the grounds that most of the early Christian witnesses are later than Jn and might represent a more developed symbolism. Water, for instance, certainly plays a more symbolic and sacramental role in Tertullian than it does in Jn. Schnackenburg, who is a moderate sacramentalist, has his own method of procedure; first he studies the clearly sacramental texts in Jn and establishes from them an estimate of the sacramentality of the Evangelist with which to approach the more obscure texts.

#### CONSIDERATION OF THE METHODOLOGY OF THESE VIEWS

The study of all the arguments for and against Johannine sacramentality suggests that a balance may be achieved through a better methodological appreciation on both sides.

*First*, the literary criticism of the nonsacramentalists should not be neglected. This pertains chiefly to the three definitely sacramental passages stressed by Bultmann: 3:5; 6:51b-58; 19:34b-35. Too often, if we take Jn 6 as an example, supporters of the sacramental position satisfy themselves by proving that the chapter is a unity. Against Bultmann, and quite correctly, they point out Eucharistic indications in the earlier part of chap. 6.<sup>20</sup> To some this would prove that the Eucharistic section belongs to the rest of the chapter. Yet, why could it not have been added to the chapter by someone desiring precisely to clarify the Eucharistic undertones of the rest of the discourse? The unity could be purely a literary or logical one.

What the recognition of Eucharistic elements in others parts of chap. 6 does prove is that Bultmann's concept of the Ecclesiastical Redactor is false. There is every evidence that the sacramental section has a certain harmony with the rest of the discourse and was not simply superimposed by an act of ecclesiastical censorship to make Jn conform to sacramental ideas.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, while we may rule out such a theory of arbitrary redaction, we cannot exclude editorship

<sup>20</sup> This is admitted by Bornkamm, *art. cit.*, p. 162, and Köster, *art. cit.*, p. 62, and is a commonplace among Catholic writers. For an excellent summary of Catholic views, see Cyril Vollert, S.J., "The Eucharist: Quests for Insights from Scripture," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 21 (1960) 404-15.

<sup>21</sup> Clarence T. Craig, "Sacramental Interest in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1939) 32, pointed this out a long time ago. He stressed that we cannot discover a redactor's addition by isolating ideas that seem to us to contradict the main position of the Evangelist. "It is quite another thing to demonstrate that they were contradictory to him."

in the history of the composition of Jn. E. Schweizer and Ruckstuhl,<sup>22</sup> by the use of stylistic characteristics, have devastated the source theory of Jn as posited by Bultmann and others. There is too much literary homogeneity in Jn to posit the simple combination of totally distinct sources. Yet, this homogeneity cannot rule out subsequent editorship *within* the Johannine tradition. The Last Discourse is, perhaps, the best example of this: it is all quite Johannine, but it certainly shows signs of editorial modifications.

With this in mind, we cannot dismiss the possibility that some sacramental sections in Jn (e.g., 3:5 and 6:51-58) are editorial additions of Johannine material, designed to bring out the real sacramental undertones already present.<sup>23</sup> This would account for the surface unity of the sections, and yet allow for the startlingly deeper sacramentality of the specific additions. Thus there would be truth in the remarks of the nonsacramentalists that certain specific sections do have clearer sacramental emphasis than the rest of the Gospel. In our view, this would weaken Schnackenburg's criterion of using the clearly sacramental sections as a canon for judging the sacramental symbolism and interest of the rest of the Gospel.

*Second*, we must discuss the claim of the nonsacramentalists that Johannine sacramentality is of a peripheral character, or introduced only as part of anti-Docetist apologetic. This peripheral sacramentality is contrasted with "Hellenistic" or "Ignatian" sacramentality, which gives independent value to the sacraments.

Here, too, there is a methodological difficulty. Most of those who hold this view (see above) have confined their study to the three so-called clearly sacramental passages of the Gospel and to 1 Jn 5:6-8. Now there probably is an anti-Docetic emphasis in 1 Jn 5:6-8 and in Jn 19:34b-35;<sup>24</sup> the author is stressing the bloody death of Jesus

<sup>22</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *Ego Eimi* (Göttingen, 1939); Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums* (Fribourg, 1951).

<sup>23</sup> We have given a preliminary sketch of our personal views on these sections in our pamphlet commentary on Jn in the *New Testament Reading Guide* 13 (Collegeville, Minn., 1960), and shall publish a detailed article on Jn 6 in the *Proceedings of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine* (1962).

<sup>24</sup> See E. Schweizer, *art. cit.* (supra n. 6) pp. 344-52. The two passages, however, do not have exactly the same emphasis in their sacramental symbolism. As Schnackenburg, *art. cit.*, p. 249, points out, the blood and water of 19:34 stress the origins of the Eucharist and baptism in the death of Christ, whereas the water and blood of 1 Jn stress the place of baptism and the Eucharist in the work of the Church. Thus, even here the anti-Docetic element is not the exclusive sacramental interest.

as the Christ. The water and blood bear witness to the humanity of Jesus. Another section, 6:51b-58, may have some claim to be considered as anti-Docetic, although this seems less clear to us.<sup>25</sup> Yet, it is only in these two or three sacramental passages that there is any emphasis on the connection between anti-Docetism and sacramentalism. The many other sacramental passages claimed by Cullmann, Niewalda, and others have no such particular bent. Thus, if any truth can be granted to even a part of the claims of the ultra-sacramental school, this very specialized aspect attributed to Johannine sacramentality would disappear, and anti-Docetism would become merely one aspect of a larger sacramental picture.

As for "peripheral sacramentality" in general, a great deal depends on the definition of terms. No exegete with a sense of history expects to find a fully developed Scholastic sacramentalism in Jn. And it is probably true that even between the time of Jn and that of Ignatius of Antioch there was some development of sacramental theology.<sup>26</sup> Yet, in evaluating Johannine sacramentality, we must remember that the purpose of the Evangelist was different from that of a man such as Ignatius. The Evangelist cannot treat of the sacraments as such, but only inasmuch as they are reflected in the words and works of Jesus.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the claim that in Jn the sacraments are emphasized only in so far as they help unite the Christian to the historical Jesus is a bit naive. What other role could the sacraments play in *a gospel*? Any reference to the role of the sacraments in the postresurrectional Church can only be through prophetic typology or some other secondary sense, if the author is to maintain his purpose of telling the significance of what really happened between the baptism of Jesus

<sup>25</sup> The stress on "feeding on" Jesus' flesh may help to prove His humanity, but 6:55 ("My flesh is a real food, and my blood a real drink") seems to put more emphasis on the true nourishing value of the flesh and the blood, rather than on any anti-Docetic motif. There is nothing particularly anti-Docetic about 3:5.

<sup>26</sup> The picture is not totally clear. The reason for the rejection of the three sacramental passages is because often they are regarded as Ignatian rather than Johannine (so Bornkamm). Yet, Köster distinguishes carefully between the sacramentality of these passages and that of Ignatius.

<sup>27</sup> Schnackenburg, *art. cit.*, pp. 253-54, says that for Jn the sacraments take the work of salvation once performed by Jesus, represent it, and apply it to all believers after the coming of the Spirit. The self-revelation of Jesus as the source of truth and life stands in the foreground of the Gospel; the Church and the sacraments stand in the background as a continuation of that work.



and His resurrection. Thus, most of the exegetes who interpret Jn sacramentally are quite correct methodologically in seeing any sacramental reference as the second of a twofold meaning present in the words and works of Jesus. For example, if we believe in the fundamental historicity of the Nicodemus incident, then we must allow a primary, nonsacramental meaning to Jesus' words, a meaning which Nicodemus could have understood. The reference to Christian baptism can only be secondary, at least chronologically. Johannine sacramentality fits into the Gospel's oft-repeated confession that the deeper meaning of these things was not understood till afterwards. In this sense, then, Johannine sacramentality is "peripheral," but such a description tends to be misleading.

Nor does the fact that Jn omits the institutions of baptism and the Eucharist mean that the Evangelist was not interested in the sacraments. That Jesus Christ instituted the sacraments is a dogma of the faith. But there is nothing of faith about when He instituted baptism. St. Thomas connects the institution of baptism to Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan, a scene which Jn does not narrate but at least implies (1:33). Estius connects the institution of baptism to the Nicodemus scene (3:5), in which case Jn would be the only one to have recorded the institution. More frequently, perhaps, theologians follow Tertullian and Alexander of Hales in connecting the institution of baptism to Mt 28:19, "Go . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," words not recorded by Jn (nor by Mk, nor by Lk—are these too nonsacramental?). Many scholars today, however, suggest that the Trinitarian formula as given by Mt came into the Gospel from liturgical usage.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, in not connecting the institution of baptism to any precise words, but in seeing references to baptism in many of the words and works of Jesus, Jn may be representing the original, imprecise outlook of the earliest Christian theology.

The Eucharist presents a more complicated problem. No one doubts that Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. But did the early Church preserve the precise words of Jesus as words of institution? Behind the four accounts in Mt, Mk, Lk, and 1 Cor, scholars

<sup>28</sup> For example, D. M. Stanley, S.J., in his pamphlet commentary on Mt in *New Testament Reading Guide 4* (Collegeville, Minn., 1960) p. 92.

see two basic traditions, that of Paul (Lk) and that of Mk (Mt), both with claims to antiquity.<sup>29</sup> And while Jn does not record the scene of institution at the Last Supper, the words of 6:51, "The bread that I shall give is my own flesh for the life of the world," may stand quite close to the Semitic original of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, since many claim that Jesus probably spoke of His flesh rather than of His body. Thus, the argument against Johannine sacramentality from the failure to record institutions is not as impressive as might first seem, and probably reflects more of modern theological interests than of those of antiquity.<sup>30</sup>

*Third*, we must consider the methodology of the sacramentalists and answer the fundamental question: Is it necessary to have some internal indication that the author himself intended a symbolic reference to the sacraments? As we have said, most of the ultrasacramentalists approach the problem from the viewpoint of what the Evangelist's audience could have understood. Yet, that is a very delicate instrument of exegesis, or rather an instrument that is used with much more ease in eisegesis.

A few considerations seem in order. We grant that we cannot approach Jn with the idea of accepting only the symbolism that is clear to us today. Certainly Niewalda is correct in pointing out that some type of symbolism (typical sense, secondary sense, *sensus plenior*, or whatever hermeneutical tag we may give it) was in more general vogue in *NT* times than it is in our own. And there are indications all through Jn that the author was prepared to carry his symbolism quite far. Who would have dared to interpret 21:18 and its vague reference to Peter's stretching out his hands as a symbol of his crucifixion, if the sacred writer did not make it specific? Or, if one prefers to avoid

<sup>29</sup> For bibliography see Vollert, *art. cit.*, pp. 416 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 71, says that Jn never refers explicitly to sacramental institutions because the sacraments do not hang from any one moment but from the whole fact of Christ. This is an attractive explanation, but we suspect that the whole problem is a modern creation, as Craig holds, *art. cit.*, pp. 33-34. Of course, if one is really interested in finding institutions in Jn, the Council of Trent (*DB* 894) says that the principal institution of the sacrament of penance was in the scene recorded exclusively in Jn 20:22-23. (Probably this does not mean that penance is the exclusive object of the verse. The power to forgive sins through the reception of the Spirit is a wide power exercised in baptism—see Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38—and in penance.)

chap. 21, the same may be said of the equation of the Temple and the body of Jesus (2:21), and of the Spirit and water (7:39).<sup>31</sup>

Now it may be objected that these symbols show that the Evangelist can and does explain symbolism when he employs it, and that therefore we should confine ourselves to just those symbols that he explains. But is there anyone who believes that "the lamb of God," which Jn does not explain, does not have some symbolic reference, whether it be to the Suffering Servant or to the paschal lamb, or both? And since the water-Spirit equation is not specified until chap. 7, are we to believe that in none of the earlier passages water refers to the Spirit?<sup>32</sup> Thus, it might be more precise to say that the symbols the Evangelist explains are precisely the very difficult ones that might otherwise have been overlooked. To confine the Gospel's symbolism to them would be arbitrarily to prejudice our exegesis.<sup>33</sup>

Niewalda's investigation of the symbols used in the early Church for the sacraments can serve as a negative criterion in exegeting Jn. If there is no clear indication in the Gospel itself that a passage has symbolic reference to a sacrament, and if there is no evidence in the early Church that the passage was understood sacramentally, then we may well rule out a sacramental exegesis. A sacramental symbol that the Evangelist intended to be easily understood without explanation should have left some trace in art or in liturgy or in the writings of the Fathers. Without such assurance, we may suspect that we are dealing with modern imaginative eisegesis.

Let us consider, for instance, Cullmann's<sup>34</sup> interpretation of the foot-washing scene in chap. 13 as a symbol of the Eucharist. Jesus specifically holds up the foot washing as an example of humble and

<sup>31</sup> We might add the comparison of the crucified Christ to the brazen serpent (3:14), of the multiplication of the loaves to the gift of manna (chap. 6), and the symbolism of 12:32-33. See Vawter, *art. cit.* (supra n. 14) p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> We do not suggest that every mention of water refers to the Spirit; but since the Spirit gives life (6:63), we would find difficulty in disassociating the "living water" of chap. 4 from the Spirit.

<sup>33</sup> This is the basic objection that we would bring against Michaelis' work (supra n. 12). Many of his objections against Cullmann are perfectly valid, but on the whole he seems to demand from the Evangelist a type of indication that we might expect in a twentieth-century writer. This is to overly narrow the symbolic import of Jn.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 105-9.

loving service to one's brethren (13:15). Nevertheless, in this scene many have seen a symbolic reference to a sacrament or sacraments. Verse 10 reads: "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet." The first clause, says Cullmann, "can surely have only this meaning; he who has received Baptism, even when he sins afresh, needs no second Baptism." While we would not attribute to this exegesis the certainty that Cullmann gives it, we believe that some symbolic reference to baptism is solidly probable, and it was well known in antiquity.<sup>35</sup> But Cullmann goes on to maintain that the clause "except for his feet," which is of doubtful authenticity,<sup>36</sup> is a symbol of the Eucharist, a sacrament which is meant to be repeated. This is a view shared by Goguel, Loisy, W. Bauer, and Macgregor, who point out the connection between the washing of the feet as a symbol of love and the Eucharist as the sacrament of love. Now antiquity may have seen a reference to penance in this text, but not to the Eucharist. The lack of external support makes the exegesis suspect, especially since foot washing is scarcely a natural symbol for the Eucharist. The statement in v. 14 that the disciples must wash one another's feet would be an exceedingly strange form of a command to repeat the Eucharist. And so, on the basis of our criteria, we would reject this interpretation.

<sup>35</sup> In our pamphlet commentary (supra n. 23) pp. 67-68, we have listed our reasons for seeing a reference to baptism. But this symbolism must be interpreted loosely (we certainly do not mean that this scene is the baptism of the disciples). It is a secondary symbolism, perhaps gained by the fusion of two accounts; in the primary significance we have an example of love, and that is what must be repeated. But the washing, considered as bathing (v. 10), also symbolizes baptism in the sense that it flows from the power of Jesus (compare 13:3 with Mt 28:18-19) and is necessary if we are to have a share with Him in the next life (13:8). The arguments against all sacramental symbolism proposed by Johann Michl, "Der Sinn der Fusswaschung," *Biblica* 40 (1959) 697-708, fail to appreciate any subtlety in the proposed symbolism. Schnackenburg's treatment, *art. cit.*, pp. 249-51, is much more nuanced.

<sup>36</sup> See M.-E. Boismard, *Revue biblique* 60 (1953) 353-56. Verse 10 should probably read: "The man who has bathed has no need to wash; he is clean all over." The excision of a reference to the feet delivers us from the exegesis proposed by H. von Campenhausen, "Zur Auslegung von Joh 13,6-10," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 33 (1934) 259-71, and championed by Craig, *art. cit.*, p. 37. These authors have suggested that the idea in v. 10 is that foot washing is valid baptism and that one need not wash the whole body (perhaps a polemic against the disciples of the Baptist). For completeness, we might add that E. Lohmeyer, "Die Fusswaschung," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 38 (1939) 74-94, saw in the foot washing a symbol of apostolic ordination.

*Fourth*, if thus far we have accepted some of the criteria of the sacramentalists, and if, in particular, we can employ Niewalda's criterion of traditional symbolism as a negative check, we cannot accept it as the sole positive criterion that he makes it. We agree that the author need not have explicitly explained a symbol, but can we rule out the need for some indications in the text or context?<sup>37</sup> Exegesis is still the determination of the author's intent, and not primarily the determination of the audience's understanding. We agree fully with Schnackenburg that the examination of how others understood the Gospel a century later cannot serve as a sole criterion of interpretation. (On that principle, could we not determine the literal meaning of the *OT* through its usage in the *NT*?) Such a criterion is especially open to question when we are dealing with something like symbolism, which lends itself to imaginative development.

Let us take an example. For Niewalda,<sup>38</sup> both the healing of the man at Bethesda in chap. 5 and the healing of the blind man in chap. 9 are symbols of the cleansing and healing wrought through baptism. There is good patristic and liturgical evidence for this interpretation of both.<sup>39</sup> Yet, what a difference of internal indication!

a) The main theme of chap. 9 is the opening of the man's eyes to what Jesus really is, in contrast to the blindness of the Pharisees (9:35-41). That baptism was spoken of as "enlightenment" (*phōtismos*) is seen in the *NT* (Heb 6:4; 10:32) and in the earliest patristic evidence.<sup>40</sup> If we turn to chap. 5, we find that the main theme concerns the Sabbath. The dramatic role of the man who was healed is reduced to a minimum. He recovers his health, but he receives no particu-

<sup>37</sup> So Niewalda, *op. cit.*, p. 165: "Von geringer oder gar keiner Bedeutung ist der logische Kontext, da der Bildzusammenhang dem antiken Menschen wichtiger ist als der Gedankengang."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-67. Cullmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 102, accepts both; Corell, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 67, rejects the first and accepts the second; Michaelis, *op. cit.*, p. 19, treats only the first and rejects it. D. M. Stanley, S.J., "The Mission of the Son," *Worship* 33 (1958-59) 30, seems favorable to the baptismal interpretation of chap. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Niewalda marshals the evidence. Both scenes are connected with baptism in catacomb art. For chap. 5, Tertullian and Chrysostom are among those who see baptismal reference; for chap. 9, Irenaeus and Chrysostom. For the lectionary evidence, see Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, pp. 363 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Justin, *Apol.* 1, 61: "This bath is called enlightenment." Notice that the *NT* references are from Heb, an epistle with strong Johannine affinities. See C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 1 (2nd. ed.; Paris, 1952) 109-38.

lar gift of understanding. His healing is simply the occasion for the Sabbath dispute.

b) In chap. 9 there is a specific connection between blindness and sin. The disciples think that physical blindness is an index of sin (9:2). Jesus denies this, but points out (9:4-5) that the healing of this blindness will demonstrate how, as the light of the world, He overcomes night, which is certainly a symbol for Satan's power. At the end (9:41) we hear that the Pharisees are spiritually blind and remain guilty of sin. Thus, the whole context lends itself easily to a symbolism of baptism removing sin.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the only reference to sin in the Bethesda story is the direction to "sin no more" in 5:14. This direction does no more than establish the connection between Jesus' power over sickness and His power over sin that is common to many miracles in the Synoptics. No figurative aspect of the healing is brought out as in chap. 9. True, the discourse that follows is concerned with the power to give life, but this is in the light of the rabbinic theology that God continues to give life *on the Sabbath*.

c) The man in chap. 9 is healed by washing in water (9:7). The man in chap. 5 is healed by the command of Jesus. In fact, this healing is contrasted with the healing that might have been accomplished by washing in the pool.

d) A symbolism is specified in 9:7 which connects the healing waters with Jesus. Siloam means "sent," and in Jn Jesus is the one sent. There is no such definite symbolism in chap. 5. Some have pointed out that the name of the pool is "Bethesda," which means "place of mercy." Actually, we now know that the Aramaic form of the name was *byt' d'tyn*, which does not refer to mercy. It is true that there could be a play on the Greek form of the name, but the manuscript evidence is very uncertain as to which is the real Greek form (Bethesda, Bezatha, or Bethsaida). In any case, the man was *not* healed in this pool. Another symbolism, suggested by Tertullian, labors under similar difficulties. A reference to baptism is seen in the angel's stirring of the waters and giving healing power to them (even though these waters do not heal the man!). It is well known that the verse that concerns

<sup>41</sup> Whether or not "blindness from birth," so often mentioned in chap. 9 (vv. 1, 2, 13, 18, 19, 20, 24, 32—the only case in the Gospels), is a deliberate reference to original sin, is more difficult to say.

the angel (5:4) is not found in any early Greek manuscript and is probably not authentic.

And so, while Niewalda's external criterion may fit both chap. 5 and chap. 9, there is no parity in the internal indications pointing to sacramental symbolism. It is quite plausible that the Evangelist may have intended a secondary reference to the healing and enlightening power of baptism in chap. 9, but he has left no real indication of a similar intention for chap. 5. Therefore, in our judgment, we should reject the claim for baptismal symbolism in chap. 5.

These observations have led us to two relatively clear criteria for judging the presence of sacramental symbolism in Jn. While there need be no clear identification of the symbolism, there should be some internal, contextual indication. This should be corroborated by the external criterion of good attestation for the sacramental interpretation in early Church art, liturgy, or literature. Now, of course, the combination of these two criteria will give us varying degrees of certitude in our exegesis. At times, as in chap. 9, the evidence may be strong enough to be reasonably probative. At other times, the internal evidence will be somewhat elusive, and the most we can have is a probability. If either criterion is totally unfulfilled, we should reject any sacramental symbolism, rather than allow ourselves to be victimized by accommodation.

#### APPLICATION OF THE CRITERIA

We shall not attempt to apply these criteria to every example of sacramental symbolism that has been proposed for Jn; some examples would obviously meet the criteria, some would obviously not. Let us take, however, some of the more difficult examples.

*First*, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan (Jn 1:19-34). In this scene Cullmann<sup>42</sup> sees the historical origin of Christian baptism and "a pointer to the baptism of the Christian community." This is fairly evident. For Jesus, His baptism marked the beginning of the public proclamation of God's dominion. For His followers, baptism was the means by which men were incorporated into this dominion. The two baptisms were joined because the apostolic kerygma, which began its narrative with the baptism of Jesus, put a demand on the listener to

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 60 ff. Also Corell, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56; Niewalda, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

be baptized. The question we wish to decide here, however, is whether *in Jn's account* there is any special baptismal symbolism beyond that which is the common heritage of all the Gospels. We should point out from the start that the external criterion is difficult to apply here, for references to the baptism of Jesus will not always specify Jn's account as the precise source of the symbolism.

The suggestion that Jn's account, in particular, specifies that Christian baptism will be a baptism communicating the Spirit is not too impressive. This is far clearer in the Synoptics (Mk 1:8; par.), where a baptism with a Holy Spirit is directly contrasted with a baptism with water. This contrast is not found in Jn, since 1:33 stands by itself.

Cullmann maintains, however, that Jn 1:26 really presents a deeper insight than the Synoptic contrast, for Jn contrasts John's baptism in water and the person of Jesus: "I am only baptizing in water, but there is one among you whom you do not recognize." The true significance of Christian baptism, Cullmann maintains, is achieved in the person of Jesus Himself—a truth foreshadowed in Jn. Actually, the supposed contrast in v. 26 does not exist. The contrast there is between John the Baptist and the one to come after him. The interrogators have demanded to know what the exact role of the Baptist is and why he is baptizing. He tells them that they should not worry about him, but about the more important one-to-come who stands in their midst.<sup>43</sup>

Does the fact that Jn 1:33 says that the Spirit rested on Jesus symbolize that Christian baptism will communicate a permanent gift of the Spirit? Jn 1:33 is a reminiscence of the Suffering Servant passage in Is 42:1; and the Suffering Servant theme in the baptism of Jesus is found in all the Gospels (Mk 1:11 also echoes Is 42:1). We might add that the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at the baptism, as described in the Synoptics, is also permanent (see Mt 4:1, where the Spirit conducts Jesus into the desert). Again there is no distinct sacramental symbolism in the Johannine account.

According to Cullmann, Corell, and Niewalda, Jn like Paul connects Christian baptism with the death of Jesus, for the Baptist points Him out (1:29) as "the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin."

<sup>43</sup> Michaelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4.



Thus, in a baptismal context, Jesus was marked out as one to die for sin. We admit as obvious that it was the baptism of Jesus which revealed Him to be the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God (even though Jn does not specifically draw this causal relation, for Jn does not describe the baptism of Jesus as such). Likewise, we admit that the designation of Jesus as the Lamb, at least in its Gospel sense, refers to His death. But how does the fact that Jesus' baptism pointed to His death also signify that from His death would flow Christian baptism? It is true that the Lamb of God who will die for sin (1:29) will also baptize with a Holy Spirit (1:33), but one must admit that there is no hint in Jn of the connection of the two ideas. Is there any more or less connection in the Synoptics between Jesus as the Suffering Servant (Mk 1:11) and baptism with a Holy Spirit (Mk 1:8)?

Thus, the special baptismal symbolism attributed to Jn's account of the scene lies in extremely complicated exegesis—exegesis which finds little support in the Gospel itself.

*Second*, the Cana scene (Jn 2:1–11). Fr. Vawter<sup>44</sup> suggests for this scene a symbolic reference to the sacrament of matrimony, or at least to marriage as a sacred institution in the sense of Eph 5:25, which compares it to the union between Christ and the Church. Vawter stresses the presence of Mary at Cana as the “woman” and draws on what is, in our opinion, the very plausible relation to the figure of the “woman” at the cross (Jn 19:26) and in Ap 12. He thus sees Mary as a symbol of the Church. “The presence of Mary-the-Church at this wedding forecasts the sacramental nature of Christian marriage once the glorification of Jesus is accomplished.” Jesus and the Church are present at this marriage, the two terms of the comparison in Eph 5.

In applying our external criterion to this suggestion, we find that most of the ancient evidence connects Cana with the Eucharist or baptism.<sup>45</sup> However, a few of the Fathers<sup>46</sup> do see in the Lord's presence at Cana a tacit attestation of the sanctity of marriage against any

<sup>44</sup> *Art. cit.* (supra n. 14) p. 164.

<sup>45</sup> Niewalda, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–38.

<sup>46</sup> For references to Tertullian and Cyril of Alexandria, see M. F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel* (Cambridge, 1960) pp. 42–43. The Fathers mentioned this scene in their treatises on marriage, but that is not exactly the same as seeing the scene as a symbol of Christian matrimony. As Wiles remarks, marriage is never suggested as the essential meaning of the sign.

enkratitic extremes. By way of internal support, Stanley<sup>47</sup> reminds us of the wedding symbolism present in the *OT*, where marriage symbolizes the relations between God and Israel. Thus, for him, the mention of the wedding at Cana could symbolize the relations of Christ and the Church, which in turn could point to Christian marriage.

In our judgment, neither the external nor the internal evidence for a symbolic reference to matrimony is strong. The wedding is only the backdrop and occasion for the story, and the joining of the man and woman does not have any direct role in the narrative. In the Vawter-Stanley hypothesis we still have an obvious difficulty: Jesus and Mary-the-Church are only present; there is no union between them to symbolize matrimony as in Eph 5. Perhaps our objections smack too much of modern logic, but the proposed symbolism does not seem to have made any particular impression in antiquity either, at least in the form proposed by Vawter and Stanley. We cannot allow, then, any more than a remote possibility to the symbolism.

The Eucharistic reference of changing the water into wine<sup>48</sup> is better supported. Niewalda<sup>49</sup> points out its early occurrence in a fresco in an Alexandrian catacomb, where it is linked to the multiplication of the loaves. St. Irenaeus says that "Mary was hastening the wonderful sign of the wine and wanted before the [appointed] time to partake of the cup of recapitulation."<sup>50</sup> Internally, too, there are many possible hints of Eucharistic symbolism. The changing of water to wine occurs before Passover (2:13), as does the multiplication of the loaves (6:4) and the Last Supper. Thus, before Passover we have a wine miracle and a bread miracle; these might be seen as taking the place of the Eucharistic institution, which Jn does not mention.

<sup>47</sup> "Cana as Epiphany," *Worship* 32 (1957-58) 83-89.

<sup>48</sup> Cullmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-71 (he sees it as a complement to the baptismal reference proposed for chap. 1); Corell, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58; Stanley, "Cana," p. 88; Niewalda, *op. cit.*, p. 166 (he would not exclude a baptismal reference as suggested by Ephraem the Syrian).

<sup>49</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 137 (second or third century).

<sup>50</sup> *Adv. haer.* 3, 16, 7: "... compendii poculo," i.e., as F. Sagnard, O.P., explains it (*Sources chrétiennes* 34, 295-97, n. 1), the cup "which sums up and concentrates in it the mysteries of salvation, in a striking 'epitome' of the marvels of grace . . . : it is the cup of the Eucharist, 'the wonderful sign of the wine' of which Cana is the figure . . . in intimate connection with 'the hour of His passion.'"

There is a probable connection with the death of Jesus in the mention of the hour that was to come (2:4) and would only begin at the Last Supper (13:1). The water becomes wine, as the wine would become blood. The wine at Cana is praised as "the quality wine," the wine of the new dispensation kept until now; and this wine is the means of Jesus' manifesting His glory (2:11 and 17:5). All of these indications, though far from conclusive, do have special significance when we realize that, for the Jew, wine was the blood of the grape.<sup>51</sup> Thus, on the basis of our criteria, we would allow a good probability for the Eucharistic symbolism of Cana.<sup>52</sup>

*Third*, the cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22). Cullmann<sup>53</sup> suggests this as the other half of the Eucharistic symbolism that we have seen at Cana: there the blood, here the body, of Christ. The Temple does stand for the body of Jesus (2:21); nevertheless, scarcely the Eucharistic body, which in Jn is referred to as "flesh." That this ingenious theory proposed by Cullmann has no real internal support is obvious, nor is there an echo in tradition for Eucharistic symbolism in the cleansing of the Temple.

Also to be rejected is A. Schweizer's<sup>54</sup> suggestion that the Temple scene is a reference to baptism because it is a fulfilment of Ez 47:1-12, where water flows out from the Temple. While the threatened destruction of the old Temple and its replacement with a temple of messianic nature may have been a fulfilment of a whole battery of OT passages, there is no reason to single out Ez 47 in particular, or to think that the stream of water mentioned there was in the Evangelist's mind.

*Fourth*, a baptismal symbolism has been suggested by Niewalda<sup>55</sup> for the walking on the water (6:16-21), the Good Shepherd discourse (10:1-18), and the Lazarus story (11:1-45). All of these meet to some extent his criterion of traditional symbolism. However, they do not meet any criterion of internal evidence. We can see how Lazarus'

<sup>51</sup> Gn 49:11; Dt 32:14; Sir 50:15.

<sup>52</sup> Naturally, any sacramental symbolism is secondary. The principal idea seems to be that the old has passed away in favor of a new creation; the replacement of the Jewish purifications; and the plenitude of wine as a sign of the messianic days.

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 71-74.

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.* (supra n. 11) p. 347.

<sup>55</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 166-67. The reference to baptism in the walking on the water is just possible. Also, he sees a possible reference to penance in the Lazarus story (along with Irenaeus): the power of binding and loosing is related to the loosing of Lazarus' feet.

return to life might be connected in Christian thought with rebirth by baptism, especially in the light of Paul's theology (Col 2:12), but the Evangelist, who knew both ideas, makes no attempt to connect them. Likewise, the connection of baptism and incorporation into the Shepherd's flock is a logical deduction but scarcely an exegetical one.

*Fifth*, the anointing at Bethany (12:1-11). Fr. Vawter<sup>56</sup> sees here a symbolic reference to extreme unction. In Jn this scene does not serve to prepare for the physical burial of the Lord, as it does in the Synoptics, for there is a real burial described in Jn 19:39-42 which would make such preparation otiose. Rather, the anointing of chap. 12 prepares for the type of burial we hear of in 12:24, the burial of the seed in the ground so that it may bear rich fruit. Thus, the anointing has a connection with the glorification and exaltation of the Lord. Then Vawter tells us: "The day of Christ's burial is the day of the Church." This is somehow connected to the suggestion that the anointing in Jn may symbolize the sacrament of final anointing referred to in Jas 5:14-15. We must humbly admit that the logic of this connection escapes us, unless perhaps the author means that the sacrament of anointing predicts our resurrection as the anointing at Bethany predicted Christ's. However, as has been seen more clearly in recent years, the sacrament of anointing was primarily directed against sickness, not against death.<sup>57</sup> This, plus the fact that the anointing at Bethany was with perfume (*myron*) and not oil (*elaion*), removes any internal indications of a symbolic reference to extreme unction. As far as we know, there is no ancient tradition to support such symbolism.

*Sixth*, the allegory of the vine (15:1-8). Many<sup>58</sup> have seen a Eucharistic reference here. Tradition seems to give good support to this symbolism, beginning with the blessing over the chalice reported in the *Didache*: "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, that you have revealed to us through Jesus your ser-

<sup>56</sup> *Art. cit.*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Palmer, S.J., "The Purpose of Anointing the Sick," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 19 (1958) 309-44; and Kevin Condon, "The Sacrament of Healing," *Scripture* 11 (1959) 33-42.

<sup>58</sup> Cullmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-13; Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71, 394; Corell, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74; Niewalda, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

vant."<sup>59</sup> Such an early connection of the vine and the Eucharist is impressive.

There is internal evidence, too, for sacramental symbolism. The figure of the vine is placed in the setting of the Last Supper; and even if the Evangelist did not mention the Eucharist at the Supper, we can scarcely believe that he did not know of its place there. The disciples have just drunk the Eucharistic wine-made-blood, "the fruit of the vine" (Mk 14:25). The primary stress in the description of the vine and the branches is on unity; this is also one of the signal effects of the Eucharist in early Christian theology (1 Cor 10:17).

There are similarities between the vine-and-the-branch passage and the Eucharistic section in 6:51-58. The branch must abide in or remain on the vine; in 6:56 we hear: "The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood *abides in* me and I in him." Cut off from the vine, the branch will wither because life comes to the branch through the vine; in 6:57 we hear: "The man who feeds on me will have his life through me." The unity represented by the vine demands love (15:9), love so great as to lay down one's life for one's loved ones (15:13). Thus, there is a connection between the fruitful vine and the Lord's death.<sup>60</sup> In 6:51 we hear: "The bread that I shall give is my own flesh for the life of the world"; and we note that "give" here is a reference to giving in death. And so it seems that "I am the real vine" (15:1) is very close to "I am the living bread" (6:51). In their primary meaning both metaphors may refer to divine wisdom as the source of life, but both may also have a secondary reference to the Eucharist.<sup>61</sup> Thus, we believe that the proposed Eucharistic symbolism of chap. 15 meets our criteria satisfactorily.

*Seventh*, the draught of fish and the meal in chap. 21. The catch of 153 fish in 21:6-8, 10-11 is, as Lk 5:1-11 teaches us, probably a symbol of the mission of conversion, i.e., the fish caught symbolize those converted by the disciples as fishers of men. This is reinforced by the

<sup>59</sup> *Didache* 9, 2. For other references see Niewalda, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-79.

<sup>60</sup> Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 71: "The union, therefore, of the eucharistic cup is the union of love unto death, the love of the cross."

<sup>61</sup> Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 113, draws still another parallel: the branch which is cast off and is to be burned is a reference to Judas, paralleling the reference to Judas in 6:70. This seems farfetched.

emphasis that the net which was the instrument of the catch was not torn (21:11), a symbol which can be interpreted in reference to the Church. Peter's role as the shepherd in 21:15-17 would fit into this general picture.

Now, since this conversion logically implies baptism, are we to think that the Evangelist had baptism specifically in mind? There is evidence for this in antiquity.<sup>62</sup> The internal case for baptismal symbolism would be strengthened if St. Jerome's interpretation of the number 153 is correct. In his commentary on Ez 47:9-12, he sees a connection between the scene in Jn and that of the fish caught in the miraculous stream that flows from Ezechiel's Temple. If Jn had the Ezechiel passage in mind with the number 153,<sup>63</sup> then the miraculous stream of baptismal water flowing from the new temple which is Christ (Jn 7:38; 2:21) could have been meant. However, this type of exegesis is quite complicated and tentative; it would not allow us to characterize the baptismal interpretation of the scene as more than possible.

A similar case can be put forward for Eucharistic symbolism in 21:9, 13, with its meal consisting of fish (*opsarion*) and a loaf of bread, to which Jesus invited the seven disciples (21:2). Niewalda<sup>64</sup> points out that the representation of a meal with seven at table appears in a Eucharistic context in catacomb art. There are difficulties, of course: there is no mention of wine at this meal,<sup>65</sup> nor is the symbolism of the fish (*ichthys*) for Jesus Christ really applicable here. However, since the symbolism could be based on the bread alone, these difficulties are probably not insurmountable.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> E.g., Ephraem the Syrian; see Niewalda, *op. cit.*, p. 83. In pictorial representations it would be difficult to distinguish which account of the draught of fish was meant, Jn's or Lk's.

<sup>63</sup> In Ez, fishermen stand beside the stream from En-gedi to En-eglaim. Emerton, *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958) 86 ff., and Ackroyd, *ibid.* 10 (1959) 94, calculate how the letters of these names add up to 153 (in Hebrew and in Greek).

<sup>64</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 168. He does not seem to find the evidence for the Eucharistic interpretation of the passage overwhelming. Again, it is not always easy to distinguish pictorial representation of the meal in Jn 21 from that of other "Eucharistic" meals recorded in the NT.

<sup>65</sup> However, many are willing to see Eucharistic symbolism in Lk 24:30, where only bread is mentioned.

<sup>66</sup> Perhaps it is well to remind ourselves that we are not asking whether or not the

Is there a general basis for Eucharistic symbolism in all the post-resurrectional meals in the Gospels? If in the reception of the Eucharist the early Christians awaited the return of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26), they may well have read Eucharistic significance into those meals where the resurrected Lord did appear among men. Certainly, the vocabulary used of the meal in Jn 21 is significant in the light of the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6:11) and of the words that the Synoptics record at the Last Supper:

Jn 21:13: "Jesus took the bread [gave thanks: D, Syr<sup>a</sup>] and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish."

Jn 6:11: "Jesus took the loaves of bread, gave thanks, and distributed them to those seated there, and did the same with the fish."

Mk 14:22: "And taking the bread, He blessed, broke, and gave it to them."

If there are Eucharistic overtones in the multiplication of the loaves (and we believe there are, not only in Jn, but also in the Synoptic accounts), there may well be Eucharistic overtones in the very similar account in Jn 21. And the description of the postresurrectional meal in Jn 21 may have reminded the Christian of the Last Supper as well. But again, we cannot go beyond possibility.

With this we can bring our treatment to a close. Obviously, we have not solved all the difficulties, nor have we proposed foolproof criteria which will work in every instance. But we hope that we have made a contribution toward bringing the proposed Johannine sacramentary under workable control.

## APPENDIX

### THE JOHANNINE SACRAMENTARY

The following is a list of passages in which the various authors mentioned throughout the article have seen sacramental symbolism. In the right margin we indicate how these proposed contributions to the sacramentary meet the criteria that we have set up.

**Matrimony:** Cana . . . . . *Remotely possible*

Eucharist was celebrated on the shores of the lake, but whether or not the account of the meal has Eucharistic symbolism. Among those who support Eucharistic symbolism are Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 484: "This meal was probably intended to call to the minds of the readers eucharistic associations"; Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

**Extreme Unction:** Anointing at Bethany . . . . . *Rejected*

**Penance:** Lazarus . . . . . *Rejected*  
 Jn 20:23 . . . . . *Council of Trent*

**Baptism:**

Baptism of Jesus—symbolism beyond what is found in the Synoptic accounts  
*Rejected*

Cana . . . . . *Rejected*

Cleansing of the Temple . . . . . *Rejected*

Conversation with Nicodemus . . . . . *Acceptable*

Conversation with the Samaritan woman . . . . . *Acceptable*

Healing at Bethesda . . . . . *Rejected*

The walking on the water . . . . . *Rejected*

Source of living waters (7:38) . . . . . *Acceptable*

Healing of the man born blind . . . . . *Acceptable*

The Good Shepherd . . . . . *Rejected*

The raising of Lazarus . . . . . *Rejected*

The foot washing . . . . . *Acceptable*

The miraculous draught of fish (21) . . . . . *Possible*

**Eucharist:**

Cana . . . . . *Acceptable*

Cleansing of the Temple . . . . . *Rejected*

“My meat is to do the will of my Father” (4:31–34) . . . . . *Rejected*

Chapter 6 . . . . . *Acceptable*

The foot washing . . . . . *Rejected*

The vine and the branches . . . . . *Acceptable*

Meal of bread and fish (21) . . . . . *Possible*

**Baptism and Eucharist:**

Blood and water from the spear thrust (19:34) . . . . . *Acceptable*

Water and blood as witnesses (1 Jn 5:8) . . . . . *Acceptable*