

LONERGAN ON EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

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*[Loneragan's formal treatment of the theology of the Eucharist was confined to some early studies. The author of this article here applies principles drawn from Lonergan's mature writings to the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the cross. In particular, Lonergan's theology of grace is found to shed light on problems associated with the eucharistic theories of Anscar Vonier. Lonergan's view of theological method is also judged to be relevant to contemporary discussion of the *lex orandi*.]*

THE NAME OF BERNARD LONERGAN is not one that figures prominently in sacramental theology. One associates his name in the first place with the question of method, and then with the theology of grace, Trinity, and Christology. However, the all-embracing relevance of the question of method and the fundamental orientations arising from his philosophy combine to raise questions for sacramental theologians as well as for others. Lonergan gave us a few early writings on the question of Eucharistic sacrifice. In themselves these are not of great value, but are sufficient to indicate his own personal interest in the Eucharist and the central place it had in his own mind in relation to some of the basic themes of his thought as these were already being broached in the 1930s and 1940s.

Reflecting on these various pointers, John McDermott has written an article on Lonergan's "sacramental vision."¹ In this he was able to show that his writings on grace were particularly relevant to the question of the sacraments, even though these are mentioned only incidentally in Lonergan's study of grace.² A similar point was made some 25 years ago by the

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¹ John M. McDermott, "The Sacramental Vision of Lonergan's Grace and Freedom," *Sapientia* (Buenos Aires) 50 (1995) 115–48. See also Stephen Happel, "Sacraments: Symbols that Redirect Our Desires," in *The Desires of the Human Heart: An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Vernon Gregson (New York: Paulist, 1988) 237–54.

² *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed.

late Irish theologian Brian McNamara who used Lonergan's *Grace and Freedom* in particular to tease out some of the knotty problems involved in the "mystery-presence" approach to the Eucharist.³ This article was noticed by the late Edward Kilmartin who made considerable use of it in his final work.⁴ The recent publication of Kilmartin's book is the immediate occasion for my article, since it underlines the relevance of the question as to how significant is Lonergan's work for sacramental theology. I intend here to bring this matter into focus around the issue of the presence of the sacrifice of the cross in the Eucharist.⁵

This in fact was one of the points that arose in Lonergan's early essay *De notione sacrificii*, the most interesting of his few early writings on the Eucharist.⁶ It covers 18 Latin pages and has not yet been published.⁷ In this work one should notice, first of all, the definition of sacrifice as "the appropriate symbol of a sacrificial attitude."⁸ This definition is noteworthy in that it marks a turn from a ritualistic to a more anthropocentric approach. Among the authors whom Lonergan was using at the time the ritualistic notion had predominated through the idea of sacrifice as a change in the victim, generally by its destruction. Instead of this, Lonergan focuses on the significance of the symbol. In time this definition, when joined with his later work on the meaning of symbolism, would suggest a fruitful devel-

J. Patout Burns (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974; latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000). Here the earlier printing is cited. McDermott also made particular use of an article dated 1935 but only recently come to light: Bernard Lonergan, "Pantôn anakephalaiôsis: The Restoration of all Things," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 9 (1991) 139–72.

³ Brian McNamara, "Christus patiens in Mass and Sacraments: Higher Perspectives," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 42 (1975) 17–35.

⁴ Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert Daly (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998). I review this book in *Milltown Studies* no. 45 (Summer 2000) 176–83.

⁵ The relevance of Lonergan's thought for Christ's presence in host and cup is the subject of my article, "Lonergan and Eucharistic Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 62 (1996/97) 17–28; also, in a summary way, in my *The Eucharist, Problems in Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 223–26.

⁶ Two others are, firstly, a devotional article, "The Mass and Man," *The Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, June 1947, reprinted in *The Catholic Mind* 45 (September 1947) 571–76; secondly, an unpublished set of notes of 99 pages on the Eucharist. Part of this material was later edited as a codex on sacrifice and is henceforth referred to below as "Codex." This unpublished material is preserved in the Lonergan Research Institute in Toronto.

⁷ A translation by Michael Shields, S.J., entitled *The Notion of Sacrifice*, may be consulted at Toronto's Lonergan Research Institute, or at one of the various Lonergan Centers. As this translation is presented in numbered paragraphs, my references are to the version's pages and paragraphs.

⁸ *The Notion of Sacrifice* 1, no. 1. In support of this definition Lonergan cites Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.5; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (ST) 2–2, q. 85, a. 2.

opment for sacramental theology.⁹ His highlighting of the sacrificial attitude of Christ and of the worshipers is also an aspect to be noted and one to which I shall return.

The main point to be retained from *De notione sacrificii* is Lonergan's discussion of the Tridentine teaching that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. Much of the theological interest of the time focused on the meaning of the word "same." Already in the 1920s writers such as Odo Casel and Anscar Vonier were interpreting "same" in the sense of a numerical identity of the sacrifice. This would have been rejected by much of the earlier tradition, not only by the Scotists generally, but by leading Thomists such as Louis Billot and Ludwig Lercher. Lonergan opted for a numerical identity, but not for the reason that his symbolist definition of sacrifice might have suggested. Supporters of the notion of a sacramental sacrifice would have cited at this point the sacramental principle that sacraments bring about what they signify. Therefore the Eucharist brings about the reality of the sacrifice of the cross in a symbolic but real way.

The notion of a sacramental sacrifice is associated in particular with the work of Anscar Vonier whose main argument for his position was an appeal to the work of Aquinas.¹⁰ In fact when one examines closely the texts of Aquinas on the matter, not least those cited by Vonier, their explicit statement falls somewhat short of the meaning Vonier had in mind. This is admitted even by one of Vonier's most committed disciples, Burkhard Neunheuser, who wrote as follows about Aquinas's treatise on the matter in the third part of the *Summa theologiae*: "Certainly we do not find [in Aquinas] one explicit account, which brings all these [i.e., Vonier's] themes and positions together. The doctrine on the Eucharist as sacrifice is spread out over the whole treatise, but it is there, and can be gleaned from the entire presentation, perhaps not without straining somewhat, which then the various aspects of later explanation make clear."¹¹ That Vonier's account of Aquinas is true to the Master remains a matter of dispute. A number of scholars, for different reasons, reject his position, both in itself and as an interpretation of Aquinas.¹²

Lonergan's difficulty with sacramental sacrifice is not entirely clear. It begins with his notion of sacrifice as essentially defined in relation to

⁹ See Stephen Happel, "Sacraments: Symbols that Redirect our Desires" 245–52 and the cited references.

¹⁰ Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1925).

¹¹ Burkhard Neunheuser, *Eucharistie in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte IV, 4b (Freiburg: Herder, 1963) 41, my translation. As a basis in Aquinas, Neunheuser cites especially *ST* 3, q. 79, a. 1 and q. 83, a. 1.

¹² Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West* 253; David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 270 and 233–35.

sacrificial attitude. A sacrifice, he says, cannot effect such an attitude in the way that a sacrament effects what it signifies.¹³ The reason appears to be that the kind of efficacy *ex opere operato* implied by the sacramental principle does not do justice to the way sacrifice depends by definition on the sacrificial attitude of the members of the Church and so on the principle of cooperation *ex opere operantis*. Lonergan referred here to the way the ritual of the Eucharist is symbol of the sacrificial attitude of the members of the Church, insofar as, by its essential meaning, it presents itself as source of this attitude. However, the sacrificial attitude of the actual worshipers, in any given instance, enters into the constitution of the sacrifice only accidentally.¹⁴

Lonergan's emphasis on the sacrificial attitude not only of Christ but of the members of the Church, is remarkable for its time. As already noted, it underlines an anthropocentric turn in his thought. This is in line with the general emphasis in his later work on the subjective conditions of thought and consciousness. McNamara's essay eventually emphasized the configuration of the worshipers with Christ, one of the aspects that appealed to Kilmartin although in his case the stress is on the faith of the actual participants as the locus of the presence of the mysteries.

Lonergan's approach here was remarkable also in that, from within the Thomist tradition, he spoke so clearly of the Church in his explanation of the very definition of sacrifice. Kilmartin strongly pressed that Thomistic theology has absorbed the ecclesiological aspect of the Eucharist into the Christological. He saw this especially in the understanding of the role of the celebrant. The aspect of this theology that Kilmartin picked out for criticism, namely that it is through representing Christ in consecrating and offering that the priest represents the Church, is certainly found in Lonergan, but not to the exclusion of other aspects in the way Kilmartin might be held to suggest. Lonergan in fact, in that work as in other writings from his early period, showed a particular concern for the social dimension of Christianity and for the mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ.¹⁵ This concern was reflected inevitably in his theology of the Eucharist. It is not too much to say that the sacrificial attitude of the total Mystical Body, Head and members, is the central idea around which is built the entire exposition of the essay *The Notion of Sacrifice*.

Despite this contrast between the approaches of Lonergan and Vonier,

¹³ *The Notion of Sacrifice* 8, no. 25. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ This concern is evident in this article's concluding quotation and in the early essay, "Pantôn anakephalaiôsis" already cited in n. 2 above. See also "The Mystical Body of Christ," an unpublished address delivered in 1951, available at any of the various Lonergan Centers or at the Lonergan Research Institute, Toronto. See also Codex (n. 6 above), Thesis 4, Corollarium "De Communionem . . . Quenam ista unio."

there remains a certain agreement between them in that both argue for a numerical identity between the sacrifice of the cross and that of the Eucharist. But in Lonergan's case, in this early essay, the focus is on formal causality rather than on efficient causality. Besides the points previously established by the Council of Trent in the matter, Lonergan appealed to the intentionality of the cross and Eucharist. Intentionality here is presented by Lonergan as an aspect of formal causality. In a sacrifice, he wrote, the formal cause "is that by which the subject or material cause becomes an appropriate symbol of a sacrificial attitude."¹⁶ Here he developed the point as follows: "The intentionality (*esse intentionale*) which on the cross manifests Christ's sacrificial attitude is numerically the same as the intentionality manifested in the Eucharist."

In focusing on the *esse intentionale* or central meaning of Christ's sacrifice in this way, Lonergan distinguished it from those elements through which this meaning was embodied in time and space, assigning them partly to the sphere of formal causality and partly to that of material causality. This section of his essay is not notable for its clarity. When Brian McNamara came to discuss the same problem some decades later, he was able to benefit from the scheme of levels of consciousness established by Lonergan's *Insight*.¹⁷ This enabled the Irish theologian to assign the aspect of insight and meaning to the level of understanding, and the aspect of spatial and temporal elements to the level of experience.

In Lonergan's mature writing the aspect of meaning is that which is grasped by the act of understanding, the insight. Insight is the grasp of experience as intelligibly unified, but the aspect of the temporal and the spatial belongs in itself to what Lonergan called experience. McNamara appositely quotes the statement, "The differences of particular places and particular times involve no immanent intelligibility of their own."¹⁸ Later still, Kilmartin seized on this principle in his approach to the problem: "Spatial and temporal conditions are not relevant to the basic meaning of occurrences. The basic meaning of the sacrifice of the cross, of what occurred, is independent of the circumstances of the death *as meaning*."¹⁹

Lonergan never returned to this question in his later writings. Aspects of his thought that were clarified in his mind only subsequently, especially as developed in *Grace and Freedom*, are rightly held to shed considerable light on our topic, as the articles by McDermott and McNamara illustrate. But one issue in particular makes a difference between the earlier writings

¹⁶ *The Notion of Sacrifice* 18 no. 59.

¹⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans Green, 1958; latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992).

¹⁸ *Insight* 27, cited by McNamara, "Christus patiens" 23.

¹⁹ Edward Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 313, his emphasis. Kilmartin derives this quotation from McNamara, "Christus patiens" 23, n. 14.

and his later work, namely the real distinction between essence and existence and its implications for theological issues.²⁰ Though Lonergan apparently had already accepted this principle by the date normally assigned to *The Notion of Sacrifice*, it is to be noted that the implications of that distinction are absent from that work.²¹

In Lonergan the level of formal cause, of which the *esse intentionale* is seen as an aspect, is distinguished from that of *esse naturale*, which might be described as the level of concrete reality.²² The whole debate raised by writers such as Casel and Vonier implied a mysterious identity between Calvary and Eucharist, which, at least in the case of some expressions of Casel, seemed to include in some sense the historical reality of the original event and so, to that extent, to occur on the level of *esse naturale*.²³

In his earlier writings Lonergan had not yet come to grips with the real distinction between essence and existence and its implications for the various problems. In such a perspective it is understandable that issues that would later be treated through essence and existence are treated in terms of matter and form, such as we have seen in *The Notion of Sacrifice*.²⁴ By the time Lonergan wrote his dissertation on grace the real distinction is a fixed presupposition in the background of the discussion of efficient and instrumental causality in *Grace and Freedom*. These provide then an existential element that would have made possible a different kind of explanation in regard to the numerical identity of cross and Eucharist. On the standard dating of *The Notion of Sacrifice* it remains a puzzle that he did not do this in that essay. Unfortunately, he never returned to the matter again.

²⁰ On Lonergan's coming to accept this distinction during his undergraduate theology in Rome, see Richard M. Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993) 115–16.

²¹ The date of *The Notion of Sacrifice* is uncertain, but it is usually held to be contemporary with a course on the Eucharist that Lonergan taught at Montreal during the academic year 1943–1944. The other two main writings on the Eucharist, referred to in n. 6 above, are also assigned to the 1940s in the usual chronology of Lonergan's works.

²² *The Notion of Sacrifice* 14 no. 45; 18 no. 60. For the distinction between *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale* in another context see *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997) 203.

²³ O. Casel, "Mysteriengengenwart," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1928) 145–224, at 158, 163, 171, 186.

²⁴ I have in mind an analogous development in the case of the notion of individuality that is discussed exclusively in terms of formal and material causality in 1935, but 40 years later is treated in terms of essence and existence. Compare the treatment in "Pantôn anakephalaiôsis" 152 with that in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985) 90–94.

FOUR RELEVANT CATEGORIES

The studies of Lonergan's sacramental teaching to which I referred at the beginning of my article touch on many issues. I now propose to narrow the perspective and to set out in a summary way four main points from Lonergan's later writings, beginning with *Grace and Freedom*, which are relevant to the sacraments in general and specifically to the problem about the Eucharist. These points include: the differentiation of consciousness; time and eternity; efficient causality; instrumental causality.

The Differentiation of Consciousness

Of these four points, the first is the most crucial and the one most characteristic of Lonergan's theology. It not only affects how one approaches the other three but also might even determine whether one accepts them as relevant at all. The differentiation of consciousness is one of the main fruits of that program of self-appropriation which Lonergan undertook in his principal work, *Insight*, though it received its clearest formulation only in *Method in Theology*.²⁵ The distinction or differentiation of consciousness into four dynamically interlocking operations—experience, understanding, judging, and deciding—is familiar in English-language theology today. Less commonly shared is Lonergan's conviction that the human mind, as a self-assembling totality of these four operations is our ultimate faculty of the real—not some vague free-floating occurrence called “experience” which is so often interpreted as a form of actual knowledge in itself. For Lonergan, experience is only potential knowledge, part of its infrastructure. The actual grasp of reality comes only with understanding and judgment, which form the suprastructure of knowledge.²⁶

The significance of this basic point cannot be developed here. I refer the reader to Lonergan's exposition in his major writings *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. Indeed the discovery of the nature of realism was for Lonergan the fundamental dividing line in all intellectual activity. He called it intellectual conversion. If one has no memory of the startling strangeness of the event, it is a discovery one has not yet made.²⁷ On the level of philosophical articulation he regards it as “very rare.”²⁸

From this basis Lonergan goes on to see these four operations combining in various ways to form what he calls various realms of meaning. By this term he designates the way our approach to various problems can be

²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

²⁶ See Lonergan, *A Third Collection* 116.

²⁷ Lonergan, “Introduction,” *Insight* xxviii.

²⁸ *Foundations of Theology*, ed. Philip McShane (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1971) 234.

characterized according to different standpoints, which determine not only the way issues are viewed in characteristically different ways but also according to different types of language. The main realms of meaning are those of common-sense, theory, and interiority. The ultimate root of these distinctions lies in the contrasting ways the same human mind works within the contrasting finality of each realm.²⁹

In particular there is the distinction between the realm of common-sense and that of theory.³⁰ The former is the realm of persons and things in their relations to us, and one speaks of them in language that is descriptive, concrete, imaginative, and often spontaneous. The realm of theory is concerned with the relationships among persons and things in themselves. Objects are known, not in their common-sense relations to us, but in their verifiable relations to one another. Here the appropriate language is explanatory, reflective, technical and systematic.

These two realms of meaning have a particular relevance in the context of worship and liturgy, where so much of the evidence used in debate comes from the common-sense pattern of experience, whereas the search for ultimate answers can eventually carry one into the metaphysical world of what Lonergan meant by theory and systematic viewpoint. A basic point for the whole discussion lies in the fact that these contrasting styles have their origin in the many-leveled dynamism of the one human mind. In the light of that fact alone it should be clear that there can be no ultimate rivalry between the different approaches. A consciousness that is authentically differentiated will recognize the scope, limits, and complementarity of the various realms of meaning and will have sufficient self-knowledge to know when to shift from one realm to another.

Lonergan's notion of the differentiation of consciousness gains a particular relevance in the context of the current discussion in sacramental theology about the roles of the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* in the formation of doctrine. This point was raised most recently by Edward Kilmartin who took up some ideas of Cesare Giraudo.³¹ According to Giraudo, the second millennium was marked by a certain dominance of the *lex credendi*. Both Kilmartin and Giraudo saw it as the task of the third millennium to hand back the primacy to the *lex orandi*.

The distinction between the two approaches, that of the *lex orandi* and that of the *lex credendi*, is somewhat analogous to that between undiffer-

²⁹ *Method in Theology* 81–99; 271–81.

³⁰ The realm of interiority is explained by Lonergan in *Method in Theology* 83–84.

³¹ Cesare Giraudo, *Eucaristia per la chiesa: Prospettive teologiche sull'eucaristia a partire dalla "lex orandi"* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1989) 14–26; Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 323 ff. and 343 ff.

entiated and differentiated consciousness, or perhaps to that between a common-sense realm and the realms of theory and interiority. Even if one is prepared to allow a certain validity to the points being made here by Kilmartin and Giraudo, an appreciation of the issues involved in the differentiation of consciousness must inevitably temper one's enthusiasm for the *lex orandi* as the key to the theology of the third millennium. If Lonergan was right about this issue, there is no substitute for hard-headed systematic and metaphysical thinking in theology, as I hope to argue in what follows.

Time and Eternity

My second point concerns the relationship between time and eternity which Lonergan takes over from Aquinas. The timelessness of God is inevitably an aspect of any discussion of the presence of the past in worship. It is not surprising that it has often been invoked in the discussion of the unity between the Eucharist and the cross. Here again, however, the differentiation of consciousness is crucial. It makes all the difference between conceiving eternity as totally outside time or as a kind of superior duration parallel to the duration of things in this world. The prevalence of process thought, the confusion that bedevils the notion of propitiation and the general difficulty in achieving a fully differentiated consciousness suggest that, more commonly than might have been supposed, real assent is frequently given to the second interpretation of eternity rather than to the first.

The first interpretation of timelessness in God brings into focus the divine plan as the source of all that happens in the world and in liturgy, particularly if one avoids the conceptualist explanation of the divine economy in terms of a voluntaristically conceived divine will.³² Once again, this was a point noted by Kilmartin and used to good effect. " 'Eternity' as predicated of God means total simultaneity. In other words, what God knows, wills, and effects, God knows, wills, and effects *eternally*."³³ From this point of view temporal succession can only be seen as the consequent term of a timeless act of divine knowing, willing and effecting. Such then is the divine priority of God over history, so that God's plan is the source, not only of all things, but of the mode of their emergence, whether necessary or contingent, and of the relationships between them. This is the fundamental perspective from which to approach any discussion of divine cau-

³² Lonergan, *Insight* 695; McNamara, "Christus patiens" 35, n. 3.

³³ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 312, his emphasis, citing McNamara, "Christus patiens" 20–24.

sality in history, but also for overcoming any suggestion about divine causality as a response to human affairs.³⁴

In particular this perspective sheds considerable light on how one assesses the ultimate significance of time and space in relation to the sacraments. Such questions arise within the context of duration. The historical scheme of present, past and future is an abiding framework of the language of Christian worship,³⁵ but duration remains an attribute of finite creation exclusively. In the divine scheme of things it is intelligible only as a consequent term for a timeless divine act of knowing, willing, and effecting. Timelessness is exclusively a divine attribute, so that, strictly speaking, no occurrence in this world can become timeless. Lonergan followed this up by insisting that space and time are aspects of what he calls “the empirical residue” which is basically matter. This is the point in his remark, already quoted, that differences of particular places and times involve no immanent intelligibility of their own.³⁶

However, to leave the issue there is to leave it on the level of formal and material causality, which is where *The Notion of Sacrifice* leaves it. There is also the existential level to be considered, and on this level particular times and places “are positive aspects of experience.”³⁷ As a result it is not surprising that when people are conscious of being under a special divine providence, as happens in the liturgy, they can have a very positive experience of being present to past and future in a way outside the ordinary flow of time. This fact is sufficiently widespread in religion for it to be taken seriously by the systematic theologian.³⁸ To this issue, I now add categories of Lonergan’s philosophy and theology which offer further elucidations.

Efficient Causality

Efficient causality is one of these categories. As an aid in understanding the sacraments, this kind of causality is sometimes criticized by some writers today.³⁹ Some of the difficulties associated with the notion lie in an

³⁴ For a brief discussion of the aspect of God’s transcendence of history in relation to the Eucharist as propitiatory, see Moloney, *The Eucharist* 217–18.

³⁵ *ST* 3, q. 65, a. 3.

³⁶ *Insight* 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 26.

³⁸ On the evidence of comparative religion see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961) 88–89. Something parallel is also found in Jewish liturgy, even though the notion of divinity in revealed religion is essentially different. For Jewish liturgy, among many authors one might cite Giraud, *Eucaristia* 139–46. For the difference in the notion of divinity, see Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1994) 39 ff.

³⁹ See Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpre-*

approach based on how one imagines it rather than on how one understands it—a tendency that Lonergan calls “picture-thinking” and that he is particularly concerned to counter.⁴⁰ His notion of efficient causality is a careful development of the Aristotelian account of transitive action of which the key principle is summed up in the phrase: the reality of the action is in the recipient: *actio est in passo*.⁴¹

By this approach, Lonergan following Aristotle takes his stand against any notion of efficient causality as an intermediary influx between cause and effect. Such a notion is excluded since the question of origin would recur in the case of this intermediary entity and so on into infinity. The only way to resist this infinite regress is to take one’s stand at the very beginning and to insist that the reality of action is identical with that of the new reality which the recipient acquires as a result of the action; or more accurately, it is this new reality with a real relation of dependence on its cause. This analysis yields the crucial conclusion that action is the actuality of the cause in the effect. Indeed that is the very nature of presence as such. The presence of A to B is not some prior condition of the action of A on B but the result of the action of A on B or, in other words, an aspect of the effect that A has produced in B.

Presence is of course a central category for Eucharistic theology not only for the understanding of the consecrated gifts but also for the notion of the actualization of past and future in the liturgy. If one accepts this analysis, one will be able to find the presence of the mysteries of Christ’s life in the liturgy through the efficient causality that these past events still exercise on worship and on worshipers. If one does not accept this analysis, one will be more conscious of the distance between Calvary and Mass and will be looking around for some intermediate reality such as the glorified being of Christ in which his past actions have become “eternalized.” According to Kilmartin, this has been the most popular solution to the problem.⁴² In such an approach one will very likely underestimate the force of Aquinas’s key statement that Calvary is present in the Mass, not only in being represented there, but also through the effects flowing from the past into the present.⁴³

Clearly this is a central issue not only in the interpretation of Aquinas

tation of Christian Existence, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeline Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 410–12.

⁴⁰ *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974) 76–78.

⁴¹ *Grace and Freedom* 63–91; *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967; latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988) 54–68.

⁴² Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 321.

⁴³ For Aquinas see *ST* 3, q. 83, a. 1.

but also in the formulation of contemporary positions. Kilmartin's development of the point is a good illustration of how Lonergan's approach, mediated to him by McNamara, can make a contribution today. Kilmartin faced the issue in dealing with the interpretation of Aquinas advanced by Ferdinand Pratzner in particular.⁴⁴ According to Pratzner, Aquinas situated the objective reality of Christ's historical sacrifice simply in the past. In the Eucharist then the only sense of the presence of the past came about through its being recalled subjectively by the worshipers.

What Pratzner missed here is the role of instrumental efficient causality in the system of Aquinas. This is the basis of Kilmartin's argument against him, invoking a statement of Aquinas which he found in McNamara: "All the actions and passions of Christ work instrumentally through the power of the divinity for human salvation."⁴⁵ Kilmartin concluded: "Pratzner has not reckoned with what was axiomatic for Aquinas that the historical living of Christ is really present in all sacramental celebrations of the Church: a presence in which one or other event of Christ's life is highlighted, and to which corresponds the offer of the proper dispositions to respond to the represented saving event."⁴⁶ In other words, the basis for that presence throughout history is the effects of the "actions and passions" of Christ, brought about by means of the efficient causality of the divinity working through them instrumentally. Clearly this argument can be completed only by turning to our next topic.

Instrumental Causality

The analogy of the instrument, in one form or another, has been used in Christian preaching from the beginning.⁴⁷ It was commonly adopted by the patristic writers in the context of Christology, but ever since the Middle Ages it has been used extensively in sacramental theology. As with efficient causality, so too with instrumentality, the basic notions are treated by some writers today with considerable reserve.⁴⁸ This unease, however, can easily become a pointer to a deeper division at the level of the differentiation of consciousness.

⁴⁴ Ferdinand Pratzner, *Messe und Kreuzesopfer: Die Krise der sakramentalen Idee bei Luther und in der mittelalterlichen Scholastik*, Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie 29 (Vienna: Herder, 1970).

⁴⁵ *ST* 3, q. 48, a. 6, cited by Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 255 f. and 316; see also McNamara, "Christus patiens" 31.

⁴⁶ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 254.

⁴⁷ E.g., Roman 6:13, where "instruments" is the translation in many versions of the original Greek *hopla*. This text is quoted by Lonergan in his first discussion of instrumentality in "Pantôn anakephalaiôsis" 141.

⁴⁸ See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* 437–38.

In his study of operative and cooperative grace, Lonergan set out his basic treatment of instrumentality as an aspect of all causality.⁴⁹ As the principal efficient cause of all things, God is involved in every instance of finite causality in the world. He applied every agent to its activity, so that all finite causes are instruments of God in working out the divine plan for the world. The presence of instrumental causality in all finite efficient causality helped to make the interpretation of the sacraments along the lines of instrumentality more understandable. The principal agent of the divine economy, of which the sacramental system is part, is God. In the divine plan, the first instrument of this causality is the humanity of Christ working through its universal historical causality for the salvation of the world. The sacraments are only one aspect of this. They are seen as having their place within the global movement of instrumental efficient causality from God through Christ to the entire human race.⁵⁰

Sacramental causes work through their symbolism; they effect what they signify. This is what is meant by “the sacramental principle.” Some writers press this principle to the point of saying that it is by their very signifying that sacraments cause the sacramental effect. This may be accepted as a way of describing the sacramental mode of causing once one concedes that signs can have this depth of efficacy only by having a place within a larger scheme of things. This is expressed by saying that such signs are at the same time instruments of the divine power at work in the sacramental world, and this in turn is understandable only within the perspective of the entire plan of God at work in history. Rahner commented that the relationship between the sign function and the aspect of instrumental causality, as Aquinas presented them, is not fully thought out in its ultimate significance.⁵¹ His own attempt to fill the gap with his theory of the *Realsymbol* is well known, though far from universally acceptable.⁵² Lonergan’s deeper appreciation of instrumental causality perhaps points to something that Rahner missed in Aquinas.

As I have already noted, in his *The Notion of Sacrifice* Lonergan was concerned to distinguish the operation of the sacrifice from the operation

⁴⁹ *Grace and Freedom* 80–91.

⁵⁰ Rahner was concerned that exclusivist views of sacramental causality could cut across the salvation of the non-believer. The final sentences of this paragraph are meant to show how this legitimate concern can be catered for in Lonergan’s approach: Karl Rahner, “Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event,” *Theological Investigations* 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976) 161–84, at 179–81.

⁵¹ Karl Rahner, “Introductory Observations on Thomas Aquinas’ Theology of Sacraments in General,” *Theological Investigations* 14.149–60, at 150.

⁵² David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* 274.

of the sacrament.⁵³ God is the principal cause of the sacramental order where the signs effect what they signify. But the line of causality flowing from the sacrifice was seen in that study to be of a different order. In this case the principal cause was said to be the man Jesus Christ, and here it was denied that the sign effects that which it signifies. Indeed at this stage Lonergan made a particular point of saying that the sacramental principle could not explain the configuration of the sacrificial attitude of the worshipers to the attitude of Christ on the cross. The reason for this is not stated explicitly, but the point seems to be that the causality of the sign is something that works objectively and with a certain immediacy *ex opere operato*, whereas the causality of the eucharistic sacrifice cannot be guaranteed in the same way, since it depends on the subjective factors involved in the configuration of people's sacrificial attitudes to those of Christ.

Despite its wide acceptance in sacramental theology, Vonier's application of the sacramental principle to the eucharistic sacrifice remains problematic for a number of writers, among whom Kilmartin is the most recent significant figure. The kind of difficulty raised by Lonergan above is not unlike that felt by Kilmartin, who made much of the statement in Aquinas that the link between ourselves and Christ's passion lies in our faith.⁵⁴ In Kilmartin's theology there has always been a special focus on the worshiper, on the assembly, and on a communication theory of liturgy.⁵⁵ In line with this way of thinking he rejected the notion of Casel (and Vonier) of the presence of the sacrifice of the cross objectively realized in a sacramental mode of being on the altar, and pointed rather to "a presence in the willing participant in whose favor the sacramental celebration takes place."⁵⁶

If we may pursue this point in Vonier rather than in Casel (the former being the one nearer to Aquinas), Vonier's principal concern lay in locating the essence of the sacrifice of Christ in the words and gestures of the priest at the altar.⁵⁷ He of course realized that all this was in view of the effect on the worshipers, but for him as a theologian this was not the principal area of contention. His main interest lay in the way the divine activity passed through the words and gestures of the ritual in their role as God's chosen instrument to change us.⁵⁸ Citing a passage of Aquinas, Vonier identified

⁵³ *The Notion of Sacrifice* 8, no. 26.

⁵⁴ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 259 ff.

⁵⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, 1: *Systematic Theology of Liturgy* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988).

⁵⁶ *The Eucharist in the West* 263.

⁵⁷ Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* 108–20.

⁵⁸ *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* 17–26.

the power of the instrument present in the celebration itself as a *virtus fluens* flowing from Christ.⁵⁹

In my view, both Vonier and Kilmartin point to real aspects of our liturgy, but one cannot do justice to the entire sacramental event without taking both aspects into account. Clearly the effects of Christ's sacrifice are found primarily in the configuration of the worshipers to the sacrificial attitude of Christ, but since in the divine plan this is commonly brought about through the instrumentality of a particular liturgical rite, the aspect underlined by Vonier must also be given its place.

I would suggest that behind this dichotomy between the objective and subjective orders lies an issue, to which neither of these writers referred, but one which must be resolved before these two orders can be drawn into that comprehensive view of divine causality in history, of which the sacramental economy is necessarily part. It is the question of human freedom. This is a crucial aspect of sacramental efficacy in so far as the *opus operatum* is conditioned intrinsically in its effectiveness by the *opus operantis*. Human freedom and choice belong to the order of the contingent and the existential. Only after Lonergan had accepted the real distinction of essence and existence did he eventually come to a reconciliation of human freedom with divine causality. This came about in his study of operative and cooperative grace, above all in the crucial thesis that God is cause both of necessary and of contingent effect.⁶⁰

By giving the contingent and the free a place within the divine plan, Lonergan embraced the existential, as distinct from the essential, order of things. In this way his view of world-wide instrumentality, first outlined by him in an imperfect way in his study "Pantôn anakephalaiôsis," achieved a break-through into the existential order and only then received a truly universal application. Lonergan once remarked that we need a treatment of the historical causality that Christ the man exercises in the world.⁶¹ These issues of existence, instrumentality, contingency, and freedom must be key elements in such a treatment.

The logic of this development, never developed in writing by Lonergan, is to unite the order of sacrament and the order of sacrifice within the one timeless divine plan, within the one line of divine knowing, willing, and effecting and, as a result, in some sense within the one event. It is only in this perspective that the sacramental principle can be applied to the sacrificial order, as proposed in Vonier's theorem of sacramental sacrifice. Contemporary criticism of Vonier as an interpreter of Aquinas misses this

⁵⁹ Ibid. 40, citing *ST* 3, q. 62, a. 3.

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* 103–9.

⁶¹ B. Lonergan, *De Verbo incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1961) 362.

existential element in Aquinas, which needs however to be explicitated for the modern reader.⁶² The sacramental principle on its own is scarcely sufficient to carry the weight of what Vonier laid upon it, unless it is seen as only one aspect of the divine plan at work efficaciously in history. In placing the sacramental principle at the summit of his system, Vonier did not go far enough. All questions of time and eternity, of events within time and outside time, can be resolved only by placing the timeless divine plan as the summit and source of the entire economy of salvation.

At this stage in our reflections we need to bring together Lonergan's account of presence through efficient causality with all that we have just seen about instrumentality. It is along these lines that a solution can eventually be found to the problem of the presence of the past in the liturgy.⁶³ As Aquinas stated, all that Christ did and all that was done to him are instrumental in our salvation by the power of God.⁶⁴ In another place he wrote of such power that "through presence it reaches all places and times."⁶⁵ Perhaps one should say that the mystery is present in one way in the liturgical rite before it is present in another way in the hearts of the worshipers—and, one might add, in yet another way in the Church universal.⁶⁶

It is a common criticism of the analogy of instrumentality, both in sacramental theology and in other fields, that it easily imports a mechanistic interpretation into relationships that are essentially personal and free. All comparisons limp to some extent, and the danger referred to in this instance is clearly real. Ultimately it is a question of whether an attentive understanding can isolate the kernel of positive insight in the analogy from the husk of possible misunderstanding.

This kind of criticism is only an aspect of a broader movement in contemporary sacramental theology, already referred to, according to which, not only efficiency and instrumentality, but the whole metaphysical basis that underlies these concepts is under scrutiny. What is considered to be at stake is the personal aspect of the sacraments as instances of human and personal encounter. One of the more radical expressions of this movement

⁶² Vonier criticized by Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* 253. There is also Pratzner's criticism of the sacramental sacrifice theory summarized by Kilmartin 310 f.

⁶³ There is also the question of the presence of the future, but as this would require a modification in the presentation of causality, it is omitted from this article for reasons of length.

⁶⁴ *ST* 3, q. 48, a. 6.

⁶⁵ *ST* 3, q. 56, a. 1, obj. 3.

⁶⁶ For the way Kilmartin concentrates on the presence of the cross in the worshipers and neglects the presence proper to the ritual, see, for example, *The Eucharist in the West* 225–26.

will be found in the work of L.-M. Chauvet.⁶⁷ A more moderate position is that of David Power who sees a way forward in a combination of narrative theology and the analogy of being.⁶⁸ Both authors, in their different ways, are appealing to the uses of language to contribute to an explanatory framework which formerly was provided by metaphysics.

In terms of Lonergan's theological method, this controversy should be approached, first, through his general view of the differentiation of consciousness, and in particular through the distinction between the functional specialty of "systematics" and that of "communications." This perspective suggests that theology can suffer from attempting too much at the same time, for instance trying to solve a problem of communication by embracing a particular metaphysics. Tasks, which some might set in opposition, can be seen as complimentary. Lonergan's approach to language is not one of his strong points, but much of what the authors just referred to have been writing can be given a place within his notion of the functional specialty "communications," which, as he understands it, leaves intact the whole metaphysical framework to be treated in the specialty "systematics." This distinction, which goes back to his notion of the differentiation of consciousness, is one of the significant contributions which his views can make to this discussion.⁶⁹

However, concerning this supposed conflict between the personal and the metaphysical, not all systems are equally open to the kind of resolution which Lonergan's approach makes possible. Personal relationships are ultimately a matter of knowing and loving. The metaphysical relationships have to do with causality, especially formal and efficient causality. The kind of approach that Lonergan developed in his study of divine grace not only provided a solution to the problems of grace which escaped other approaches, but also implied a way of combining the lines of causality with those of personal relationship. This solution was developed by showing how the active and passive aspects of knowing and loving can be transposed into the categories of efficient cause and effect. To develop this point here would overstep the limits of this article. I refer readers to Lonergan's own work *Grace and Freedom* or perhaps to J. M. Stebbins's outstanding study of his teaching on grace and the supernatural.⁷⁰ Here my intent has

⁶⁷ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* 410–13.

⁶⁸ Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* 287–88; 305–6.

⁶⁹ Relevant here are the recent remarks by Robert Doran on extending one's notion of systematic understanding to include within the mysteries of faith "permanently elemental meaning" to be expressed in symbolic, esthetic, and dramatic terms: (Robert Doran, "Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology," *TS* 59 [1998] 569–607, at 578–82).

⁷⁰ J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World Order and Human*

been to emphasize how Lonergan's legacy is waiting to be applied to current developments in sacramental theology.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of my article has been to indicate the relevance of some guiding principles of Lonergan's thought for a theology of the Eucharist. Regrettably, in his later writings, he never returned to present his approach on this in his own words. This should not, however, be taken to mean that the Eucharist was a marginal reality in Lonergan's view of things. Its central place in his mind is clear from his early writings and may be summed up as follows. The central reality of the Eucharist is the self-sacrificing love of Christ. This is the supreme instance of that love which is the answer to the fundamental problem of decline in human history. In so far as Christ's love is made available to us in a special way through the Mass to promote the configuration of the members of the body to the Head, the Mass must have a central place in that development of redemption which is the solution to the problems of the world. As Lonergan put it in the unnuanced terms of a preconciliar devotional article: "Not only are we to put on the sacrificial spirit of our Lord, but also we are to take part in his offering of his sacrifice. . . . [B]ut what matters is not how one comes but whether one puts on, prays to put on, the sacrificial spirit of our Lord, to offer with him his sacrifice for the redemption of mankind and the mystery of the glory of God. . . . [T]he sacrifice of the Mass is the source of the power to save human society. Those who believe, hope and love do so in virtue of the sacrifice of Calvary applied to the needs of the hour by the sacrifice of the Mass."⁷¹

Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995).

⁷¹ *The Catholic Mind* 45 (September 1947) 575–76.