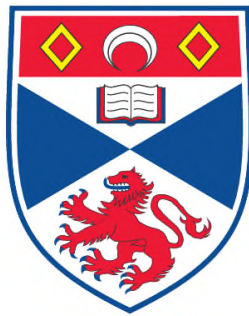


**THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE WORD: THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY**

Joshua Dale Genig

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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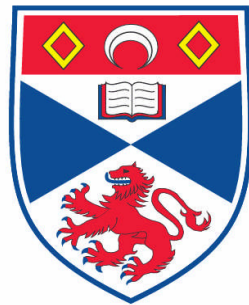
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of the Annunciation to Mary

Joshua Dale Genig



This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

30 January 2012

Abstract

The Sacramentality of the Word: Through the Lens of the Annunciation to Mary

Professor David W. Brown, Adviser

Joshua Dale Genig

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that, in failing to take the sacramentality of the Word seriously, the preaching of the Church has suffered negative consequences. In short, preaching has often become, at best, a form of instruction or, at worst, an incantation of sorts, rather than an integral part of deepening our relationship with Christ by functioning sacramentally to bring about divine participation with Jesus' corporeal humanity in his living Word. Moreover, this trouble has had a profoundly negative effect on my own Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod due, in part, to our Reformation heritage as Christians who believe, teach, and confess the sole authority and divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Yet, what has been lost over the past 500 years since the Reformation began is the reality of Christ's ongoing corporeal presence in and for the Church, particularly as he is present in the *viva vox* of preaching.

In order to recover that reality, I propose that one should consider the annunciation to Mary where, with a sermon of sorts, the corporeal Christ took up residence in the flesh of his hearer. In addition to granting Mary a son, however, this tangible presence of Jesus also delivered to her precisely what was contained within his own flesh: the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9). When understood as a biblical paradigm for the Church, it becomes clear that

what happened to Mary can, indeed, happen to Christians of the present day. To that end, I propose that preaching today, when understood sacramentally, can deliver the fullness of the person of Christ, who continues to come in corporeality, with humanity and divinity, in the *viva vox* of preaching.

1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Joshua Dale Genig, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 79,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in January, 2007 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in January, 2007; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in Durham University between 2007 and 2008 and in the University of St Andrews between 2008 and 2011.

Date _____ signature of candidate _____

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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This doctorate began, however, long before I was accepted to write for a Ph.D. at The University of Durham, beginning in January of 2007. In the fall of 1996, I first met Brother James Rottenbacher, CSC, who, whether he knows it or not, forever changed my theological life. He pressed me to think and speak clearly and, more than anything else, to see my own Lutheran heritage as part of the Great Tradition. Due to illness, he is no longer able to leave his mark on Gabriel Richard Catholic Prep School, from whence I graduated in 2000, but his spirit is alive in his numerous theological children. He has changed me, and I am better for it.

After three joyous years at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, I was accepted into the Master of Divinity program at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne in 2003. While I am grateful for the theological and pastoral formation I was given there, most notably through the scholarship and encouragement of The Reverend Doctor James Bushur, The Reverend Doctor Arthur Just, Jr., The Reverend Doctor Timothy Quill, The Reverend Doctor Lawrence Rast, The Reverend Doctor William Weinrich, and The

Reverend Doctor Dean Wenthe, I am especially indebted to my mentor and friend, The Reverend Doctor David Scaer. He was the first to challenge my, then, narrow Lutheran hermeneutic. However, he did not simply push me toward some other theoretical theological system. Rather, he pushed me toward Jesus, particularly the Jesus of the Gospels. In turn, he taught me how to hear the words of Jesus as the actual *viva vox*, the living voice of God in Christ. He embodied for me what it meant to be a theologian and a doctor of the Church by comprehending, long before anyone else, that all theology was, fully and finally, Christology. I pray that this, the first of my theological works, honors him for all the good he did to me and for me. Words cannot express how grateful I am to him for helping to make me the theologian that I am today, however inadequate I may be.

If David Scaer prepared me theologically to pursue a Ph.D., then The Reverend Doctor Scott Bruzek made it possible financially. In addition to paying for my annual tuition, he also provided funds for travel and vacation time from parish responsibilities so that my family and I might spend extended periods in St. Andrews. Without him and his ongoing encouragement, I likely never would have completed this degree. To him I remain forever grateful.

Other friends nudged and pushed and encouraged along the way, and they are worthy of mention here too, especially Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr. Leroy Huizenga, and Dr. John Kleinig. When the end seemed all too distant, they each reminded me plainly and simply: get it done.

So far as this thesis is concerned, however, I must offer enormous thanks to my doctoral supervisor, Professor David Brown, FBA. Along with being the most gifted theologian with whom I have ever worked, he is also a wonderful priest in the Church of England (now Scotland). To that end, his conversation was always pastoral, his insight always keen, and the way he shaped me and formed me into a doctor of the Church would not have been possible with anyone else. My only regret over the past five years is that I was not able to spend more time learning from him in person.

Other than my pastoral and academic colleagues, I have been blessed with two extraordinarily faithful friends: Matthew and Rachel Strutzel and their children: Drake, Charlie, August, and Maddox. It was their friendship which strengthened me, their prayers which nourished me, and their unending kindness which made my ministry in Wheaton a joy when it appeared that the Enemy was winning the day. He did not. And living the Eucharistic life is what saw all of us through. My gratitude to them and for them is beyond expression.

When I reflect on the totality of my life, however, I suppose it is safe to say that none of my successes would have been possible were it not for my wonderful parents, Doctor Dennis and Martha Genig. Not only did they provide a safe and loving home for their children, but they embodied for me what it meant to be a Christian. They worked hard, they said their prayers, they loved their children, and they always did what was best, even when that was not easy. My own father, especially, proved to me that receiving a

doctoral degree is more than a title; it is the mark of a disciplined life put to good use in and for the Church. I will carry their example with me until my last breath and, moreover, I will pray that it lives on in my own children as it has in me.

Yet, as I pen the final words of this thesis, I am reminded again that this five year journey was a joy principally because of the support of my family. My daughters, Emma Mary and Clare Maria (and our third child, who is due in just weeks), bear the name of the one who modeled the sacramentality of preaching for me, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Seeing their smiles, hearing their laughter, and receiving their love throughout all of this was truly *sacramental*. In many respects, they taught me more about my thesis than any of the greatest theological works I encountered in my research. Moreover, as they journeyed with me back and forth across the Atlantic on many occasions, even celebrating a few birthdays in the United Kingdom, their presence was balm for my weary soul and mind. What means the most, however, is that their love for me is in no way dependent upon this degree and, in fact, it does not matter to them. Their love for me and mine for them transcends this world; it is truly sublime.

It is to my wife, Abigail Barbara, however that I must dedicate this work. She is the most faithful, supportive, understanding, and loving wife a man could hope for. Nothing more can be said, for words do not suffice to express my gratitude to her and to God for giving her to me as a gift. I can never repay her for what she has done for me, but I pray that my faithfulness,

as a husband, father, pastor, and now scholar and doctor of the Church is, in
some sense, a start.

Joshua Dale Genig

2 February 2012

The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord

The Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Candlemas

To Abigail

Who continues to demonstrate that St. Paul was right:

sacramentum hoc magnum est

Preface

IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM¹

‘In the beginning was the Word.’ This stands as the greeting above the gateway for all who enter St. Mary’s quad and St. Mary’s Divinity School at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. It is fitting, of course, because all theology begins, continues, and ends with the Word. And for nearly 600 years, theologians have been formed and trained by this college in order to delve more deeply into Sacred Scripture and the riches contained therein. Preachers, especially, are concerned with this Word and have been for centuries. It is from this Word that a preacher has their life, their ministry, and, of course, something to say.

Yet, the Word’s beginning was not the final word on the matter. As St. John also wrote: ‘The Word became flesh’ (Jn 1:14). The Word, which once existed in the beginning, took on tangibility and allowed himself to be handled and heard by us. Certainly, the fact that he is, by nature, *logos* reveals a tremendous amount about him. On the other hand, however, the fact that this Word took on flesh gives us an even deeper connection with the truth of his existence. And it is with this Word made flesh that I would like to devote the following pages of this thesis, searching particularly for his sacramentality, not only in the first century as he walked and talked in Palestine, but even today, as he engages the Church in the fullness of his divinity and humanity by way of his *viva vox*.

¹ This, the Latin rendering of Jn 1:1, is the motto of St. Mary’s Divinity School of the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

To that end, this thesis, divided into seven chapters, demonstrates that some in the Church, in failing to take the sacramentality of the Word seriously, have produced and used incorrect models of preaching. In short, preaching has become, on the one hand, a form of instruction or, on the other hand, a magical incantation of sorts, rather than an integral part of deepening our relationship with Christ by functioning, with the Eucharist and Baptism, to bring about divine participation with Jesus in his living Word as delivered by the human mouth of the preacher.

Chapter One clarifies two terms which are critical to my investigation: Word and sacrament. In this chapter, I demonstrate the way in which both Word and sacrament have undergone a narrowing in definition, both in their own way and at their own time. I then conclude that this narrowing in definition has left the Church with a very narrow understanding of preaching, one which does not move far beyond the conveying of information. I also demonstrate, however, that the Word and preaching can, indeed, function sacramentally by bearing within themselves an innate corporeality.

Chapter Two examines specifically my own church, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. I propose that since the 1970s and the struggle that occurred in my church (referred to historically as 'The Battle Over the Bible'), those who remained in my church body have suffered from an over adamant confession of the sole authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture, at the expense of the Christological and the sacramental. More specifically, I demonstrate that Holy Scripture has been placed above the person of Christ,

making the formal principle of theology also the material principle. I compare this position with Calvin's own theology of the Word and preaching, demonstrating that, in fact, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's theology has become 'Calvinistic', or at any rate, according to one common interpretation of his view. Moreover, I demonstrate how this reality has negatively affected the preaching of the Church.

Chapter Three discusses the nature of the Word, as taught by Holy Scripture and promulgated by the fathers of the Church and the fathers of the Lutheran confession. I begin with an examination of the incarnation as the constitutive element of a truly *primary theology*. I then explore the classic confession of the incarnate Christ (*communicatio idiomatum*) and the way in which this confession has been further adapted by the Lutheran Church. Using Christology, I demonstrate that Christ, in his person and as the *logos* of the Father, bears within himself an innate 'tangibility' or 'physicality' which is still received today in his Word. Moreover, I suggest that this ongoing incarnational life of Christ also implies an ongoing delivery of the fullness of his person - human and divine - which can only be grasped within the confines of a robust Christology. I then examine the account of the creation in an attempt to find the origin of this tangibility. In short, I explore the way in which the use of 'good' and 'very good' reflect the goodness of matter and, particularly, the goodness of humanity. Finally, I explore the way in which the goodness of this created matter finds its summit in the incarnation of Christ.

Chapter Four discusses, specifically, the 'sermon' preached at the Annunciation to Mary. Here, I give special attention to the way in which the angel spoke to Mary on her level and, consequently, how his words speak to us on our level. This two-level of meaning approach displays the adaptability of the Word, which necessarily reflects its sacramentality.

Chapter Five continues examination of the Annunciation, but explores, particularly, the way in which the words spoken by the angel to Mary actually deliver that of which they speak: the person of Christ. Moreover, I explore how the reception of this Word by Mary grants her divine participation with that which the Word delivers corporeally. This tangibility of the Word necessarily reflects its sacramentality.

Chapter Six explores the ways in which the Lord does to us what he did to Mary. In short, I examine the two-levels of meaning as they relate to the Christian hearer today. Moreover, I propose that, just as the Word granted divine participation to Mary, so it grants us divine participation with Jesus, the one who comes to us with corporality in the *viva vox* of the sermon.

Chapter Seven briefly explores two academic works, both of which propose a sacramentality to preaching. I expose, however, their weaknesses and the ways in which they, in actuality, fail to accomplish that which they propose. Additionally, I examine two contemporary preaching forms intended to aid in the preaching task. Specifically, I expose the ways in which they hinder the sacramentality of preaching rather than help it. Finally, I offer my own alternative for preaching, one which does not primarily seek to

deliver information, but seeks, in turn, to draw hearers more fully into the life of Christ by speaking – corporeally and adaptably – his *viva vox*.

In what follows, I, at times, rely heavily upon the work of a few sources, particularly the Church fathers, the Lutheran Confessions, and Calvin’s *Institutes*. For ease of reading, unless otherwise indicated, all citations from the Church fathers are from the English translation of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, all citations from the Lutheran Confessions are from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, and all citations from Calvin’s *Institutes* are from *The Library of Christian Classics, Vols. XX-XXI*.²

While some may question the need for such a thesis, I offer the following from Pope Benedict XVI’s recent post-synodical apostolic exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, to demonstrate, in fact, both the timeliness and necessity of such an undertaking:

In our day the faithful need to be helped to see more clearly the link between Mary of Nazareth and the faith-filled hearing of God’s word. I would encourage scholars as well to study the relationship between *Mariology and the theology of the word*. This could prove most beneficial both for the spiritual life and for theological and biblical studies. Indeed, what the understanding of the faith has enabled us to know about Mary stands at the heart of Christian truth. The incarnation of the word cannot be conceived apart from the freedom of this young woman who by her assent decisively cooperated with the entrance of the eternal into time. Mary is the image of the Church in attentive hearing

² *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1-10*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2004); *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1-14*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2004); *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1-14*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2004); *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1959); *The Library of Christian Classics, Vols. XX-XXI*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia PA: Westminster, 1960).

of the word of God, which took flesh in her. Mary also symbolizes openness to God and others; an active listening which interiorizes and assimilates, one in which the word becomes a way of life.³

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodical Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), 49-50. The complete text can be found at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini_en.pdf. For another example of Pope Benedict XVI's perspective, one might consider the new pulpit at the high altar of the Vatican, which bears on its front an image of the annunciation to Mary, undoubtedly a reference, to a greater or lesser extent, to Pope Benedict's theology of the Word and preaching.

Chapter 1

Defining the Terms

Introduction

Since this thesis focuses particularly on the sacramentality of the Word of God and its interplay with the pastoral act of preaching, two words are critical to our investigation and need to be explored in further detail before proceeding: Word and sacrament. While new definitions for both of these terms are not offered herein, I do provide an historical examination of the ways in which the classic definitions of both Word and sacrament (*μυστήριον* and *sacramentum*) have narrowed from their original meanings and uses. Additionally, I provide the relevant reasons for this theological shift. I then describe what has classically constituted the sacramental in three of the major Western Christian traditions, particularly the following: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinistic/Reformed. Given the foregoing, I pose this question: Can the Word function sacramentally? In answer to the question, I offer some examples, both homely and Biblical, of how the Word, written and preached, might once again be considered sacramental and, moreover, how it might find commonality and not distinction with the recognized sacraments of the Church, precisely in that it delivers the one behind the gift, Jesus Christ.

Word

In its narrow, Biblical sense, the Word in Christian history has been defined as the Sacred Scriptures, particularly those books listed in the

Christian canon.⁴ This Word of God is written, and is regarded by Christians as inspired and, therefore, authoritative for both the Church and the faithful. Nearly every strain of historic Protestant Christianity, in fact, has held to the aforementioned definition of the Word as an inspired text, found within the Biblical canon, which is authoritatively binding for both the corporate Christian Church and the individual Christian faithful.⁵

My own church body, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS), subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions contained within the Book of Concord of 1580. There, it describes the Lutheran position on the Word of God this way:

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must

⁴ The canon, in definitive form, can be traced to A.D. 367 (see Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol. I: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* [Nashville TN: Abingdon, 1987], 150). See also Carter Lindberg, *A Brief History of Christianity* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006), 15: 'The oldest witness to a complete New testament as it now stands is Athanasius (ca. 296 - 373), the bishop of Alexandria. In 367, in his annual pastoral letter to the churches of Egypt [...], he listed the books to be accepted as canonical literature.' Certainly, however, there was a canon, in unofficial form, well before that time, which included, nonetheless, some books which did not make it into the canon observed by Protestants today. One example of such a book, revered by Christians even before a formal canon was initiated, was *Ecclesiasticus*, whose name literally meant, 'The Church's Book,' signifying a certain level of acceptance among Christians at the time.

⁵ While Lutherans are grouped with the entirety of Protestantism by way of illustration, they often do not consider themselves to be 'Protestant,' both in terms of motive at the time of the Reformation and theology both then and now. Nevertheless, for prominent examples from the various Protestant confessional documents of Scotland (The Scottish Confession of Faith - 1560), England (The 39 Articles - 1563), and France (The Calvinistic Confession of Faith - 1571), see the following, respectively: 'The Scotch Confession of Faith', Art. 18 in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2007), 462-463; 'The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England', Art. VI, in Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 489-490 (hereafter **39 Articles**); 'Confession de Foy', Art. I, no. 5, in *Bekennnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche*, ed. Wilhelm Niesel (Zurich CH, 1938), 67, lines 18-21. For a contemporary examination of this trend, one might consider the work of James White, a leading Protestant liturgical scholar, who moves the Anglican/Episcopal tradition to the right of Lutheranism in the 20th century and beyond, signifying a shift in both traditions, with Lutheranism becoming more Protestant than ever before (see James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* [Nashville TN: Abingdon, 2000], 38, diagram 3).

be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, 'Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.'

Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times. [...]

All doctrines should conform to the standards set forth above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.⁶

From this, it becomes clear that one of the Word's primary virtues, at least since the time of the Protestant Reformation, is that it contains the teaching (doctrine) necessary for man's salvation.⁷ Moreover, if something cannot be proved therein, it is unnecessary (and even unlawful) for the faithful to believe it and practise it. What this suggests is that unlike some of the other prominent world religions (e.g. Judaism, which is marked by practise rather than doctrine and Islam, which is marked by the Five Pillars), for the Protestant Church, as seen in their various confessional documents,

⁶ Formula of Concord, Epitome, Summary, 1-2, 6-7 (hereafter *FC, Epitome*).

⁷ Admittedly, this characterisation of 'Protestant' is somewhat narrow. However, it is only a reflection of the confessional documents which emerged in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Certainly, individual Protestant theologians did, at times, take a broader perspective on the matter.

doctrine is as important (if not more important) as the practise of the Christian faith.

Consequently, by narrowing both the definition and use of the Scriptures to the body of doctrine necessary for judging truth, this has led the Scriptures to take on the character of a body of information.⁸ Rather than breathing life into the faithful, Scripture has set the parameters for what the faithful can and cannot believe and practise.

While this may have been an inevitable outcome, especially given the dogmatic strife at the time of the Reformation (where information was needed for debate, critique, and eventual separation from the Roman Church), along with the invention of the printing press in the middle of the 15th century (that same information was suddenly capable of being spread rapidly), one must wonder if this apparently unavoidable outcome has permanently shifted the eyes of the Church toward doctrine and away from Christ. In other words, one must ask: Has the faith, as expressed in Holy Scripture, become cerebral rather than a living reality?⁹ And in some sense, it seems as though it has. However, if the Church no longer expects to hear Christ speaking in Holy

⁸ The same may quite possibly be said of the Roman Church where faith became associated with the assent of the mind instead of trust in the promise. To that end, when assent is faith's first word, then the Word of God takes on an informational character, which informs a rational faith (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 42:156 [hereafter CCC]).

⁹ Cf. Pierre Babin, *The New Era in Religious Communication* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1991), 99.

Scripture, then it would appear that the Scriptures are 'not very Christian anymore.'¹⁰

Yet, for the early church fathers, the Word of Scripture was understood rather differently. Certainly, the fathers did not deny the informational aspect of Holy Scripture, meaning that as the inspired Word of God it bore the standard for Christian doctrine.¹¹ Yet, the emphasis of the Church fathers was often focused in a different direction: upon the Word made flesh, who by the power of his Holy Spirit, spoke through the mouth and hand of the Biblical authors. In turn, the emphasis was not placed primarily upon the doctrinal content of the Scriptures so much as it was upon the one who gave the content, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Therefore, for the Church fathers, the Biblical word *logos* took on a broader meaning than merely a word on a page or an utterance from a mouth. As Hilary of Poitiers has asserted: 'Your plea that the Word is the sound of a voice, the utterance of a thought, falls to the ground. The Word is a reality, not a sound, a Being, not a speech, God, not a nonentity.'¹²

Consequently, for the early Church, Holy Scripture in written, spoken, and illustrative forms was the standard for divine communication, and not simply divine information, for it was the living God himself who was to be

¹⁰ Elizabeth Achtemeier, 'The Canon as the Voice of the Living God' in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 120.

¹¹ John R. Willis, *The Teachings of the Church Fathers* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), 82. By citing Clement of Rome, Willis notes that the confession of Scripture's inerrancy can be traced as far back as the end of the first century: 'You have studied the Holy Scriptures, which are true and inspired by the Holy Spirit' (*Letter to the Corinthians*, Chap. 45). Moreover, it is clear from the history of the Church that Scripture was used in the midst of dogmatic strife.

¹² Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, Bk. II.15.

found dwelling and speaking *in the Word*.¹³ In turn, Scripture took on a tangible, incarnational, and even sacramental character.

A few examples might be helpful here.

Theophilus of Antioch (2nd c.), in writing about the authorship of the Old Testament, describes the interplay between the writer and the Word in the following way:

For the prophets were not when the world came into existence, but the wisdom of God which was in Him, and His holy Word which was always present with Him. [...] And Moses, who lived many years before Solomon, or, rather, the Word of God by him as by an instrument, says, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen. 1:1).¹⁴

Hippolytus (3rd c.) wrote of the prophets' union with the Word this way:

And just as it is with instruments of music, so had they the Word always, like the plectrum, in union with them, and when moved by Him the prophets announced what God willed. For they spake not of their own power (let there be no mistake as to that), neither did they declare what pleased themselves.¹⁵

Thus far, however, while there is an established tangibility to the Word of God in Theophilus and Hippolytus, that Word remains more instrumental than personal. Or to state it another way, while it is clear that the Word was uttered *through people*, there is no mention yet of it entering into its hearers. We will need Jerome and Irenaeus for that.

¹³ As far as icons are concerned, see, for instance, St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 2000), 19: 'An image is of like character with its prototype.' Hence, like Scripture, icons are written, not painted.

¹⁴ Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, Bk. II, chap. X.

¹⁵ Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, Chap. 2.

Jerome (4th – 5th c.) brought out the aural character of the Word this way:

You are reading? No. Your betrothed is talking to you. It is your betrothed, that is, Christ, who is united with you. He tears you away from the solitude of the desert and brings you into his home, saying to you, “Enter into the joy of your Lord.”¹⁶

And Irenaeus (2nd – 3rd c.) wrote of our consumption of that spoken

Word this way:

Therefore, like giving milk to infants, the perfect Bread of the Father revealed himself to us on earth in human form, so that we might be nourished by his Word like babes at the breast and so by degrees become strong enough to digest the whole Word of God.¹⁷

Clearly, therefore, there was a fleshly, Christological reality wrapped up in the early Church’s confession of the Word of Scripture. In other words, ““God *did not* stop speaking when his book went to press.”¹⁸ For the fathers of the Church, Scripture was something that possessed life; it was something that spoke to the Church and the faithful; and it was ultimately intended by the Lord to be taken in through the ear and digested as food for the soul, as Anselm of Canterbury (11th – 12th c.) has written:

Taste the goodness of your Redeemer, [...] chew his words as a honey-comb, suck out their flavor, which is sweeter than honey, swallow their health-giving sweetness. Chew by thinking, suck

¹⁶ *Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary*, ed. Thomas Spidlik (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 16. Along these same lines, see *Ancient Christian Doctrine: We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord*, ed. Mark J. Edwards (Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2009), xxii: ‘For Augustine, the written word is, like the incarnate Christ, the embodiment of love.’ The editor notes that this is the theme of Augustine’s, *On Christian Doctrine* 1.

¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4.62.

¹⁸ Achtmeier, ‘The Canon as the Voice of the Living God,’ 122, citing the Lutheran preacher, Paul Scherer (emphasis mine).

by understanding, swallow by loving and rejoicing. Rejoice in chewing, be glad in sucking, delight in swallowing.¹⁹

Very simply, for the early Church, Jesus Christ was the unifying principle of Holy Scripture. He was both the 'endpoint and fullness' of Holy Scripture.²⁰ And a proper exegesis of Holy Scripture came to discover that Jesus was disclosed, tangibly, as the Word within the text.

All of the foregoing may well stem from the fact that the early Church fathers fell at the end of a long line of philosophers and theologians who had thought about the nature of the *logos* well before their time. Initially, of course, *logos* came from *lego* meaning, very simply, 'to speak.'²¹ However, as its most basic meaning was exposed to an ever-expanding Greek culture, that meaning expanded along with it.²² Soon, *logos* came to mean not simply 'to speak,' but 'to give a definition' or, even more broadly, 'to relate.' Therefore, given its expanding definition in the patristic period, the Biblical word for 'word' – *logos* – did not 'just mean "word" in a literal or even in a lively metaphorical sense.'²³ Instead, it was considered by the fathers to be 'the underlying pattern of the cosmic fabric, the warp and weft by which all things

¹⁹ Opening of 'A Meditation on Human Redemption,' in *Anselm of Canterbury*, eds. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert W. Richardson (London UK: SCM, 1974), 137. This meditation was written between 1099-1100 (see *ibid.*, fn 1).

²⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Vol. 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 237.

²¹ Cf. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1978), 1082; 1085 where the claim is made that *logos* originally had a broader meaning than merely 'to speak.' Yet, this assertion fails to recognize the etymological progression of *logos* from *lego*.

²² *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2006) vol. 4, 80-84 (hereafter *Dictionary*).

²³ Susan Hinlicky Wilson, 'Plato Was Wrong,' *Christian Century*, December 28, 2004, 16.

hang together.’²⁴ And that underlying cosmic reality, the *logos*, which existed before the world began, eventually came to be expressed in the spoken word. And when it came to be uttered as speech, it had the ability to bring creation into existence. Finally, and most importantly, this *logos*, according to the Gospel of John, actually took on flesh and dwelt among his creation as its creator.²⁵ And because the *logos* took on flesh and blood, there is an innate visibility to the relationship between God and man which is based upon, very simply, a Word. To that end, there is, in some sense, a progression in tangibility to this *logos*, as seen in the church fathers – from mind to mouth to flesh. However, this tangibility of the Word appears to run contrary to the four Protestant confessions, particularly those associated with the controversies surrounding the Reformation, as the informational character of the Word advocated by the Reformers relegated it to mind and pen, but very rarely allowed it to take on flesh. And this informational character, as will be discovered, continues to negatively affect the preaching of the Lutheran Church today.

Sacrament

While the Word narrowed in definition and use, from a thoroughgoing Christological reality meant to be consumed to a body of information meant to delineate what doctrine was ultimately necessary for salvation, one would not expect the same to hold true for the definition of a sacrament. For, intrinsically, the sacraments have a more concrete, tangible character,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cf. Jn 1:14.

particularly among more sacramental Christians. Like the Word, however, it is important to examine the evolution of the term *sacrament* to see how it, too, might affect the ultimate goal of this dissertation: the sacramentality of the Word of preaching.

1. *μυστήριον*

For our discussion of the term *sacrament* and the development of definition therein, I will begin by briefly examining the more ancient of terms employed, *μυστήριον*.

While the cultic rites of mystery began as simple rites intended to gain from the gods a good harvest in the ancient world (7th cent. B.C. to the 4th A.D.), they were eventually broadened to such a degree so as to give the participants a share in the destiny of the gods themselves.²⁶ Yet, in order for someone to be fit to share in this 'divine potency,' he or she first had to be initiated.²⁷ For those not yet initiated were 'denied both access to the sacred actions and knowledge of them.'²⁸ Admittedly, while the distinction between the actual mystery rite and the rites of initiation was often blurred, it was of utter importance that the one who was to partake of the mystery had undergone an act of initiation prior, as the mystery itself was not child's play.²⁹ Rather, in the mind of the ancients, the cultic rites of mystery

²⁶ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 803. For a brief, yet stunning, overview of the ancient mystery cults, see Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 59-66.

²⁷ Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 66.

²⁸ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 804.

²⁹ The rites of initiation actually granted the gifts of the mystery.

delivered the life of the god behind the mystery, thereby granting the participant salvation.³⁰

Evolving from its use by the ancients, in the Biblical corpus, particularly the writings of St. Paul, *μυστήριον* is firmly connected with the *kerygma* of Christ.³¹ Why? Precisely because Jesus himself *is* the mystery of God, and when that mystery is delivered *kerygmatically*, the very same Christ, the mystery, takes up residence in the hearer, thereby bringing to fruition the words of Paul: 'To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27).³²

Distinct, in some sense, from the ancient mystery cults (especially the Gnostic mysteries), the thrust behind *μυστήριον* in the Christian tradition is not primarily on the hiddenness of a particular god behind the cult's mystery.³³ To be sure, however, there was a certain amount of revelation involved in the ancient mystery cults as well. In fact, some of the most sacred secrets of a given cult were known only to those who had been initiated. These sacred secrets were 'oral tradition, passed down from hierophant to hierophant, and never written down. Furthermore, there were severe civil penalties if initiates into the religion ever spoke about or revealed what they witnessed at the

³⁰ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 803-805. See also Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 66.

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 819.

³² Cf. Col 2:2.

³³ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 811-812. The Greek word *mysterion* is derived from the verb *muo*, which means to walk about with one's eyes closed (Cf. John W. Kleinig, 'The Mystery of Christ' [Adelaide AU: Australian Lutheran College, 2004], 1).

Mysteries.³⁴ However, the god behind the cult's mystery often remained unknown to those participating in the ancient mystery itself.³⁵ Consequently, this unfamiliarity and secrecy became the primary point of divergence between the ancient mystery cults and the mysteries of the Christian tradition.

With the dawn of Christianity, μυστήριον actually took on a new meaning, referring specifically to the *revelation* of Jesus (the μυστήριον of God) who came by way of proclamation – the *kerygma*. It is important to note, however, that ‘the mystery is not itself revelation; it is the object of revelation. [...] It is not as though the mystery were a presupposition of revelation which is set aside when it takes place. Rather, revelation discloses the mystery as such.’³⁶ Therefore, Jesus, the mystery, is disclosed within the *kerygmatic* revelation. It is also important to note, however, that while the revelation bore the mystery (Jesus Christ), there still remained a sense of the unknown, particularly within the early Church's rites associated with initiation. For ‘although the Christian practice of secrecy goes back to the gospels, it seems likely that in the fourth century the desire to rival the pagan mysteries led to an elaboration of the practice of secrecy,’ particularly within the initiatory rites associated with the adult catechumenate.³⁷ It should be duly noted, however, that a mystery differs dramatically from a secret.³⁸ A secret, once

³⁴ Steven D. Hales, *Relativism and the Foundations of Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006), 70. See also *The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Third Edition*, eds. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford UK: Oxford, 1996), 706.

³⁵ Cf. David Brown, *God and Mystery in Words* (Oxford UK: Oxford, 2008), 22.

³⁶ *Dictionary*, vol. 4., 820-821.

³⁷ Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 57.

³⁸ Unfortunately, in the NIV version of Holy Scripture, ‘mystery’ is often translated as ‘secret’. See, for instance, the following: Matt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10; 2 Thess 2:7 (Cf. Kleinig, ‘The Mystery of Christ,’ 1).

one knows it, ceases to be a secret. A mystery, however, remains a mystery and, in fact, it increases in its mysteriousness, the more one comes in contact with it.³⁹ The curiosity which the mysteries of the early Church produced not only highlighted the experiential, but also was thought to invoke a sense of reverence for and attraction to that which was hidden.⁴⁰ However, curiosity was never a mystery's final word. As with all things Christian, there would come a time when those catechumens would be delivered from the darkness and brought into the light of revelation, particularly the revelation of Jesus Christ, who had forever changed them through their participation in the mysteries of the Church.⁴¹

It is noteworthy that while the use of the term *μυστήριον* is rare in the post-apostolic fathers, it became more frequent in the apologetic period (3rd c.), as the Church struggled against the Gnostic notion that there was a separation between spirit and matter. The former was holy and the latter was unholy, or so the thinking went.⁴² Consequently, God, being Spirit, was

³⁹ John W. Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 57.

⁴⁰ Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 57.

⁴¹ Here, it is important to note that this does not mean that Christians were or are privy to knowing everything. In fact, the reality is quite the contrary. Because of our sinful and damaged condition, we, as mortal human beings, are not capable of knowing the full extent of revelation. There are things which cannot and will not be understood until we are granted the beatific vision of heaven. Yet, we do have Christ, who comes, bearing in his flesh the fullness of the Godhead. When we see him, incarnationally and sacramentally, we have indeed seen the Father (Jn 14:6-9). This is what is meant by receiving the fullness of divine revelation by way of participation in the mysteries of the Church.

⁴² *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 824 and Paul E. Deterding, *Colossians* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 9. Deterding's commentary begins with a helpful discussion of the Gnostic overtones surrounding the congregation in Colossae and the Colossian heresy. Admittedly, however, such a view of the Colossian is highly controversial.

considered in some sense hidden or separated from his material creation.⁴³ He was, very simply, a mystery. Given the prevalence of Gnostic thought, however, even Christian doctrine fell under the category of mystery, as it was believed that one could never fully mine the riches of the Church's doctrinal teaching.⁴⁴ Yet, as Kittel has noted, 'a dubious result of this conception of dogma is the separation of the mystery from the *kerygma*.'⁴⁵ No longer was mystery associated with the Church's revelatory proclamation of Christ, but it became associated with her task of passing on the doctrinal principles of the faith. In other words, the informational replaced the sacramental, as doctrine became the means for revealing the mystery.

This final observation, that the informational usurped the sacramental, is interesting in light of a similar observation made regarding the Word, particularly that the doctrinal replaced the tangible. To that end, while occurring at different times in Christian history, it appears that both the Word and the sacrament, when the latter is understood as mystery, underwent heavy pressure to be associated with information and not with the person of Christ.

⁴³ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 825. Kittel notes that the term *μυστήριον* is used both in reference to the mystery cults of the time and the mysteries of the Christian faith, specifically those from the life of Jesus, and the OT types prefiguring those mysteries. The use of *μυστήριον* became especially apparent with Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and the Alexandrian School 'who applied gnostic-neoplatonic terminology to the truths of the Christian religion' (William A. Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament* [Rome IT: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1992], 33).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 826.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

2. *Sacramentum*

Since the first century B.C., *sacramentum* was used by the Romans for the initiatory rites of the army, specifically referring to the oath given by a soldier.⁴⁶ As Bohec noted:

The mobilization of an army was marked by a ceremony of swearing an oath (*sacramentum*), binding the soldier to the general and the Emperor in the presence of the gods. In the early years of the Empire this rite underwent a degree of secularization (the *sacramentum* became a *iusiurandum*), but reverted to a religious nature in the third century.⁴⁷

The thrust of *sacramentum*, therefore, was placed upon the actual act of initiation, whereby the oath (*sacramentum*) brought one into full participation with the Roman army, binding him thereto in 'loyalty and obedience.'⁴⁸ Consequently, those who had not sworn an oath were not permitted to serve and were considered outside the natural bounds of the army, having not been previously initiated.

One of the earliest uses of *sacramentum* in reference to Christianity was by Pliny the Younger in a letter to Emperor Trajan. Pliny writes:

But they confirmed this to have been the principal matter either of their guilt or of their error, that they had been accustomed to assemble regularly before light on a fixed day, and to sing a hymn to Christ as if to a god and to pledge among themselves by a sacrament (*sacramento*) not unto any crime, but that they might not commit fraud, robbery, or adultery, that they might

⁴⁶ See Daniel G. Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*: Historical Sketches' in *Antiphon* 11:3 (2007), 246-247 and *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 827. See also Patrick Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify: The Scholastic Contribution to Understanding Sacraments,' in *Assembly: A Journal of Liturgical Theology* 34:4 (2008), 51.

⁴⁷ Yann Le Bohec, *The Imperial Roman Army*, trans. Raphael Bate (London UK: Routledge, 2000), 239.

⁴⁸ Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 36. See also David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford UK: Oxford, 2004), 26, where he advocates an understanding of *sacramentum* which highlights the secret entailed within the rite (in the way of μυστήριον) as opposed to an oath of allegiance as described above.

not break faith, that they might not refuse to repay a deposit. After these things had been accomplished, they had the habit of departing to their homes and of meeting again in order to take a common and harmless meal [...]; although they had ceased to do this after my edict by which, according to your command, I had forbidden fraternities to exist.⁴⁹

With the understanding that *sacramentum* was an oath or a pledge, particularly, as noted by Pliny, a pledge to do good and not evil, it naturally became associated with the Greek word, μυστήριον, as the rites of the ancient mystery cults 'also [...] entailed an oath.'⁵⁰ *Sacramentum* itself, however, had no direct connection with the mystery cults.⁵¹ Rather, the indirect connection between *sacramentum* and μυστήριον is especially apparent in Augustinian sacramental theology. As Mathai Kadavil has noted:

He [Augustine] used *sacramentum* and *mysterium* without a proper distinction. Unlike the Greek patristic term, *mysterion*, which depends upon a play of *hidden* and *manifest*, albeit emphasizing the *hidden*, Augustine's *sacramentum*, *mysterium*, *figura*, and other related words have an *obscure meaning*. That is for him sacraments are signs, and his emphasis is on understanding them. Thus, under the influence of Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy, he taught that the sacrament is a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace.⁵²

While the meaning of the terms employed in the Augustinian construction may have been somewhat obscure (though not hidden, as it was in the Greek μυστήριον), the emphasis was not on the obscurity 'but on the meaning' of the

⁴⁹ Pliny the Younger, 'Letters to the Emperor Trajan,' X.96, trans. and cited in Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*,' 249.

⁵⁰ *Dictionary*, vol. 4, 827. See also Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 37, who notes another use of *sacramentum*, specifically, 'the money to be deposited in a sacred place by the litigants' in a civil case.

⁵¹ Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*,' 251. Here, specifically, Van Slyke notes that Tertullian and other Latin Christian authors preferred *sacramentum* over μυστήριον for the sole reason that *sacramentum* lacked a connection with the mystery cults.

⁵² Mathai Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament* (Leuven BE: Peeters, 2005), 45.

sign itself, while yet retaining a 'hidden characteristic.'⁵³ This is, as David Brown has noted, 'a tension that exists in almost all forms of religion,' particularly a tension 'between explanation and mystery, between the conviction that something has been communicated by the divine (revelation) and the feeling that none the less God is infinitely beyond all our imaginings.'⁵⁴

One will find similarity in Jerome who, in his Latin Vulgate, famously translated the 'mystery' of Eph 5:32 as *sacramentum*. For Jerome, this latter word was charged 'with the value of a sign – hidden yet revealed.'⁵⁵ Christ, of course, was the revelation behind the sign, though his hiddenness implies that the revelation was not particularly clear. In other words, revelation did not equate with clarity. Though something had been revealed did not imply that it was easily perceptible or understandable.

Jerome is especially important because his Latin Vulgate 'gradually superseded the numerous versions of Scripture that circulated in the first centuries of Latin Christianity.'⁵⁶ In turn, the theological import which Jerome placed on *sacramentum* 'permanently influenced Christian vocabulary.'⁵⁷ More specifically, because Jerome chose to translate μυστήριον as *sacramentum*, almost every translation available today considers these two terms to be equal in definition.

⁵³ Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 39 and Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*,' 259, respectively.

⁵⁴ The two foregoing citations are from: Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 22.

⁵⁵ Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*,' 259.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

It was this equating of μυστήριον with *sacramentum* which may have led to the very wide use of the latter term in much of the first millennium. We find, for example, a contemporary of Jerome like Augustine gave the title of ‘sacrament’ to the following: the font of baptism, the giving of salt during baptism, the ashes at baptism, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Feast of Easter.⁵⁸ The function of these rather unexpected sacraments is summed up well by Hugh of St. Victor: ‘There are some sacraments in the Church in which, even if salvation does not consist principally, salvation is increased, in so far as devotion is exercised.’⁵⁹ It seems as though nearly every inch of creation, when taken up for use by and for the Church could, at one time, have been deemed a ‘sacrament.’⁶⁰

Constituting the Sacramental

Taking into account the evolution in terms referring to sacrament in the ancient world, at this point, it might be helpful to explore what, properly speaking, constitutes a ‘sacrament’ in the various western Christian traditions today, particularly to see whether or not the Word of God might fit within that category. Since, however, there are but two sacraments which are common to all Western traditions – Baptism and the Eucharist – the Eucharist will often be the chosen sacrament to be used by way of example when an example is necessary.

⁵⁸ Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University, 2009), 39.

⁵⁹ Hugh of St. Victor, *De Minoribus Sacramentis et Sacris* in J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina* (Paris FR, 1854) 176:471 (hereafter *PL*; translation mine).

⁶⁰ While these are no longer considered sacraments in the narrow sense of the term, they are considered *sacramentals* or ‘liturgical actions with a basically epicletic structure (or a structure made up of anamnesis and epiclesis)’ (Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, trans. Linda M. Maloney [Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1992], 318).

1. *Roman Catholic*

According to Roman Catholic teaching,

The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.⁶¹

Within the sacramental realities of the Roman Church, the emphasis is clearly placed upon the 'visible rite' by which grace is made present, though that grace is described as 'free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God [...],'⁶² and which is 'infused into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.'⁶³

To better understand the particular doctrinal position of Rome and the history of sacramental thought, however, it might be helpful to go back before going forward. In other words, while the contemporary Roman Catholic Church was, at one time, certainly the only Church and, likewise, was certainly not Roman, it may be helpful to take a brief, cursory look at the history of what has constituted a sacrament in the universal catholic tradition before discussing the particular theological position of the Roman Church today.⁶⁴

⁶¹ CCC, 293:1131.

⁶² Ibid., 483:1996.

⁶³ Ibid., 484:1999. See also Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 109.

⁶⁴ A small 'c' is intentionally used here for 'catholic' as a reference, not to the Roman Catholic Church, but to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. In this discussion, most of what follows comes from the article by Patrick Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 51-56.

First, Tertullian (2nd – 3rd c.), who confessed that the material (e.g. water, bread, wine, hands, etc.) brought about divine healing in opposition to the Gnostics of his day when he wrote thus:

I should *thereby* teach all the more fully, that it is not to be doubted that God has made the material substance which He has disposed throughout all His products and works, obey Him also in His own peculiar sacraments; that the *material substance* which governs terrestrial life acts as agent likewise in the celestial.⁶⁵

In short, earthly matter, when coupled with the sanctification of the Spirit, was capable of bearing the divine.⁶⁶

Cyril of Jerusalem (4th c.), promulgating the tradition of Tertullian, emphasized the sanctification of the material object by way of the *spoken word*, thereby narrowing the use of the word ‘sacrament’ from the entire ‘action to object.’⁶⁷ Particularly in the Eucharist, the ‘sanctification of the bread and wine changes them into the body and blood of Christ,’ thereby confecting a sacrament.⁶⁸ Cyril writes of this in his catechetical lecture on the mysteries:

For as the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist before the invocation of the Holy and Adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, while after the invocation the Bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ, so in like manner such meats belonging to the pomp of Satan [...] become profane by the invocation of the evil spirit.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, III (emphasis Tertullian’s). See also Patrick Regan, ‘Signs that Signify and Sanctify,’ 51.

⁶⁶ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, IV.

⁶⁷ Regan, ‘Signs that Signify and Sanctify,’ 52. See also David Brown (*God and Mystery in Words*, 40, fn 48) who helpfully directs his readers to the *Didache*, chapters 9-10, as an example of the liturgy as a whole serving to bring about the sacramental. Interestingly, in the *Didache*, one will find a Eucharistic prayer, but no actual recitation of the words of institution.

⁶⁸ Regan, ‘Signs that Signify and Sanctify,’ 52.

⁶⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture XIX. 7*.

One should note well the slight narrowing which has begun in definition, already in the fourth century. What began broadly as the divine being conveyed through sanctified matter (Tertullian) has already narrowed to the point of delineating as sacrament that particular bread and wine which has received the spoken word of invocation by the priest (Cyril of Jerusalem). Interestingly, however, the particular set of words to be spoken has yet to be determined.

Carrying on, then, it was Ambrose (4th c.) who, on the heels of the apologetic period in Church history, proposed a sharp distinction between the materiality of the sacraments and their spiritual effects.⁷⁰ This particular separation, however, appears to be in the way of *μυστήριον* and not *sacramentum*, as the former served as a common hermeneutic at the time.

Yet, it was Augustine (4th - 5th c.) who took 'a decisive step forward in the theology of sacraments by placing them in the general category of sign.'⁷¹ This sacramental theology, driven by the language of 'sign', furthered the gap between what was seen (sign) and what was unseen (thing signified - spiritual effects) as earlier proposed by Ambrose.⁷² As Van Roo has noted:

The basic distinction underlying Augustine's notion of sign is that of *thing* and *sign*. Some things are not used to signify anything; others are. In the latter case, the sign makes something else come to thought, and that *something else* is the *res* which technically is correlative with the sign: it is the thing made known, the thing learned through the sign.⁷³

⁷⁰ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 52.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 52-53. See also Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 38-43.

⁷³ Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 41.

It is of note, however, that while the gap between sign and thing signified may appear to have been furthered by Augustine, the intention of his *sign* and *thing* construction was precisely the opposite: to highlight the *revelation* of the *something else*, namely, the thing signified. In other words, while the Greek patristic μυστήριον bore the weight, to a certain extent, of that which was unknown and considered a secret, the Latin *sacramentum*, in whose sphere Augustine works, was based precisely upon the meaning which the 'sacred sign' was intended to deliver through revelation.⁷⁴

However, whatever sacramental defining had taken place up until this point in Christian history paled in comparison to the work of the scholastics, who assumed the task of defining a general concept of 'sacrament' which would apply to all of the regularly celebrated sacraments of the Church.⁷⁵ The early scholastics like Hugh of Saint Victor (11th – 12th c.), seeking to make sacramental theology 'logically coherent,' took a turn from Augustine's thinking by proposing that sacraments were not merely signification (this concept appears to have been too broad and abstract for the scholastics), but also contained within them the grace which was signified therein by virtue of the consecratory act.⁷⁶ As one commentator has noted, for the Scholastics,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34, 39.

⁷⁵ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 45.

⁷⁶ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 53.

grace 'was contained in the sacrament like medicine in a bottle.'⁷⁷ This was in opposition to the notion that grace was merely the *thing signified*.⁷⁸

It should be noted, however, that while the scholastics appear to have narrowed the gap created by Ambrose and enlarged by Augustine, their theological work actually created a more dramatic narrowing in definition than what was earlier observed in Cyril of Jerusalem, who moved from 'action to object.' This scholastic narrowing caused a shift in focus from the totality of the words spoken (epiclesis, one might say) to the narrowness of the words of consecration which, in their minds, brought about the fundamental distinction between sign and sacrament. In short, the consecration was the constitutive element in the sacramental reality.⁷⁹ Therefore, according to Hugh, it was the institution of Christ which brought signification and the word spoken (a recitation of Christ's words of institution) which brought sanctification and made a thing a sacrament.⁸⁰ Moreover, while signs can merely signify, sacraments can also confer, or to utilize Hugh's terminology, sacraments are efficacious.⁸¹ Given the foregoing, Hugh proposed a more specific definition of sacrament than that of the modified Augustinian formula (*sacrae rei signum* – sign of a sacred thing) in the following manner: 'A sacrament is a corporeal or material element set before the senses without, representing by similitude and signifying by

⁷⁷ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 51.

⁷⁸ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 53.

⁷⁹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 51.

⁸⁰ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 53.

⁸¹ Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, I, 9 in *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1951), 155. See also Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 52.

institution and containing by sanctification some invisible and spiritual grace.⁸² At this point in Christian history, sacraments were those things which had received the consecratory words of the priest.

Significantly, as the leading figure in scholastic thought, Thomas Aquinas (13th c.) ‘accepts Augustine’s definition that a sacrament is a sign of a sacred reality, but only [...] insofar as it sanctifies human beings.’⁸³ As Aquinas wrote: ‘*signum rei sacrae in quantum est sanctificans homines.*’⁸⁴ Yet Aquinas takes Augustine a step further by specifying the necessity of a particular set of words for the consecratory act: the words of institution.⁸⁵ For Aquinas, the driving force of the sacrament was the use of words by a priest which functioned as the formal principal of sacramental theology.⁸⁶ This is clearly attested to in Aquinas’ famous hymn for the Feast of Corpus Christi, *Pange Lingua*:

*Verbum caro, panem verum
verbo carnem efficit.*⁸⁷

To that end, Regan helpfully asserts that ‘in modern times, what is remembered most of all is that sacraments are efficacious because of the formula spoken by the priest [...] giving the impression that the sacrament is

⁸² Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, I, 9.

⁸³ Regan, ‘Signs that Signify and Sanctify,’ 54.

⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, Q. 60, Art. II.

⁸⁵ Ibid. III, Q. 60, Art. 7. See also Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 39.

⁸⁶ Ibid. III, Q. 60, Art. 7: ‘*in sacramentis verba se habent per modum formæ.*’ See also Regan, ‘Signs that Signify and Sanctify,’ 55 and Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), xiv. In the latter, Chauvet asserts that the idea of sacramental cause and effect has one significant disadvantage, namely, that it suggests ‘the idea of quasi automatic production, as long as the instrument is properly utilized by the minister.’

⁸⁷ Hugh Henry, ‘Pange Lingua Gloriosi’ in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11 (New York NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), found online at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11441c.htm>.

a thing.⁸⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, detected a similar problem in modern sacramental theology, which took its cue from scholastic thought. He wrote:

For a certain kind of text-book theology, what mattered in the sacraments and likewise in the Eucharist, was essentially their validity, and therefore the moment of consecration [...]. Everything else was being considered as beautiful ceremonies, interesting [...] but not as the reality in which the Eucharist has its concrete existence. It was thus necessary to discover anew that the Liturgy is not just a collection of ceremonies which aim to give length and solemnity to the consecration.⁸⁹

And in highlighting the words spoken by the priest, the idea of mystery was all but lost, particularly mystery as it was embodied in the totality of the liturgical celebration.⁹⁰ As Vorgrimler has observed: 'The sacraments were transformed from symbolic liturgical actions and life-events to extremely brief, punctual gestures.'⁹¹ Therefore, sacramental theology proceeded 'not from the concrete liturgical tradition [...] but from its own a priori and abstract categories and definitions.'⁹² In other words, sacramental definitions were formulated and liturgical rites were tested to see whether or not they would fit within those definitions, and not vice versa. Consequently, what was lost in all of this was the role of the totality of the rite itself and, as

⁸⁸ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 55. For an extreme example of the efficaciousness of the words of institution, see the Council of Florence, Session 8 (22 November 1439): 'A priest speaking in the person of Christ effects this sacrament. For, in virtue of those words, the substance of bread is changed into the body of Christ and the substance of wine into his blood' (the complete text of the Council can be found online at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/florence.htm#3>). See also Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 51 where Regan's point is reiterated.

⁸⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, 'Assessment and Future Prospects' in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, ed. Alcuin Reid (Farnborough UK: Saint Michael's Abbey Press, 2003), 146.

⁹⁰ Cf. Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 39.

⁹¹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 54.

⁹² Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1988), 13.

David Brown has noted, 'the way in which words, so far from functioning merely as a test for divine action, could actually themselves help mediate the divine.'⁹³ Very simply, words became the *information* needed for an efficacious sacrament.⁹⁴

To that end, recently there has been a push to expand once more the notion of sacrament, particularly by theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, and Otto Semmelroth (20th c.), who each taught that Christ was the primordial sacrament and, when one came in contact with him, one came in contact with something that was truly called 'sacrament.'⁹⁵ This move, while rather contemporary, actually appears to be quite ancient. For this theological move understands Christ as *the sacrament* in the same way that the early fathers, including the apostle St. Paul, understood Christ as the μυστήριον of God.

Kenan Osborne discussed the influence of these three theologians in the following way:

Jesus in his humanity as the primordial sacrament, and the church as the foundational sacrament, became a point of departure for many Catholic theologians once the writings of Semmelroth, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx became popular. This provided a much-needed balance to sacramental theology, since it moved away from a 'two-and-two-only sacrament' approach,

⁹³ Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 23.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 56-57. This is not to say, however, that some objective standard for the presence of Christ in the sacraments is unnecessary. In fact, that reality is quite the contrary. At a bare minimum, there must be some metric for determining Christ's presence in his sacramental gifts, particularly the Eucharist, for, if there were not, the faithful would have no assurance of a comforting presence. However, once the Church has moved beyond merely recognizing his presence in the Eucharist, would it not be helpful to explore all the additional possibilities by which Christ might be present, corporeally, in and for his creation?

⁹⁵ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 55. The first use of the term 'primordial sacrament', as noted by Vorgrimler (*Sacramental Theology*, 32), was by Carl Feckes in 1934 (*Ursakrament*).

on the one hand, and from a 'seven-and-seven-only sacrament' approach, on the other. Reaching beyond both scholasticism and neo-scholasticism to the patristic period of both East and West, these authors presented an approach to Christian sacramentality that was old and yet new. Sacramentality was seen by these authors as a more profound aspect of the Christian Church with a primordial base in the Incarnation itself [...]. Sacramental thought was more closely tied to Jesus, since, in the limited two or seven views of sacraments, the tie to Jesus was basically that sacraments were instituted by Christ. An intrinsic connection to the very Incarnation was never involved.⁹⁶

At the time, what appeared to be a new approach to sacramental theology, appropriately labelled *Nouvelle Théologie*, was actually a return to a more ancient way of understanding the nature of a 'sacrament', in opposition to the medieval development of limiting the sacraments to seven sacred actions.⁹⁷ The intention of this *ressourcement*, or return to the primary Biblical, patristic, and liturgical sources, was to allow the incarnate Christ to have his way with the Church, as opposed to allowing the Church to continue to have her way with Christ. For 'a theology worthy of the name [...] should have a sacramental theology consistent with its Christology.'⁹⁸ And who is Christ? He is, 'in his humanity, [...] the sacrament of God.'⁹⁹

While the rationalism and gnosticism of scholasticism and neo-scholasticism at times put the onus on the Church and the faithful to determine what was and what was not properly called a sacrament,

⁹⁶ Kenan B. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 47.

⁹⁷ For a brilliant survey of the movement, see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie & Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁹⁸ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Madeleine M. Beaumont and Patrick Madigan (Collegeville MN: Pueblo, 1995), 538.

⁹⁹ Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2006), 202.

Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Semmelroth, and other *Nouvelle* theologians put the onus back on Christ. Whatever was assumed in his sacred flesh and received his Christological touch was considered to be, in some sense, sacramental.

Schillebeeckx described the primordial sacrament this way:

Because the saving acts of the man Jesus are performed by a divine person, they have a divine power to save, but because this divine power to save appears to us in visible form, the saving activity of Jesus is *sacramental*. For a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility. [...] The man Jesus, as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of redemption, is *the* sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the Son of God himself, is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption.¹⁰⁰

For Schillebeeckx, a sacrament appears to be defined as any material element ('outwardly perceptible form') through which the divine is conveyed. The primordial example of such a sacrament was, of course, the person of Jesus Christ, a point which is not original to Schillebeeckx, but was made clear in the Ambrosian missal, the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas and, if somewhat indirectly, Luther.

The Ambrosian missal's Preface for the First Sunday in Advent reads this way: '[...] *manifestans plebi tuae Unigeniti tui sacramentum,*' or '[...] manifesting to your people the *sacrament* of your only begotten [Son].'¹⁰¹ Likewise, St. Augustine wrote that '*Non est enim aliud Dei mysterium, nisi Christus*' or 'there is no other mystery of God but Christ.'¹⁰² St. Thomas

¹⁰⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Lanham MD: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 15.

¹⁰¹ Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*, 79, fn 38.

¹⁰² Augustine, *Epist.* 187, no. 34 in *PL* 38:845.

Aquinas wrote that Jesus was 'the fundamental sacrament, insofar as his human nature, as the instrument of divinity, effects salvation.'¹⁰³ And Luther, too, wrote: '*Unum solum habent sacrae literae sacramentum, quod est ipse Christus Dominus*' or 'Sacred Scripture has only one sacrament, that is Christ the Lord.'¹⁰⁴ Together, these indicate that the understanding of Christ as the primordial sacrament or mystery of God was present well before the work of the Second Vatican Council, even if these ideas were largely confined until then to academic circles.

Rahner, however, takes Schillebeeckx a step further by specifying that Christ is both the sign and the thing signified within the sacramental realities. He wrote thus: 'Christ in his historical existence is both reality and sign, *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti*, of the redemptive grace of God.'¹⁰⁵ In other words, the sign (the person of Jesus who walked on this earth) does not simply point our eyes and ears to another reality, but actually bears within himself (in his flesh) that same divine reality – 'the redemptive grace of God.' While Rahner's understanding of sacrament remains quite broad, here we see him doing with Schillebeeckx what Augustine did with Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Ambrose. In other words, with Rahner's inclusion of the language of reality and sign, one must wonder if he was, in fact, proposing a

¹⁰³ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV, Art. 41 translated in Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 120 vols. (Weimar DE, 1883-2009), 6: 86 (hereafter *WA*). When an English translation is offered (hereafter *AE*), it will be from *Luther's Works, American Edition*, 55 vols., eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, vols. 1-30 and Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, vols. 31-55, 1958-1986).

¹⁰⁵ Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York NY: Herder and Herder, 1963), 16.

slight narrowing in definition from that of Schillebeeckx. Regardless of what he was attempting, however, Osborne has noted that 'for both Rahner and Schillebeeckx, [...] it is clear that Jesus in his humanity is a sacrament of God's redemptive love for all men and women.'¹⁰⁶

Semmelroth, though grouped with Schillebeeckx and Rahner as one supportive of a broader sacramentality, does not come to full theological consensus with the former two. While Schillebeeckx and Rahner see sacramentality as originating *in the flesh of Christ*, Semmelroth would see that particular flesh as *analogous* to a sacrament, but not a sacrament in and of itself.¹⁰⁷ In speaking of the Church, he says thus:

Of course, if the church today takes up this term, 'sacrament,' in order to describe itself, it means this in an analogous sense; not all the elements in the concept of sacrament which were developed for the seven individual sacraments, and which were unified since the eleventh century, are realized in the sacrament Church in the same way. However, the constitutive elements of the sacrament are indeed realized in the Church.¹⁰⁸

The same, no doubt, could be said of the person of Christ, the *verum corpus*.

What is striking, however, is the way in which Semmelroth appears to be speaking contradictorily. For example, with Schillebeeckx and Rahner, he pushes for a broader sacramentality, but at the same time, speaks of 'the elements in the concept of sacrament.' When one identifies the specific elements within the sacrament, however, one has inevitably begun to narrow

¹⁰⁶ Kenan B. Osborne, 'Jesus as Human Expression of the Divine Presence: Toward a New Incarnation of the Sacraments' in *The Sacraments: God's Love and Mercy Actualized*, ed. Francis A. Eigo (Villanova PA: Villanova University, 1979), 32.

¹⁰⁷ See Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, 91.

¹⁰⁸ Otto Semmelroth, 'Die Kirche als Sakrament des Heils,' *Mysterium Salutis*, IV/1, 320, translated by and cited in Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, 91.

the intrinsic definition of a sacrament. Moreover, such dissecting of the sacramental reality appears to place Semmelroth in the camp of scholasticism and neo-scholasticism, as noted above, where identifying and highlighting constitutive elements caused a narrowing in definition and not a broadening. Also, Semmelroth asserts that the church is *analogous* to a sacrament, but that 'the constitutive elements of the sacrament are indeed realized in the Church.' One must ask, however, that if the constitutive elements are indeed realized, can it be merely analogous?¹⁰⁹

Regardless of Semmelroth's ability (or inability) to make his claim, it is clear that this push for a broader definition of sacrament by Schillebeeckx, Rahner, and Semmelroth, in turn, has made the sacrament inclusive, not merely of 'consecrated bread,' but actually of the entire 'uttered event' within the milieu of the Church.¹¹⁰ In other words, no longer were the sacramental rites of the Church the exclusive place in which one could come in contact with God. Instead, any contact with God was inclusive of the sacramental and considered as such.¹¹¹ Moreover, if something was caught up in the realm of this broader sacramentality, it was, at the same time, caught up in the realm of the incarnation, for that is where the sacramental receives its primordial character: in the assumption of flesh and blood in the womb of the

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, 92.

¹¹⁰ Regan, 'Signs that Signify and Sanctify,' 54 and 56 respectively.

¹¹¹ Cf. Robert W. Bertram, 'Review of Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*' in *Journal of Religion* 45 (1965), 260-261.

Virgin Mary. Any encounter with Jesus, the primordial sacrament, therefore, is both a sacramental and an incarnational encounter.¹¹²

Kenan Osborne commented on the importance of this rather recent return to the sacramental theology of the past:

One of the most helpful turning points in contemporary theology has been the abandonment of a reductionistic view of sacrament and a healthy broadening of what sacrament is all about. No longer does the term sacrament refer merely to seven or two particular liturgical rites in the Christian churches, but rather a sacramental aspect undergirds the entire theological fabric of both christology and ecclesiology.¹¹³

Both Christ and the Church have been rediscovered in terms of their inherent sacramental character, a truth which can be seen very clearly in the Missals of the Roman Church, published in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.¹¹⁴

For example, the *Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia*, the third Latin version since Vatican II, uses the word *sacramentum* 252 times. Interestingly, however, this same word appeared only 131 times in the Missal published in the same year as the start of the Second Council: 1962.¹¹⁵ 'The word's liturgical import,

¹¹² The incarnation is of particular importance, as that is the direction in which this thesis is headed: toward the sacramentality of the Word, both written and preached, with the Annunciation to Mary serving as the icon of such sacramental activity.

¹¹³ Osborne, 'Jesus as Human Expression of the Divine Presence,' 29.

¹¹⁴ One of the dangers associated with this hyper-sacramental understanding is that it runs the risk of making *everything* sacramental. And when everything is sacramental, then nothing is sacramental. This danger, however, is most prominent in the more sacramental traditions, particularly the Catholic Church. Yet for the sake of this thesis, and the presupposed low sacramental understanding in the Lutheran Church, this perspective comes as a welcome gift.

¹¹⁵ Van Slyke, 'The Changing Meaning of *sacramentum*,' 245. However, this may be due, in part, to the fact that the *Missale Romanum* was larger in size than former missals. Naturally, with an increase in size, one would also expect an increase in the frequency of the word, *sacramentum*.

then' as noted by Van Slyke, 'has practically doubled in the years following the Second Vatican Council.'¹¹⁶

It is clear, therefore, that within the Roman Church there has been an evolution of sacramental understanding, and in some sense the church has come full-circle, from Tertullian's emphasis on materiality, to Schillebeeckx' proposal for a broader notion of sacrament which finds its origin in the materiality of the person of Christ. It has yet to be seen, however, whether or not this recent development will have a lasting impact on the Church.

What is fairly clear from the Church's history is that heresies force confessions, and confessions bring critique, and critique causes one to sharpen and re-think and, at times, even re-formulate. The Lutheran Church, by the very fact that she is a younger Church and a Church that was never intended to break away from the Roman Church, has not been forced to struggle through some of the same theological battles once faced by the common fathers of the Church. As 'catholics in exile,' our catholic forefathers delineated much of our sacramental theology for us, so a number of overlaps will naturally be expected and will, most certainly, be present.¹¹⁷

2. *Lutheran*

According to confessional Lutheran teaching, sacraments are defined as 'rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Carl E. Braaten, 'Confessional Lutheranism in an Ecumenical World,' Concordia Theological Quarterly 71:3/4 (July/October 2007), 223. Obviously, the same catholic heritage can be seen in other ecclesial 'children' of the Reformation, particularly Anglicanism and Calvinism.

has been added.¹¹⁸ Grace, in particular, is that which delivers the forgiveness of sins. It is striking, however, that no mention of Christ is made here. In some sense, it appears that the sacraments are thought of as an abstraction. And where there is abstraction, there is usually a lack of tangibility.

Indeed, since the confessional period of Lutheranism (particularly the 16th and 17th c.), there has been a continual narrowing in sacramental definition. The full extent of this narrowing is especially clear in the *Explanation of the Small Catechism*, a document written by the LCMS and placed at the end of Luther's *Small Catechism*. In that text, for example, it proposes that a sacrament is a sacred act which is instituted by the Lord, *containing a visible element*, and by which the Lord delivers the forgiveness of sins.¹¹⁹ While this may seem insignificant, the additional requirement of a visible element has actually succeeded in narrowing the number of sacraments from three to two, removing absolution from the accepted sacramental actions, as it does not contain a material element like the water of Baptism or the bread and wine of the Eucharist. More important, however, is the fact that this *Explanation* was not part of Luther's original *Small Catechism* and, consequently, is not contained within the full list of confessional documents to which a Lutheran pastor must subscribe. Most Lutherans,

¹¹⁸ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XIII.3 (hereafter *ApAC*). The aforementioned citation was Melancthon's own definition from his *Loci* of 1521 (see fn 4 in Tappert, 211). For the number of sacraments according to the Lutheran tradition, see *ApAC*, Article XIII.4.

¹¹⁹ *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 197 (emphasis mine).

however, are ignorant of the aforementioned fact and consider this

Explanation to be authoritative and binding.

While Luther did not limit the definition of sacrament as the later editions of his *Small Catechism* proceeded to do, he did have a rather scholastic understanding of what determines the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He wrote thus: 'There the words make the bread to be Christ's body given for us. Therefore it is no more just bread, but Christ's body wears the bread.'¹²⁰ According to Luther, it was, very narrowly, the words of consecration which made Christ present in the Eucharist. Moreover, to ensure that as little time as possible elapsed between the consecration and the reception, Luther proposed that the priest deliver the consecrated host before consecrating the chalice with the *verba*.¹²¹ This suggests that in the thinking of Luther there was, as was the case with the scholastics, a special power available in the words of institution which alone were capable of bringing about sacramental efficacy.

What is notable, however, is that the Lutheran confessors acknowledged that a common sacramental understanding existed between themselves and the Roman Church, at least with regard to the sacraments' capability to engender faith, when they [Lutheran confessors] wrote: 'In Article XIII our opponents approve the statement that the sacraments are no mere marks of profession among men, as some imagine, but are rather signs

¹²⁰ WA 30:53 (translation mine). Cf. AE 53:30, WA 12:214; AE 53:81, WA 19:99.

¹²¹ AE 53:30; WA 12:214; AE 53:81; WA 19:99.

and testimonies of God's will toward us, through which he moves men's hearts to believe.¹²²

Along with a relatively common sacramental understanding, it is quite clear that there is little distinction with regard to the means by which the sacramental realities are made present within both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions. Luther wrote thus:

If a layman should perform all the outward functions of a priest, celebrating Mass, confirming, absolving, administering the sacraments, dedicating altars, churches, vestments, vessels, etc., it is certain that these actions in all respects would be similar to those of a true priest, in fact, they might be performed more reverently and properly than the real ones. But because he has not been consecrated and ordained and sanctified, he performs nothing at all, but is only playing church and deceiving himself and his followers.¹²³

Without a properly ordained steward, it is difficult, even impossible, for the sacramental mysteries to be conveyed. Yet, when a properly ordained steward is present and speaks the words of institution given him by Christ, the sacrament is present, too.¹²⁴ So where is the distinction from the Roman Church?

A real distinction becomes clear when one discovers what particularly is conveyed in the sacramental realities according to Roman Catholicism. As mentioned, the Roman Church would propose that graces are conveyed in the sacraments which *provide aid to the receiver*, thereby enabling him to respond

¹²² *ApAC*, Article XIII.1.

¹²³ *AE* 25:234-235.

¹²⁴ While Luther would shudder at being compared with the scholastics, his understanding of sacramental presence is not all that different from theirs. What makes the sacrament a sacrament is a recitation of the words of Christ by a priest. Rome, however, would not acknowledge the validity of Lutheran Orders.

to the call of God and grow in sanctification.¹²⁵ For while ‘no one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion,’ one can, ‘moved by the Holy Spirit [...] merit [...] all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.’¹²⁶ Grace, for Rome, as contained and delivered within the sacramental realities, is directed primarily towards the *sanctification* of the sinner. Therefore, by the very fact that sanctification does not come all at once, so this sacramentally bestowed grace comes in bits – more here, less there – nourishing the Christian toward a life of full sanctification. Grace, for a Lutheran, however, is directed primarily towards *justification*. “‘To be justified’” write the confessors, ‘does not mean that a wicked man is *made righteous*,’ precisely because to be made righteous is the equivalent to being sanctified.¹²⁷ In other words, grace is what forgives and in forgiving, grace justifies. Therefore, grace is not given in bits and pieces, but always full-blast and always for the justification of the sinner. This does not necessarily suggest a difference in the nature of grace itself between the two traditions, but rather a distinction in how each tradition understands the use for which the Lord intended that grace: for justification or for sanctification.

Moreover, in terms of how the sacraments function, Rome teaches that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*.¹²⁸ In its most basic sense, this confession was meant to protect the faithful from the abuse of an unworthy or even an

¹²⁵ CCC, 483:1996.

¹²⁶ CCC, 490:2027.

¹²⁷ ApAC, Article IV.252.

¹²⁸ CCC, 292:1128. This, of course, refers first to the priest and only secondarily to the recipient.

unbelieving priest. Simply, even a bad priest could say a good mass. Luther would agree. He once wrote the following:

For our faith and the sacrament must not be based on the person, whether he is godly or evil, consecrated or unconsecrated, called or an impostor, whether he is the devil or his mother, but upon Christ, upon his word, upon his office, upon his command and ordinance; where these are in force, there everything will be carried out properly, no matter who or what the person might happen to be.¹²⁹

At times, however, this same *ex opere operato* confession has been transferred from the priest to the realm of the believer. What this suggests in the believer is that, regardless of his or her disposition, grace *waits*. In particular, grace waits for the sinner to turn away from himself or herself and back toward the Lord who wishes to deliver his grace-filled gifts at the proper time: when the believer is ready to receive them.¹³⁰ Contrarily, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession brings this issue to light when it declares: 'It is much more necessary to know how to use the sacraments. Here we condemn the whole crowd of scholastic doctors who teach that unless there is some obstacle, the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, without a good disposition in the one using them.'¹³¹ This confessional perspective may well stem from the earlier memorandum of Luther, which he presented to Cardinal Cajetan during a meeting in Augsburg. In it, he insisted that faith, above all else, was necessary for a proper reception of the sacramental gifts.¹³²

¹²⁹ *AE* 38:200-201; *WA* 38:241.

¹³⁰ *CCC*, 292:1128.

¹³¹ *ApAC*, Article XIII.18.

¹³² *AE* 31:253-292; *WA* 2:13-14. See also David S. Yeago, 'The Catholic Luther' in *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 24-26.

Very simply, faith receives the gifts; unbelief rejects the gifts; and the gifts do not wait.

In sum, therefore, though Lutheran theology would not likely contradict traditional Roman teaching on the means by which the sacraments are made present (the speaking of the dominical words of institution done by the one 'put' into the office), the two traditions would likely disagree on *how* one properly receives the gifts of the sacraments (is faith necessary?) and precisely *what* those gifts are (grace as justifying gift or grace as divine aid?).¹³³

As of late, however, it appears that the Roman and Lutheran traditions have come together more than they have drifted apart. In particular, with the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (hereafter, *JDDJ*) on 31 October 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church came to a consensus 'in basic truths of the doctrine of justification.'¹³⁴ In signing this document, therefore, both Lutherans and Roman Catholics essentially declared that their respective condemnations of one another, particularly relating to the doctrine of justification and the delivery of divine grace, were henceforth null and void.¹³⁵ It is noteworthy, however that the LCMS is not a part of the Lutheran World Federation and, therefore, did not sign the *JDDJ*. Moreover, the LCMS continues to assert, in

¹³³ As for being 'put' into the Ministry, see 1 Tim 1:12 and θέμενος. See also Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Boston MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 69.

¹³⁴ 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification' (31 October 1999), paragraph 40, found online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraph 41.

response to *JDDJ*, that the definition and understanding of grace contained therein is still an ‘unresolved issue.’¹³⁶

3. Calvinistic/Reformed

Distinct from both Lutheran and Roman Catholic theology, the Calvinistic understanding of the sacraments centres around the notion that they [the sacraments] are ‘effectual *signs* of grace’ which ‘*represent* Christ and His benefits,’ though that ‘grace embraces only the elect.’¹³⁷ Calvin asserts the following in his catechism of 1538: ‘A sacrament is therefore an outward sign by which the Lord *represents* and *attests* to us his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith.’¹³⁸ As an ‘outward sign,’ the sacraments *represent* Christ, precisely because within them, Christ is not corporeally present. For, according to Calvin, ‘Christ’s body is limited by the general characteristics common to all human bodies, and is contained in heaven (where it was once for all received) [...]’.¹³⁹ Interestingly, however, while Calvin believes that Christ was taken into heaven, he never gives the ‘where’ to heaven’s existence.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, ‘The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective’ (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 8.

¹³⁷ **39 Articles**, Art. XXV in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 502-503 (emphasis mine); *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chap. XXVII.I in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 660 (hereafter **WC**) (emphasis mine) and David P. Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace* (St. Louis MO: The Luther Academy, 2009), 109, respectively.

¹³⁸ Calvin, *Catechism of 1538*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles in I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 34 (emphasis mine).

¹³⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.17.12 (hereafter *Institutes*). See also *ibid.* 2.16.14 and 4.17.30.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 4.17.26.

Therefore, it becomes clear rather quickly that, from a Calvinistic perspective, the driving force in theology is not the sacraments, but the Word of God. The sacraments, on the other hand, become secondary fundamental doctrines, for in their representation of Christ and his gifts, the sacraments ‘seal the promise *given in the Word* and make it more vivid and sure.’¹⁴¹ These sacraments, however, because they lack an intrinsic salvific character, do not, and indeed cannot, subsist in and of themselves. Moreover, when they are separated from the Word of God, they become ‘nothing in themselves, just as seals of a diploma or a public deed are nothing in themselves, and would be affixed to no purpose if nothing was written on the parchment.’¹⁴²

Yet, while the sacraments come to life in the Word of God, for Calvin and the Calvinistic tradition, the Word of God comes to life, in the spoken word, particularly that of the sermon. As Wallace notes:

When he [Calvin] insists on the sacraments being accompanied by the Word Calvin means us to understand by his use of the term ‘word’ not a ‘sort of enchantment’ or ‘magical incantation’ muttered in a scarcely audible voice and in an unknown tongue over the elements, ‘as if it were addressed to dead matter and not to men,’ but one which ‘proclaimed aloud by the minister leads the people by the hand to that which the sign tends and directs us. By the word is here meant the promise which explains the power and use of the signs.’ [...] These conditions can best be fulfilled through the preaching of a sermon, and thus it is that Calvin urges that the sacrament if it is to be properly administered should be preceded by preaching.¹⁴³

To that end, it appears that, for Calvin, the sacraments are primarily understood as *preached actions*, or actions accompanied by the inherently

¹⁴¹ Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 133 (emphasis mine).

¹⁴² *Institutes* 4.14.4.

¹⁴³ Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 136-137.

sacramental act of preaching, for it is the sermon which 'leads the people by the hand to that which the sign [sacrament] tends and directs us.' The sharp distinction of realities – Word and sacrament – does not, therefore, exist for Calvin in the same way that it does in other more sacramental traditions. For Calvin, there is the Word of God and the subsequent preached actions. While the Word of God can stand alone, the sacraments cannot.¹⁴⁴ And since the sacraments cannot stand alone, in some sense, they lack independent existence. The Word of God is the only thing that truly *is* and 'thus preaching is a sacrament.'¹⁴⁵

This particular understanding of the relationship between Word and sacrament seems to do two things. First, it appears to run as a half-way point between Roman Catholicism and the rest of Protestantism. As noted by Zachman,

Roman Catholic theologians, such as David Tracy and Hans Urs von Balthasar, have contrasted Catholic and Protestant forms of thought by saying that the former emphasizes manifestation and a sacramental way of thinking, whereas the latter emphasizes proclamation and a verbally oriented way of thinking. [...] Calvin thinks in terms of the essential interrelationship of manifestation and proclamation.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 135, citing Calvin:

Separated from the spoken word the human action in the sacrament has no spiritual efficacy, the sacrament remaining a "lifeless and bare phantom" with all its power gone and containing nothing sound and nothing pure. Indeed, Calvin calls the sacraments without the Word of God "idle and unmeaning shadows", "pure corruptions", and "delusive signs".

¹⁴⁵ Ronald A. Ward, *Royal Sacrament* (London UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1958), 22.

¹⁴⁶ Randall C. Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 21.

Yet, this half-way understanding actually appears to conflate the Word and the sacrament into one action – particularly preaching – instead of embracing the unique aspects of both traditions: a thoroughly sacramental, tangible Roman Catholic one and a thoroughly verbal, proclamatory Protestant one. While this may seem like a helpful compromise, allowing for a more sacramental understanding of the Word and proclamation, it will be discovered in what follows that by ‘manifestation’, Calvin does not necessarily mean tangibility. However, since tangibility is a key component to sacramentality, Calvin’s compromise is of little help to our search for a broader sacramentality which encompasses the Word and preaching.

Second, this particular Calvinistic understanding seems to further the gap between the sign and the thing signified, for the main point of emphasis in Calvin’s understanding of the Word of God is that the Word *signifies* the sign, which *signifies* something greater. Or to say it another way, the Word of God in preached form signifies and explains the sacrament, which, in turn, signifies God’s grace and promise.¹⁴⁷ As Calvin wrote in his *Institutes*: ‘A word [...] preached, makes us understand what the visible sign means.’¹⁴⁸ In short, Calvin adds another step to the sacramental equation, thereby removing him from the sacramental fold of both Roman Catholics and Lutherans.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 138: ‘Through the sacraments God reinforces the appeal and power of the spoken Word.’

¹⁴⁸ *Institutes* 4.14.4.

¹⁴⁹ Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 137: the ‘“word [...] leads the people by the hand to that which the sign tends and directs us. By the word is here meant the promise which explains the power and use of the signs.”’

Contrarily, in both Lutheran and Roman Catholic teaching, there is a real union between the sign and the thing signified as, for instance, when the body and blood of Christ are united with the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. Chemnitz makes this quite clear when he writes that

certainly it is not one body which is sacrificed for us on the cross and another which is delivered and received in the Supper. Instead, the same substance of the body of Christ which was given on the cross for us is broken with the bread in the Supper for eating, that is, for offering or distributing, because he says, 'This is my body, which is given for you,' and 'This is my body which is broken for you.' Therefore, it is same body which is on the cross and broken in the Supper, that is, divided, tendered, and received. The comparison explains this most beautifully.¹⁵⁰

What is present on the altar, sacramentally, is precisely that which hung upon the cross of Calvary. This, however, was not a new teaching, but clearly patristic. Chrysostom, for instance, said of the Eucharistic cup: 'This which is in the cup is that which flowed from His [Jesus'] side, and of that do we partake.'¹⁵¹ Very simply, in both Lutheran and Roman Catholic teaching, the sign and the thing signified are one in the same within the sacramental action of the Church.¹⁵² Yet, in Calvinistic understanding, there is but 'a spiritual relation [...] between the sign and the thing signified.'¹⁵³ This naturally led

¹⁵⁰ Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 123-124. See also Scott Arthur Bruzek, 'A Five-Word Faith: The Eucharistic Theology of Martin Chemnitz' *Fundamenta Sanae Doctrinae* (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1995), 220.

¹⁵¹ John Chrysostom, 'Homilies on First Corinthians,' Homily XXIV.

¹⁵² Though Lutheran theology (and Roman Catholicism as well), at times, has spoken in terms of signs and testimonies (see, for instance, *ApAC*, Article XIII.1), it must be noted that there is intended to be no distance between the sign and the thing signified (see Risto Saarinen, 'The Word of God in Luther's Theology,' *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 [1990], 34). For, as Chemnitz notes: 'it conflicts with the nature of a pledge, a sign, or a guarantee if we are separated by an immense distance and cut off from those things which ought to strengthen us and instead receive and possess only bread and wine' (Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, 192).

¹⁵³ WC, XXVII.II, 661.

Calvin to interpret 'real presence' as a *representation* of Christ's body and blood to and for the communicant. As Calvin wrote:

The present distribution of the body and blood of the Lord would not greatly benefit us unless they had once for all been given for our redemption and salvation. They [body and blood] are therefore *represented* under bread and wine so that we may learn not only that they are ours but that they have been destined as food for our spiritual life.¹⁵⁴

Yet, one must ask: Is there a connection between the outward sign and the living Christ? Or, as St. Paul asked: 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (*κοινωνία* or *communicatio*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation (*κοινωνία* or *participatio*) in the body of Christ' (1 Cor 10:16)? Is it, merely, a sign that seals, as Calvin asserted? Or is it a sacrament which grants union with Christ corporeally, as St. Paul asserted?

If it is as Calvin believes, particularly that the sacraments are mere representations or signs of Christ and his grace, then the union which occurs between Christ and the Christian within the sacramental action of the Church is nothing more than a mere spiritual union. As Calvin wrote: 'The Spirit truly unites things separated by space,' making the Eucharist, for Calvin, a '*spiritual banquet*,' in which the spirit of the believer is united with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵ 'We must not,' wrote Calvin, 'dream of such a presence of Christ in the Sacrament as the craftsmen of the Roman court have

¹⁵⁴ *Institutes* 4.17.3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 4.17.10 (emphasis mine). Calvinism would confess that the sacraments are utterly 'void and fruitless without faith and the invisible grace ministered by the Holy Spirit' connoting a distinction between the work of the sacraments and the work of the Spirit, with the latter coming 'in secret testimony' to the elect, leaving the non-elect with no hope of salvation (*Institutes*, Introduction and 1.7.4, respectively).

fashioned – as if the body of Christ, by local presence, were put there to be touched by the hands, to be chewed by the teeth, and to be swallowed by the mouth.¹⁵⁶ To that end, this theocentric approach of Calvin, where the defining characteristics were God’s glory and majesty as he reigned on high, could easily lead one to look away from the Christ who comes corporeally by way of the sacramental realities and, rather, to oneself, begging the question: How do I compare to the majestic God?

During the 20th century, Karl Barth revisited sacramental theology from a Reformed perspective. Moreover, he engaged the task at hand with particularly pastoral concerns (i.e. giving comfort to the consciences of Christians).¹⁵⁷ For his pastoral care and evangelical thrust, he should be commended. Within his theological body of work, however, something of his Christology is revealed which, necessarily, affected his sacramental theology.¹⁵⁸ Christologically speaking, Barth reveals his own starting point when he poses the question: ‘What if God be so much God that without ceasing to be God he can also be, and is willing to be, not God as well [...]?’¹⁵⁹ Therefore, one must wonder if Barth actually accepted the full implications of the *communicatio idiomatum*.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, one must wonder if Barth’s

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 4.17.12.

¹⁵⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh UK: T&T Clark, 1975), xv: ‘The community in and for which I have written it is that of the Church and not a community of theological endeavour.’

¹⁵⁸ For a tremendously helpful study of Barth’s Christology, see Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth’s Christology: It’s Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin DE: Walter de Gruyter, 1984). See also Karl Barth, *The Gottingen Dogmatics: Instruction in Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 138-139.

¹⁵⁹ Barth, *The Gottingen Dogmatics*, 136.

¹⁶⁰ E.g. Richard A. Muller, *A Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1985), 74: ‘The

theological emphasis led him to see an unfounded chasm between the divine and human orders of the cosmos. Consequently, in seeing, to a greater or lesser degree, this 'persistent [...] dualism between the divine and the human,' Barth was led to believe that God and man are, to a greater or lesser extent, at odds with one another.¹⁶¹ And when God and man are at odds, the question is: 'Where the emphasis is to be placed?'¹⁶²

Barth naturally placed his emphasis on God, in opposition to the emphasis of the liberal theology of his day, which placed its emphasis on man, but with fatal consequences.¹⁶³ Admittedly, therefore, Barth's emphasis was a helpful one. According to Barth, God is indeed present and active in his creation, but the mode of his presence is the 'agency of the Spirit' and not primarily the agency of his incarnate Son.¹⁶⁴ Yet, the *overemphasis* of this confession (the divine, at the expense of the human) led Barth to seemingly reject a robust sacramental system, particularly because he understood the sacraments to be in some sense the action of the Church and not solely the action of God: human actions, not divine.¹⁶⁵

While Barth's hyper-monergism would actually appear to be conducive to sacramentality (when, of course, one understands the

Reformed view of the *communicatio*, which tends to be restricted to the *genus idiomaticum*, approaches the communication more as a *praedicatio verbalis*, or verbal communication, of *idiomata* from both natures of the person [...].'

¹⁶¹ Trevor A. Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 6.

¹⁶² Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 1960), 31.

¹⁶³ Ibid. See also Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (Atlanta GA: John Knox Press, 1960), 40, where Barth describes the troubles of his day which led him, and others, to formulate their hyper-monergistic theology.

¹⁶⁴ Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 538.

sacraments to be the work of God), within the Barthian framework, the delivery of God's grace came by God's free and sovereign choice alone. This grace was, in turn, exercised in the faith of the Christian, a faith for which God himself was both object and subject. Consequently, for Barth, grace did not come by way of the concrete, tangible rites of the Church, in which humans had some level of participation.¹⁶⁶ Rather, since God is, by nature, free and sovereign, the delivery of grace and, ultimately, the election of the sinner, is his choice and his choice alone. Anything which impinged upon God and his divine initiative was ultimately rejected by Barth, including the sacraments.¹⁶⁷

It should be noted, however, that near the end of his career, Barth took a decidedly different turn in his hyper-monergistic theology, even offering a lecture entitled, 'The Humanity of God.'¹⁶⁸ Therein, he made this striking assertion: 'It is when we look at Jesus Christ that we know decisively that God's deity does not exclude, but includes His *humanity*.'¹⁶⁹ God, declared Barth, is infinitely concerned about man and displays this concern most clearly and concretely in his robust humanity.¹⁷⁰ Yet, Barth did not stop with this new theological assertion. Rather, Barth also made what I would consider his most honest theological confession on the matter at hand:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 539.

¹⁶⁸ This lecture was given at the meeting of the Swiss Reformed Ministers' Association in Aarau on 25 September 1956.

¹⁶⁹ Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 49. Noted Barth scholar, Bruce McCormack, believes that Barth understood God's humanity in terms of *enhypostasia*. In other words, because the man, Jesus, had his being *in* the Logos, his humanity can never be separated from the eternal existence of God. Therefore, God is uniquely human (Bruce L. McCormack, *Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2008], 246).

¹⁷⁰ Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 46-52.

In the knowledge of the humanity of God one must take seriously, affirm, and thankfully acknowledge *Christendom*, the *Church*. We must, each in his place, take part in its life and join in its service. It was a part of the exaggerations of which we were guilty in 1920 that we were able to see the theological relevance of the Church only as a negative counterpart to the Kingdom of God which we had then so happily rediscovered. We wanted to interpret the form of the Church's doctrine, its worship, its juridical order as "human, all too human," as "not so important." We regarded all the earnestness or even zeal devoted to them as superfluous or even injurious. *In all this we at least approached the theory and practice of a spiritual partisanship and an esoteric gnosticism.*¹⁷¹

This theological move, not necessarily away from an emphasis on the Lord's deity, but toward a more robust appreciation for God's humanity as witnessed in the Church's corporate life, would appear to also influence his sacramental theology.¹⁷² Unfortunately, this discovery, confession, and theological 'change of direction' did not affect Barth's sacramental theology to the extent that one would expect, though this may be due, in part, to the fact that he came to all of this late in his career.

4. *Summary of the Various Sacramental Theologies*

In sum, therefore, Rome would confess seven sacraments, all of which are instituted by Christ and entrusted to his Church, and through which

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 62 (emphasis mine).

¹⁷² Ibid., 37. Barth describes his shift in emphasis this way:

What began forcibly to press itself upon us about forty years ago was not so much the humanity of God as His *deity* – a God absolutely unique in His relation to man and the world, overpoweringly lofty and distant, strange, yes even wholly other [...] the *humanity* of God at that time moved from the center to the periphery. [...] All this, however, well it may have been meant and however much it may have mattered, was nevertheless said somewhat severely and brutally, and moreover – at least according to the other side – in part heretically (Ibid., 38, 43).

divine life is communicated to the recipient.¹⁷³ Lutheranism, having a narrower definition of sacrament, would confess only three, all of which are rites that have the command of God and the promise of grace added to them.¹⁷⁴ Calvinism would narrow a bit further, eliminating the concrete, fleshly reality contained within the sacraments of both Rome and Lutheranism, and proposing a mere sign which signifies grace and represents Christ and his gifts.¹⁷⁵ Most extreme, however, was Barth who seems to reject the traditional sacraments through which grace is delivered, particularly because they appear to mix the human and the divine in a way that he is not comfortable confessing.¹⁷⁶

Here, I should make note of the fact that I have intentionally excluded Anglicanism from the aforementioned sacramental discussion. I have done this precisely because the broad range of possibilities associated with Anglicanism, given their deep connections to both the Roman Catholic and Calvinistic traditions, would make it nearly impossible to discuss them accurately and fairly in so few pages. Moreover, what I have described above would certainly look familiar, in some form or another, to those of the Anglican tradition.

To that end, not unlike the narrowing of the definition of Word of God, it appears that the definition of sacrament underwent its own narrowing,

¹⁷³ CCC, 293:1131

¹⁷⁴ *ApAC*, Article XIII.3. The promise of grace is the point of difference between Lutheranism and Rome. Lutheranism interprets the promise of grace as the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, if a sacramental rite does not promise forgiveness, it is not, properly, called a sacrament. Whenever, however, one begins with a definition and tries to backfill into it, there is inevitably a narrowing and not a broadening in number and use.

¹⁷⁵ *39 Articles*, 502-503 and *WC*, 660 respectively.

¹⁷⁶ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 538; 541.

particularly within historically sacramental traditions (Roman Catholic and Lutheran). It seems the definition moved from the broadness of sacred rites through which the divine was conveyed by way of matter, to the narrowness of only those rites instituted by Christ and made valid by his *verba* which, in turn, convey divine grace. (Some traditions, of course, eliminated the sacramental rites, or the importance thereof, altogether.) Unfortunately, however, with this narrowing in definition came a narrowing in number, signifying that divine institution became more important than divine action. Yet, must something be instituted in order for it to be sacramental? In other words, might it be correct to say that when God acts *materially*, and through that material action delivers himself, the action is inherently sacramental?

Can the Word Function Sacramentally?

Given the foregoing, especially the brief exploration of both Word and sacrament, along with the constitutive elements of a sacrament in both the Roman Catholic and Lutheran denominations, at first glance, it might appear difficult for the Word to find a place amid the sacramental realities of either or both of those traditions. In fact, on the surface, it might appear to be slightly easier for the Word to find a sacramental place within the Calvinistic sacramental system, where matter does not necessarily convey the divine, but serves, rather, as a signifier which points to the divine, as someone or something to be striven after. In fact, it was Calvin who held to a very sacramental understanding of preaching, at times even defining the “matter”

(*res sacramenti*) of the sermon as Jesus Christ and his benefits.¹⁷⁷ Yet, the Christ who was present in Calvin's preaching was a spiritual Christ and not a tangible Christ. Therefore, in Calvinistic understanding, Christ's spiritual presence in preaching and sacrament points the believers to his tangible presence which is 'removed from the world,' thereby joining those two realities (the Christian and Christ) in Spirit.¹⁷⁸

Yet, on the other hand, from a uniquely Lutheran perspective, is there a way in which the Word can be seen as a sacramental reality which, when it is preached, actually delivers a tangible person? Before providing an answer to the aforementioned question, let me offer a few examples, albeit somewhat homely, of how words might have the potential to function sacramentally in real time.

1. *The Sacramentality of Words in Real Time*

First, let me offer the example of a husband receiving a handwritten letter from his wife while away visiting his parents who are ill. As he opens the letter and begins to read it in his parents' hearing, a letter which has described the activities back at his home – how his children miss him, how his wife is burdened by his being away, how the grounds around the home need tending, how she wishes he would come home soon, and how she longs to see him again because she loves him so very much – it would not be difficult to imagine that a bit of the person who wrote that letter might begin to shine through. In fact, with even the smallest amount of attention given to listening

¹⁷⁷ Dawn DeVries, 'Calvin's Preaching' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge UK: Cambridge, 2004), 110.

¹⁷⁸ See *Institutes* 4.17.12.

to the letter, the recipient's parents would know how much their grandchildren love their son, they would know that their daughter-in-law needs their son around, they would know the deep bond of love that exists between the two, and, consequently, they would know something more about their daughter-in-law than they did before the letter was written and read aloud. Yet, along with the informational aspect of the letter, there is every chance that the man's parents might be moved to tears, as they long for their son and his wife to be together again, as they feel and see the pain of their separation, and even as they recall their own love story, one that no doubt had its own share of difficult times and extended periods away from one another, and which, now, is being tested by illness.

With words, one will observe in the example above, 'we not only communicate information (How long until dinner? Where is the nearest gas station?), but we also communicate *ourselves* (I love you. How may I help?).'¹⁷⁹ Words, as the French Canadian theologian René Latourelle has written, are 'the means through which two interiorities unveil themselves to each other with a view towards reciprocal exchange.'¹⁸⁰ Moreover, this is especially true when those two interiorities are separated by place and time.

Take, for example, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and his riveting account in *Being and Nothingness* of walking into a café and not seeing his friend Pierre. However, contrary to what one might expect, it was in Sartre's not seeing Pierre that he actually saw him. Everything was, as Sartre

¹⁷⁹ Randall B. Smith, 'Say It Again' in *Touchstone* 23:5 (2010), 18.

¹⁸⁰ René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 1966), 317.

wrote, *not* Pierre.¹⁸¹ In Pierre's absence, Pierre was actually present. Catalano describes this phenomenon of concrete nonbeing in the following way:

Sartre shows that negative judgments such as "John is not here" have a foundation in a nonbeing that is within being and, further, that this nonbeing comes to being through the particular nonbeing that is the human consciousness, or the for-itself.¹⁸²

And Sartre was not alone. It would seem that nearly every human being has, at one time, experienced the presence of another, even in the absence of that other. Maybe it was a meal that reminds one of the cooking of their now-deceased grandmother; maybe it was the smell of a house which reminds one of their childhood home and all who filled it; or maybe it was the arrangement of household accoutrements which, in and of itself, was representative of the one who did the arranging. To that end, if we are capable of being present in our absence, how much more are we capable of being present when, in our absence, our words are there nonetheless?

In the hearing of this letter, therefore, the aforementioned family is not pointed to another, far-off reality, but instead, the reality of woman who wrote the letter is present, in their very midst, speaking to them about their beloved son from the very depths of her heart. For, even in the homely letters of a wife to a husband, the author shines through.

This is not, however, merely a spiritual presence of the author, but it is a corporeal presence. Certainly, it is a presence which transcends the laws of

¹⁸¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York NY: Citadel Press, 1956), 9. For a similar example, see Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*, trans. John Drury (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1987).

¹⁸² Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's 'Being and Nothingness'* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago, 1980), 51.

physics, for the one who writes the letters is not 'physically' present.

However, the presence of the one who writes the letters is more than spiritual, for, at the very least, the voice of the author can be 'heard' and their facial expressions can be 'seen'. Therefore, these letters, while not the same as a physical presence, are more than spiritual realities, precisely because these letters serve not merely as words on a page but, in reality, as the means by which the author (in this case, the wife) is mediated to the present context.¹⁸³

2. *Relationship: The Foundation of Communication*

In order to understand fully how it is that letters and words can convey so concretely the author who writes them, one must first begin by recognizing that when letters and words function thus, it is clear that the sender and receiver have an established relationship. In the aforementioned, the wife knows the husband more intimately than anyone else. Moreover, this sort of established relationship has a long history, dating back to Eden, where Adam and Eve were one flesh, made in the image of their creator, in order to have a perfect relationship forever. Relationship between God and humanity *and* humanity and humanity is primordial.

¹⁸³ Another helpful example is the letters of family members to those serving in the military, precisely because the place those letters hold in a soldier's life is unprecedented. In a sense, soldiers can tolerate the loss of anything else, except the letters they have received from those back home which, in an almost miraculous way, mediate another reality to them. Similarly, this phenomenon also occurs in the singing of hymns. For example, when a congregation sings 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,' is not the reality of the crucifixion mediated to the present context? Likewise, sermons have the possibility of functioning this way as well. For example, the sermons of Jonathan Edwards (not least of which was his famous 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God') were said to have moved the hearers to feel more fully 'a sense of the greatness and glory of divine things, and the infinite importance of the things of eternity' (Jonathan Edwards as cited in George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven CT: Yale, 2003], 217). In a strange way, when Edwards preached, it was as though the judgment of the world was present in the midst of the hearers. For an example of how artwork, too, can serve in similar fashion, see Willard Francis Jabusch, *The Spoken Christ: Reading and Preaching the Transforming Word* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1990), ix-x.

Yet, if it is true that relationship begins in the Garden of Eden, then all relationships are based upon speaking, for our 'reality is linguistically constructed' in the creation of the world through the *logos*.¹⁸⁴ Allow me to explain.

Within the event of creation, there appear to be at least two possibilities (though possibly more) for interpreting the opening words of Gen 1:

1. The first possibility would be that God did not actually 'speak', as we think of speaking today. He may have thought or willed creation into existence, but he did not use human words to convey that divine reality.

This possibility, however, causes at least one major question to emerge: If the Biblical account of the creation records the fact that 'God said,' then why are we to suppose that he did not actually say anything at all?

But might there be a second possibility?

2. The second possibility that I would like to offer is that within the creation event, the Father does indeed speak, but he speaks, not to the world as we know it, but rather to his Son, the *logos*. And in speaking to his Son, he delivers that of which he speaks into his Son's possession. When he says, 'Let there be light,' instantly, there is light and that light belongs to the Son.

¹⁸⁴ William H. Willimon, 'Creation through Words,' *Pulpit Resource* 37:1 (March 2009), back cover.

The account of the creation, therefore, becomes a conversation between Father and Son where the Son takes possession of the world while we, the created ones, are simply meant to listen in on that holy conversation.

If this second option is a possibility, then it becomes clear that, 'language is the primary way in which God works.'¹⁸⁵ Moreover, by speaking realities, the Lord not only brought the cosmos into existence, but he brought relationships into existence as well by giving this creation to his Son as a gift, precisely by speaking to his Son as his Father. Simply, relationships are dependent upon speaking, and speaking is always attached to the concreteness of the cosmos.

To that end, if reality is based upon speaking which creates and sustains relationships, then it is clear that the people mentioned above (husband, wife, and family) know each other already – emotions, desires, and all – and their speaking has turned 'into a form of giving from one person to the other.'¹⁸⁶

Therefore, the fundamental outcome of this reality is that those who author letters, while unable to speak with a human voice, can in fact say what they would say if they were present in the flesh. Moreover, given the established relationship (one 'linguistically constructed'), the receiver can read what has been written, and actually begin to hear the voice of the one writing, as though he or she were standing in their very midst. Yet, this is not

¹⁸⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 61.

¹⁸⁶ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 317.

merely a secular phenomenon. Biblically speaking, all of the epistles seem to serve as written letters intended to convey the living voice of the author.

And, as Martyn asserts of Paul's letter to the Galatians, so we can safely say of most letters today: 'The document is a letter, but it is also a substitute for the oral communication that would have taken place had Paul been able to travel again to Galatia.'¹⁸⁷ But if writing is a substitute, at least Biblically speaking, for oral communication, then does oral communication likewise deliver a tangible presence?

3. *Oral Communication and a Tangible Presence*

In a recent study of young girls who had just struggled through a rather stressful situation, researchers put these young girls into one of three situations:

- The first group was hugged and soothed by their mother for 15 minutes;
- the second group talked with their mothers on the telephone;
- and the third group was allowed to watch a movie.¹⁸⁸

Upon completion of the study, these researches concluded that stress levels 'dropped an equal amount for girls who'd interacted with their mothers either in person or on the phone.'¹⁸⁹

What this appears to indicate is that a voice is potentially equal in effect to a presence, and perhaps more than we realize, just as the written word may have been for a husband who was away from his beloved family.

¹⁸⁷ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York NY: Doubleday, 1997), 20.

¹⁸⁸ 'Health & Science: Reach Out and Touch' in *The Week* 10:465 (28 May 2010), 21.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

This is the case because every human voice comes with a certain amount of power, which is expressed in the spoken word.

In a brilliant sermon at St. Salvator's Chapel in St. Andrews, Jeremy Begbie explained the significance and power of a voice and words this way:

What are you going to say next . . . to the person beside you, or to someone else in Chapel? What words will you next use when you speak to somebody? When the last hymn has faded, when the blessing's been given, the organist has launched into virtuosity, and the procession has left at some stage, we're going to turn to someone, look them in the eye and open your mouths . . . to speak. What then? What will you say?

It's a moment of awesome potential. Full of promise and risk. For we're about to use the most powerful instrument we possess, the most wonderful and the most dangerous tool we'll ever use: the human word . . . and words can make and break. The moment before speech is potentially a make-or-break moment.

It can be what we might call a "Simon Cowell moment". On The X Factor, the televised singing competition, it's the moment when the three judges have to make a decision. Louis has said "yes", and Sharon's said "no", and it's all up to Simon: the future of that quivering teenager with the vast ambition and the karaoke voice. Everything hangs in the balance, in the synapse of silence, as she waits for the words that will make or break. [...]

Words. Only a few puffs of air, minute inflexions of the tongue, the tiniest movement of the lips but capable of building up and tearing down, healing and harming . . . making and breaking. Tony Blair delivers a speech and wins over even his worst enemies; the Pope delivers a speech and loses even his closest friends. You propose to your beloved with well-chosen words on St Andrews pier, and head into lifelong union; you let out the cruel words in a clumsy moment and it's all over.

The promise and risk of words. It figures highly in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Out of all the things he could write about to these fledgling Christian groups in Asia Minor, he writes about speech more than anything else. Over and over again, he comes back to it. Speech therapy it seems high on his agenda. Why? Because he knows words can make and break. And down here

in these Churches, they're breaking, they're breaking relationships, breaking the bonds that tie people together.

Yes, Paul knows about the power of words to make to mend, to bind, to pull people together; but he also knows the power of words to break, to split apart, fracture and fissure.

Words can break the bonds between us . . . but they can also make them.¹⁹⁰

Words have tremendous power. In fact, words do something to us. They make our blood move, our heart race, and our breathing speed up. Words, very simply, make us feel and think differently.¹⁹¹ In the case of the young girls above, the soothing voice of a mother, even from a distance, caused the stress levels in those girls to drop, precisely because the soothing mother behind the voice was mediated to the present context in her speaking. So the particular question at this time is the following: Can the foregoing show us anything about the Word of God – written and preached?

Word and Sacrament: Commonality or Distinction?

Prior to the Reformation, there was an extreme distinction between the Word and the sacraments, with the latter functioning as superior to the former.¹⁹² In other words, 'medieval doctrine described the sacraments as the actual events of "grace," of God's affirmative presence to us, and regarded preaching, teaching, and the like as the communication of information *about*

¹⁹⁰ Jeremy Begbie, 'Words that Break and Words that Make' (St. Andrews UK: St. Salvator's Chapel, 1 October 2006). See also Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 54-55.

¹⁹¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2005), 58.

¹⁹² Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movements and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 81.

them.¹⁹³ One could likely make the case that, to a certain extent, this is still the theological construction today in the Roman Catholic church, though Paul Janowiak's *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly* would argue that the tide needs to be, and is, turning toward a better appreciation for and use of the Word and preaching as a sacramental vehicle for the delivery of the person of Christ. And this is certainly the case after the Second Vatican Council and the emergence of the four-fold presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the priest, the community of the faithful, and *the Word*.¹⁹⁴ Yet, even in the theological perspective that Janowiak is advocating, there remains a lack of tangibility in preaching. For Rome today, preaching is sacramental, but only insofar as it 'what is heard in the word takes flesh in the sacramental activity.'¹⁹⁵ Therefore, in the Roman tradition, preaching remains, at best, an abstraction or, at worst, a signifier of something greater in the Eucharist, a theological move not unlike that of Calvin.

With the dawn of the Reformation, however, there was a dramatic shift in emphasis. In an effort to reject the aforementioned pre-Reformation theological construction, many, but not all, of the reformers (along with the present-day church bodies which are representative of their theologies) simply reversed it.¹⁹⁶ What they attempted to do was 'praise the word as the real event of grace and devalue sacraments to the level of accompanying

¹⁹³ Ibid (emphasis Gritsch's and Jenson's).

¹⁹⁴ See Paul Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), especially ix (emphasis mine).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 163.

¹⁹⁶ In the words of Pannenberg, 'traditional Protestant piety was more or less non-sacramental' (Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Baptism as Remembered "Ecstatic" Identity' in *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, eds. David Brown and Ann Loades (London UK: SPCK, 1996), 77.

ceremonies or gestures of response' and, indeed, that has remained a popular theological move.¹⁹⁷ This post-Reformation Protestant theological framework can even be seen in some Lutheran services today where the Holy Supper is celebrated *before* the sermon is preached, so as to give the place of primacy to the Word, over and against the sacraments.¹⁹⁸

Yet, neither the pre-Reformation, Roman emphasis, nor the post-Reformation, Protestant emphasis should serve as the Lutheran perspective on the relationship between the Word and the sacraments. Instead, for Lutherans, the potential for a robust sacramentology of the Word is present, precisely because for Lutherans, "'word" and "sacrament" are fundamentally but two inseparable aspects of the one event' which Lutheran theology has typically called "'the Word."¹⁹⁹ Luther described it this way:

The body you which you receive [in the Lord's Supper], the Word which you hear [in the preaching of the gospel], are the body and Word of him who holds the whole world in his hand and who inhabits it from beginning to end.²⁰⁰

The Word, therefore, comes in both spoken and visible forms – word and sacrament. Both forms convey the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ himself – the sacraments do so visibly; the spoken word does so orally. Both, however, convey Jesus concretely, tangibly, sacramentally, and completely. The

¹⁹⁷ Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, 81. See also John Macquarrie, 'Incarnation as Root of the Sacramental Principle' in *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, 30: 'In Protestantism generally, the Word and the activity of preaching are exalted as the primary functions of the Church, to the neglect of the sacraments.'

¹⁹⁸ While this is not the official practice of the Lutheran church, as contained within the rites and rubrics of the liturgy, it is the improvised practice of some, particularly those who, without question, value the Word over and against the sacrament. In these instances, the sermon takes centre stage in the Divine Service with the Eucharist proceeding it.

¹⁹⁹ Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, 80 (emphasis Gritsch's and Jenson's).

²⁰⁰ *AE* 36:298; *WA* 11:450.

fullness of Christ and, therefore, the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9), is delivered in the visible and spoken word – the one Word. The Lutheran confessions describe the reality this way:

As the Word enters through the ears to strike the heart, so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart. [...] Therefore both have the same effect.²⁰¹

To that end, for example, the Lutheran confessions call baptism ‘nothing else than the Word of God in water.’²⁰²

The Word: one is visible, one is oral, but both deliver the same Christ and, consequently, ‘both have the same effect’ – the salvation and edification of sinners. The reason they share the same effect is because they share the same Jesus, who is present corporeally in both the visible rite and the spoken word. Luther may have described it best when speaking of baptism:²⁰³

Therefore it is not simply a natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water – praise it in any other terms you can – all by virtue of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word which no one can sufficiently extol, *for it contains and conveys all the fullness of God.*²⁰⁴

The Word, therefore, is utterly sacramental, and the sacraments are utterly verbal.

In Lutheran theology, as mentioned, the potential for the aforementioned confession is present, but, sadly, such a confession has not been pulled out and articulated clearly by Lutherans as of yet. Nevertheless,

²⁰¹ *ApAC*, Article XIII.5.

²⁰² *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Article V.1 (hereafter *SA*).

²⁰³ Interestingly, Baptism seems to encounter the same problem that words do, precisely because it is a more invisible way of connecting the recipient personally and tangibly with Christ.

²⁰⁴ *Large Catechism*, Fourth Part: Baptism, 17 (hereafter *LC*) (emphasis mine). Cf. Col 2:9.

this reality remains: just as it was with the letters from a wife to her husband, in the Lord's love letter to his creation (the Word of God), the author is mediated to the present context. For 'the word of God is God in action; for God is not a lecturer but the God who is "working still," as Jesus said of His Father, and of Himself the Son (Jn 5:17).'²⁰⁵ The Lord does his work by his speaking. He says what he does and does what he says, always uttering realities. The Word of God (specifically the words of Jesus) does not simply convey information in such a way so as to implant knowledge in the hearer (though they do, in fact, do that, but it is not primary). Rather, in his speaking, the Lord, employing all the tools of rhetoric (here, meaning what was most suitable for his audience), actually delivers the fullness of himself to the hearer, just as his Father did for his Son at creation.²⁰⁶ An example from one of Jesus' own sermons or stories might help in illustrating the point.

Take, for instance, Jesus' encounter with the rich young man in Matt 19:16-30. While the wealthy boy was going away downcast, Jesus proceeded to utter some of the most striking, yet foolish, words in all of Scripture: 'And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (Matt 19:24).

How can a camel pass through the tiny eye of a needle? Could not Jesus have chosen another example, possibly even another animal, which

²⁰⁵ Martin H. Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the New Testament* (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 1.

²⁰⁶ For a brilliant discussion of Palestinian culture and the way in which Jesus engaged it through his speaking, particularly his parables, see Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes, Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1983), especially *Poet & Peasant*, 27-43.

would have made the story a slightly more plausible? Yet, on the other hand, might there be something more to Jesus' strange choice of parabolic illustrations than simply plausibility?

Theologically, it is quite clear that Jesus is attempting to show the rich young man that entering the kingdom is not an easy task, especially for those burdened and distracted by worldly things. In fact, it is quite impossible. But there is more to this illustration. This particular example is so outrageous, it is humorous. It would be like a contemporary preacher saying something to the effect of the following: 'And again I say to you, it is easier for a Land Rover to drive through a keyhole, than for a wealthy person in today's hard-hit economy to enter the kingdom of God.' Theologically, it conveys the utter impossibility of the task, but it also reveals something of the one preaching. How did he ever get to the point of choosing a Land Rover? And a keyhole?

As just one example of trying to rationalise this text from Matt 19, Cyril of Alexandria (370-444) redefines the terms altogether, attempting to allow the illustration to become more plausible. Cyril proposes that 'by "camel" here Jesus means not the living thing, the beast of burden, but the thick rope to which sailors tie their anchors.'²⁰⁷ However, while many commentators have, 'over the centuries [...] attempted to explain away the ridiculous image of a camel going through the eye of a needle, [...] almost all modern commentators

²⁰⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, "Fragment 219" in *Matthaus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, ed. Joseph Reuss (Berlin DE: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), 226, translated in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, vol. 1b, ed. Manlio Simonetti (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 102.

affirm that Jesus intends the hearer to take it literally.²⁰⁸ As Arthur Just notes: ‘One of the most common attempts to explain away this image is to suggest that the needle is a reference to a small city gate that was difficult for a camel to pass through. The other involves the word “camel,” [...] which a few copyists changed to [...] “rope.”’²⁰⁹ Cyril was one of those commentators, whose particular intention in reading this text was to show that Jesus’ specific use of terms (his rhetoric) was not ‘entirely pointless (as a camel would be), but he makes it an exceedingly difficult matter; in fact, next to impossible.’²¹⁰ Yet, with every step toward plausibility, there is naturally a step away from something quite humorous (A camel through a needle!) and, consequently, a step away from a rather revealing encounter with Jesus, one which would have been so very evident to those Middle Eastern villagers listening first-hand to this parable.

Kenneth Bailey, whose work examines the parables of Jesus ‘from within the “hermeneutical circle,” that is, [...] from a Middle Eastern cultural perspective,’ makes note of this parable’s specific cultural context and its effect upon our overall interpretation of it.²¹¹ Bailey observes:

A second alternative comes from the Middle Eastern village scene. Here peasant homes sometimes have a large set of double doors that open from the street into the courtyard of the

²⁰⁸ Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51-24:53* (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 699.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, fn 21.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, ix. It should be duly noted that, according to Bailey, parables had a profound effect upon people in the ancient world, precisely because parables were the way Middle Easterners created meaning, in contrast, of course, to the way Westerners create meaning through abstraction (Kenneth Bailey, ‘Interpreting Parables,’ *Issues, Etc.* radio program [5 July 2011], found online at [http://issuesetc.org/archive/page/2/.](http://issuesetc.org/archive/page/2/))

family home. In the village these doors must be large enough to allow the passage of a fully loaded camel. Thus the doors must be at least ten feet high and together some twelve feet wide. Such doors are constructed of massive timbers. So much manpower is required to move them that they are opened only when loaded camels are transporting something through them. The ordinary movement of people in and out of such doors is facilitated by a small door cut in the large door. This small door is easily opened. In the past some commentaries explained that this is the “needle’s eye” of the text. [...] Yet [...] Scherer, a long time resident in the Middle East, wrote bluntly, “There is not the slightest shred of evidence for this identification. This door has not in any language been called the needle’s eye, and is not so called today” (Scherer, 37). Our experience substantiates Scherer.²¹²

Likewise, making note of the Greek text, Kittel asserts:

As later in Mt. 23:24, the camel is here taken to be the largest animal on Palestinian soil. The Talmud reproduces a proverbial saying about an elephant going through the eye of a needle [...]. Jesus is using a typical oriental image to emphasise the impossibility of something by way of violent contrast. [...] It is erroneous to try to substitute *καμιλον* [rope] for *καμηλον* [camel] [...].²¹³

Presuming, therefore, that Jesus knew his audience and, consequently, adapted his parable (words and all) so as not to make it merely an information dump, it might be helpful to recall the words of St. Augustine on rhetoric:

He who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and moves. [...] Of the three, that which is given first place, that is, the necessity of teaching, resides in the things which we have to say, the other two in the manner in which we say it. Thus he who speaks when he would teach cannot think that he has said what he wished to say to the person he wishes to teach so long as that person does not understand him. For even though he has said something which he himself understands, he is not yet to be thought of as having spoken to the person who does not understand him [...] But if he desires

²¹² Ibid., 166.

²¹³ Kittel, *Dictionary*, vol. 3, 593-594.

also to delight or to move the person to whom he speaks he will not do it simply by speaking in any way at all; but the manner in which he speaks determines whether he does so. Just as the listener is to be delighted if he is to be retained as a listener, so also he is to be persuaded if he is to be moved to act. And just as he is delighted if you speak sweetly, so is he persuaded if he loves what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, sorrows at what you maintain to be sorrowful; rejoices when you announce something delightful, takes pity on those whom you place before him in speaking as being pitiful, flees those whom you, moving fear, warn are to be avoided; and is moved by whatever else may be done through grand eloquence toward moving the minds of listeners, not that they may know what is to be done, but that they may do what they already know should be done.²¹⁴

The foregoing example from the Matt 19 is demonstrative of the fact

that one cannot have words spoken without the person who speaks the words being delivered. This particular example of the camel through the needle's eye does not simply convey information; it does not simply teach though, as Augustine has noted, the teaching is quite important. In fact, it would seem than any attempt to soften the blow of the text by redefining 'camel' as 'rope' is, in actuality, an attempt to highlight the informational aspect (teaching) at the expense of the personal, subjective aspect (delighting and persuading). For if 'camel' means 'rope' then the information in the text is more plausible, and the speaker is of less importance. Yet, since the Biblical, historical, and cultural data show that 'camel' here means 'camel' then what is Jesus trying to demonstrate by his unique choice of words?

It would appear that he is teaching more than the mere difficulty (the utter impossibility, even) of entering the kingdom within the given circumstances, though that is indeed part of his message. If that, however,

²¹⁴ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York NY: The Liberal Arts Press, 1958), book IV, XII.27, 136-137.

was his only intention, could he not have said it that bluntly: 'It will be impossible for you, a rich young man, to enter the kingdom.'? Instead, however, he chooses an image, one that is so unbelievable, it is funny. And it is doubly funny to those listening first-hand, who live and work with camels on a regular basis. It was, in effect, an image that was most suitable to his audience and context and, therefore, was a rhetorically effective one, as it both delighted and moved those who heard him speaking, while simultaneously giving more of himself to his hearers than they had of him before. As the text continues, the disciples were amazed/delighted (ἐκπλήσσω), and the young man went away sorrowful/moved (λυπέω).

The delighting and the moving, however, come, first and foremost, because of the one who speaks. Of course, this does not mean that the hearer is of no value. Rather, the hearer is of immense value, but only once a word has been spoken with the intention of being heard. Generally, therefore, within the context of relationships and, particularly, in the Gospels, the speaker is the giver, and the hearer is given to. To that end, the uniqueness of the gift contained within the spoken word of Jesus (in this case, humour coupled with an unbelievably honest critique of the world's attempt to enter the Kingdom of God) comes because of the one who speaks: Jesus, the Word.²¹⁵ And as Word, Jesus adapts himself, for each of his parables not only tells a story, but functions as a means by which hearers have the potential to be drawn into that story and allowed to find their place in it. Certainly, every

²¹⁵ See Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. M. H. Bertram (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 142. See also Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 249: 'The teaching and the teacher are one.'

parable is different, but no parable is meaningless. Every single parable addresses a need, a time, a person/people, and a problem by mediating the one who speaks therein: the person of Jesus Christ.

This would indicate, therefore, that the Word of God is a sacramental Word, not because it speaks of the sacraments (though, it does indeed do this), but because it mediates the life and being of the speaker, Jesus Christ, with particularity to those who need him in their own unique way and at their own unique time. For 'the words, like the flesh itself, function sacramentally in both pointing to a divine reality beyond themselves, while at the same time mediating, however inadequately, something of that reality.'²¹⁶

Conclusion

At this point, having explored both Word and sacrament and seen, respectively, their narrowing in definition, and having examined, albeit briefly, the renewed possibility for the sacramentality of the Word and preaching, particularly as both bear an intrinsic power and both deliver the Christ behind the message, it might be best to demonstrate illustratively some of the practical implications of the sacramentality of the Word and preaching (or lack thereof) by exploring the often turbulent discussions in my own church body, the LCMS.

²¹⁶ David Brown and Ann Loades, 'Introduction: The Divine Poet,' in *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, 6.

Chapter 2

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod’s Calvinistic Theology of the Word and Preaching

Introduction

Having observed two things in particular thus far: 1) the dramatic narrowing in definitions of the Word of God and sacrament in the history of the Church, particularly in light of the events surrounding the Reformation, and 2) the way in which words, the Word of God and, particularly, the preached Word, can once again function sacramentally, in this second chapter, I explore the place that the Word of God holds in Lutheran theology of more recent memory, particularly as it has come to be expressed in the preaching of my Church. I begin this chapter, however, with an examination of ordination. While this may seem odd, it is nonetheless vitally important to our investigation into the place of the Word of God, precisely because that Word finds its clearest expression in the pastoral and liturgical acts of the Church – especially preaching – which, consequently, have their origin and foundation in ordination. Likewise, the promises made by the ordinand in the ordination rite are determinative of a pastor’s faithfulness or lack thereof throughout his ministry. Having established the ordination principle that one’s ministry in the LCMS is determined by the inerrant and inspired Scriptures, I then explore the Calvinistic theology of the Word and preaching, highlighting its perceived pitfalls in light of this same position on Scriptural authority. Finally, I explore the ways in which the Word of God and preaching in Lutheran theology of the 20th century found similarity with the

Word of God and preaching in classic Calvinistic theology and, consequently, how that has negatively affected the preaching of the LCMS.

Scriptural Authority

As noted, Lutheranism is a tradition that is rooted in the Word of God, confessing, in particular, that the Old and New Testaments, are ‘the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated.’²¹⁷ This confession is so integral to Lutheran faith and practice that it likewise appears as central and defining to one of the most sacramental rites of the Lutheran Church: ordination. Yet, from the start, it is important to note the place that the rite of ordination itself holds within the Lutheran tradition, for whatever is confessed within that rite will be of utmost importance for those who submit themselves to that rite.

Dogmatically speaking, the Apology of the Augsburg confession declares: ‘If ordination is interpreted in relation to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament.’²¹⁸ Not surprisingly, however, some in the Lutheran Church – both past and present – have downplayed the significance of ordination, even questioning its inherent sacramentality.

²¹⁷ *Solid Declaration*, Rule and Norm.1 (hereafter *SD*). This confession is the very cornerstone of everything that is Lutheran. Moreover, subscription to this confession is asked of anyone who formally calls themselves Lutheran and seeks to profess the faith found in the Lutheran Confessions.

²¹⁸ *ApAC*, Article XIII.11. ‘In relation to the ministry of the Word’ stands in opposition to the ministry of sacrifice or the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament (c.f. *ApAC*, Article XIII.7-8). Interestingly, Calvin seems to take a similar position to the Lutherans on the matter of ordination. He even goes so far as to label the laying on of hands a sacrament ‘in true and legitimate ordination’ (*Institutes* 4.19.31).

For instance, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, the first president of what now constitutes the LCMS, once wrote that ‘ordination with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but only an apostolic, ecclesiastical institution.’²¹⁹ With the understanding that ordination is not from the Lord but from man, his assertion that ‘ordination is an adiaphoron’ (neither commanded nor forbidden in Holy Scripture) flows quite logically.²²⁰

Likewise Francis Pieper, the leading systematic theologian in the history of the LCMS, wrote dogmatically:

Ordination to the ministry by the laying on of hands and prayers is not a divine ordinance, but a church custom or ceremony, for, although it is mentioned in Holy Writ, it is not commanded. [...] Hence it belongs to the adiaphorous practices. *A candidate for the ministry becomes a pastor not by his ordination, but by his call and its acceptance.*²²¹

Even more recently, Cameron MacKenzie, current professor at one of only two LCMS seminaries in the United States, subverted any sacramental overtones within the ordination rite when he said: ‘Of course, Melancthon’s point is not that the ceremony is of divine origin but that the office is and so ordination does not create the ministry but, as Walther contends, “acknowledges, attests, and confirms publicly where it has already taken place.”’²²²

²¹⁹ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, trans. John M. Drickamer (New Haven MO: Lutheran News, 1995), 47.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 454-455 (emphasis mine).

²²² Cameron A. MacKenzie, ‘Contemporary Reflections on Church and Ministry in C.F.W. Walther’ (unpublished paper originally presented at the LCMS Indiana District Pastors’ Conference, 1996), here citing Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *Church and Ministry: Witnesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 248.

It is clear from the foregoing that from the very beginning of the American Lutheran Church, some have advocated, albeit unknowingly in many instances, putting the gift of the ministry before the giving of that gift in ordination. When this occurs, the questions asked of the ordinand, especially the question of faithful subscription to the Holy Scriptures ('Do you believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and the *only infallible rule of faith and practice?*'²²³), serve merely as a formality rather than a true account before the living God who sacramentally changes men into priests.

However, while Walther, Pieper, and MacKenzie, for example, have failed to see the necessity and sacramentality of ordination, it is fairly clear, both Biblically and confessionally, that ordination through the laying on of hands is not simply adiaphorous action, but rather a divinely mandated act of God, which, when joined to the physical element (hands), actually delivers the Holy Spirit for a specific task in a specific place, and so can be deemed thoroughly sacramental.

From the Biblical perspective, one would do well to explore Lk 10:16, Jn 20:21-23, and 1 Tim 4:14 which, while not exhaustive, certainly do display the full range of texts pertaining to the ministry: i.e. pastors stand in Christ's stead in order to speak for him ('The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me'); the primary purpose of their speaking involves being sent into the

²²³ The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 165 (emphasis mine).

world to forgive and retain sins (“Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”’); and their speaking flows from the reality of having been put into the ministry through the laying on of hands (“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.’).

From a confessional Lutheran perspective, however, one should first and foremost consult the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* [presented in 1537, this was a defence of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and a refutation of the Roman Confutation], Article XIII which declares that if the office of the ministry is understood in relationship to the Word of God, then ordination (the act of putting a man into that ministry), particularly the laying on of hands, can be considered a sacrament.²²⁴ More peripherally, one should also consult the *Smalcald Articles* [a summary of Lutheran theology, written by Luther in 1537], Part III, Article X, which signifies an urgency for the act of ordination, even declaring that ‘the papists’ cannot forbid the Lutherans from ordaining men into the office of the ministry.²²⁵ In turn, if ordination was not of divine institution and, therefore, not of utter necessity, would there be this same urgency? It appears that the urgency reflects the necessity, which reflects the divine institution of ordination itself. In similar fashion, in the

²²⁶ *ApAC*, Article XIII.11.

²²⁵ *SA*, Part III, Article X.3.

Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope [written in 1537 by Philip Melanchthon, this document was composed in preparation for the Council of Trent], in the chapter on ‘The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops,’ while calling the distinctions within the ministerial office (bishops and priests) merely human inventions, speaks specifically to the validity of ordinations done by priests without a bishop. This push for valid ordination suggests that the act of ordaining a man is, in fact, quite necessary and, therefore, can and should be done by those previously ordained, even if a bishop is not present.²²⁶ Once again, would there be a push for pastors to ordain other men into the ministry if ordination was not of divine origin and, therefore, not of utter necessity?

What the foregoing is meant to suggest is that the inherent sacramentality of being placed into the office of the ministry through ordination would appear to have a natural connection to the sacramentality of the words spoken by the Church’s ordained ministers. In other words, would not one who has been sacramentally ‘put’ function and speak sacramentally?

In effect, however, there are two competing forces at play which emerge among those who accept a more sacramental understanding of the ministry and ordination (of which I am one). On the one hand, those who accept the sacramentality of the ordination rite take seriously the questions asked therein, not least of which is subscription to the infallible and inerrant Word of God. This naturally sets the pastor on the Reformation course

²²⁶ *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops.*63-67.

explicated in the introduction – where Scripture functions doctrinally and therefore is primarily informational. Yet, on the other hand, if one does in fact, understand ordination to be sacramental, one will also understand the newly ordained minister to emerge from the rite as a new man, changed even. He is not longer a civilian, if you will, but a man who has entered into a new way of life and being where he now stands, physically, in the stead of Jesus on earth for the advantage of those placed under his care. There is a change in the pastor, which naturally affects, not only his own understanding of his office, but also the way in which he engages the world and the local church from *within that office*. His rhetoric, his character, and his ethos are all transformed when a man is sacramentally put into the ministry. Therefore, when this pastor speaks, he does not recite the correct information needed for salvation (the inspired and inerrant Word of God), but, instead, speaks as Jesus Christ himself, present amid his Church to deliver his sacred and sacramental gifts. As St. Paul said of his own ministry, the newly ordained pastor also says of his: he stands and functions henceforth ‘*in persona Christi*’ (2 Cor 2:10). In turn, this new reality which follows ordination, contrary to the questions asked of the man during the ordination rite itself, seems to be utterly tangible and, therefore, utterly sacramental.

Of those two competing forces, the former usually wins the day in Lutheran circles. What is noteworthy about an ordination is not the laying on of hands and certainly not the change that takes place in the ordinand. Rather, what is significant is that this man, above all else, will let the authority

of Holy Scripture guide his ministry, placing him well within the Reformation tradition.

In both theology and in practise, it is clear, therefore, that to this very day the children of the Reformation have sought refuge in this *Sola Scriptura* confession.²²⁷ Moreover, within the current confessional Lutheran milieu, there remains little disagreement over whether or not the inspired Scriptures are the sole rule and norm of faith and life.²²⁸ And this same reality can also be said of nearly every strain of Protestant Christianity, as ‘the divine inspiration of the Bible is the foundation of historic Protestant hermeneutics and exegesis.’²²⁹ Yet, since this confession is the foundation of the ministry itself, as witnessed by its place of prominence within the rite of ordination, it shall naturally permeate the pastoral acts too.

1. *Calvin, the Authority of Scripture, and Preaching*

Take Calvin, for example, who, according to Berkhof ‘was, by common consent, the greatest exegete of the Reformation,’ but was likewise driven by a hyper-homiletical understanding of the pastoral office, which took its cue from his understanding of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of

²²⁷ As for ‘children of the Reformation,’ I am referring here, specifically, to confessional Lutherans, but this would also include many Protestants. It should also be noted that there is a chance that the phrase *Sola Scriptura* could be interpreted as those things necessary for salvation as opposed to ‘teachings from which no Christian may lawfully dissent’ (John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* [Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company, 1975], xxxvii). According to McHugh, the phrase, ‘truths necessary for salvation’ can be found in ‘the Sixth of the Thirty-nine Articles, in the French and Scottish Confession of faith [...], and in the Fourth Session of Trent’ (ibid).

²²⁸ ‘Confessional’ Lutheran is here a reference to those who hold a *quia* subscription to the Book of Concord, confessing that the confessions therein are correct *because* they are in accord with God’s holy Word.

²²⁹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1970), 93.

God.²³⁰ This should be expected, of course, since the Reformation was defined, in many respects, by the revival of the preaching task and the Biblical exegesis which accompanied it.²³¹ Yet, for Calvin, this was especially the case.

As Zachman has noted, for Calvin

the primacy of hearing over against seeing appears to be reinforced not only by the removal of images, statues, stained glass, paintings, and altars from places of worship but also by the substitution of the Sermon for the daily offering of the Mass, embodying Calvin's vision of the Church as the 'school of Christ' in which the faithful would hear daily expositions of the Scriptures and be exhorted to read the Scriptures for themselves.²³²

For Calvin, the Word of God (particularly in its preached form) was the expression of God par excellence, which also had as its primary purpose, the education of the faithful.²³³ Very simply, preaching was, for Calvin, also (and at the same time) teaching.²³⁴ This reality should not come as a surprise, however, precisely because the primacy of the Word's didactic role may well be the natural consequence of Calvin's understanding of divine election. In other words, if the Lord has already determined the eternal fate of human beings (double predestination), then the purpose of the Word of preaching was not *primarily* to save the unregenerate and to strengthen the faithful, but

²³⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Sacred Hermeneutics)* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1958), 27. The above point is affirmed by the number and acceptance of Calvin's commentaries on the books of the Bible (27). Calvin was also called, by Melancthon, 'the Theologian' in likeness to Gregory of Nazianzen and St John, the Apostle (*The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 1, 446). See also T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh UK: T&T Clark, 1992), 10.

²³¹ James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster, 1968), 29.

²³² Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, 3.

²³³ See Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching*, 180: 'John Calvin's understanding of preaching as the primary mode by God's presence in the world [...].'

²³⁴ Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 35. To a certain extent, this reality may help to explain one of the more common practices within the Calvinistic tradition: the use of Geneva Gowns (academic gowns) as opposed to vestments.

to educate the elect in the precepts of the Lord.²³⁵ Consequently, for Calvin, nothing compared to the way in which the Lord revealed himself to the elect in Holy Scripture and preaching, making ‘the only successful medium of intercourse [...] the word.’²³⁶

Calvin described the Lord’s didactic role this way, in writing on the sacraments:

The sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that *inward teacher*, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. [...] The sacraments profit not a whit without the power of the Holy Spirit, and nothing prevents them from strengthening and enlarging faith in hearts already *taught by that Schoolmaster*.²³⁷

And how does the Lord teach his children? ‘For first, the Lord teaches and instructs us by his Word.’²³⁸

And the teacher, teaching, and Word come together for Calvin in the preaching office, ‘for it is his [the Lord’s] will to teach us through human means,’ and the most basic human means is the sermon.²³⁹ It goes without saying, therefore, that the ‘human work of the sermon is critically important’ for Calvin, because he ‘thought of preaching as the primary means by which God’s presence [‘that *inward teacher*’] becomes actual to us and by which

²³⁵ See Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 83: ‘The task of the preacher of the Word is to expound the scripture in the midst of the worshipping Church [...]’ (emphasis mine).

²³⁶ Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 13 as cited in Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, 4. See also Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary*, 55: ‘God, of necessity, must communicate to us in human words, and “mean and lowly words” at that.’

²³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 4.14.9 (emphasis mine).

²³⁸ *Ibid.* 4.14.10.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* 4.1.5. See also 4.3.1.

God's work is accomplished in individual life and in the community.²⁴⁰

However, God's actualized presence as teacher is not necessarily a tangible presence, for the tangible presence of God is, at best, located in heaven.²⁴¹

In a very real sense, therefore, Calvin's understanding of the supremacy of the Word of God, delivered homiletically within worship, placed the inspired and inerrant Scriptures above the sacraments and the person of Christ and, likewise, divine information above divine communication. In particular, his sole reliance upon the preached Word for the revelation of God as teacher, at the expense of other means of expression, appears 'to reveal Calvin's invincible distrust of a largely sacramental and "incarnational" understanding of the Christian religion.'²⁴² In turn, for Calvin, the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism only 'derive their virtue from the word when it is preached *intelligently*. Without this they deserve not the name of sacraments.'²⁴³ Likewise, he wrote:

For we ought to understand the word not as one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element. Rather, it should, when preached, make us *understand* what the visible sign means.²⁴⁴

And *intelligent* preaching, which functions primarily to help the faithful understand the sacraments by way of *explanation*, has an exclusively didactic

²⁴⁰ John H. Leith, 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today,' in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville KY: Westminster, 1990), and 206 respectively.

²⁴¹ *Institutes* 4.17.30.

²⁴² Alexander Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1987), 198-199.

²⁴³ John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ in Treatises on the Sacraments: Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Forms of Prayer, and Confessions of Faith*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids MI: Christian Focus, 2002), 167 (emphasis mine).

²⁴⁴ *Institutes* 4.14.4 (emphasis mine).

character. In turn, intellectual apprehension of the sacramental subject, devoid of a sense of mystery, became the key to a proper reception of the sacraments. Consequently, for Calvin, the only true sacrament *was* preaching.²⁴⁵

Commenting on Rom 10:14, Calvin writes that ‘the Word, accordingly, is required for a true knowledge of God. But it is the preached Word alone [...], for this is the normal mode which the Lord has appointed for imparting His Word (*ordinaria ratio dispensandi*).’²⁴⁶ Preaching was, in other words, ‘the instrument of faith.’²⁴⁷ And this seems to make sense because, for Calvin, within the homiletical act, the words of the sermon were *equal* to the elements of the other recognised sacraments of the Church catholic (i.e. bread, wine, and water).²⁴⁸ Coming to the ‘element’ of the preachers words was the Holy Spirit, who made the entire homiletical act a sacramental one. As Calvin wrote: ‘The work of the Spirit, then, is joined to the Word of God. But a distinction is made, that we may know that the external word is of no avail by itself, unless animated by the power of the Spirit.’²⁴⁹

It should be noted, however, that while this would seem to align my thesis with a Calvin, who viewed preaching as sacramental, it actually fails to do so for two reasons. First, what Calvin’s perspective presupposes is that in

²⁴⁵ Here, however, ‘sacrament’ is not understood in the classic terms of adaptability and materiality mediating the divine.

²⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: Romans and Thessalonians*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 231.

²⁴⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh UK: T. Clark, 1840), 188.

²⁴⁸ Leith, ‘Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today,’ 211.

²⁴⁹ Calvin, *Commentary on Ezekiel 2:2*, translated in Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 90.

the words themselves, *Christ is not present*. Rather, the external words of the preacher are dead words – mere *elements* or signs or matter – in so far as they are equal to bread, wine, and water, before having received the Spirit's divine touch.²⁵⁰ Put more simply, preaching, for Calvin, is sacramental precisely because the words of the preacher *receive* a divine touch, as opposed to the words of the preacher actually bearing Christ in and of themselves and, in turn, *delivering* that divine touch to his hearers.²⁵¹ The bond which unites the believers with Christ in preaching, therefore, is primarily the Spirit, not the words themselves.²⁵²

Second, while Calvin would maintain the sacramentality of the Word and preaching per se and, while he would even speak of the divine accommodation of God within the preaching task, he would ironically do so at the expense of the corporeal, the tangible, and the concrete. In other words, while Calvin would certainly agree with Ward, that 'the ultimate aim of preaching is to give Christ,' thus making it a sacrament, he would also agree with Ward in so far as this Christological presence *cannot* be localized corporeally in the words of the sermon.²⁵³ As Calvin wrote, favourably citing Augustine: '*Nihil aliud sunt verba quam signa*' or, 'Words are nothing else than signs.'²⁵⁴ Preaching, therefore, may bring Christ to the hearer, but, according

²⁵⁰ Cf. *Institutes* 4.14.26.

²⁵¹ Leith, 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today,' 212: 'In doctrine he [Calvin] knew that the words of the sermon are [...] words that can by the power of the Holy Spirit become the occasion of the presence of God.'

²⁵² *Institutes* 4.17.33. See also 4.17.12.

²⁵³ Ward, *Royal Sacrament*, 22.

²⁵⁴ *Institutes* 4.14.26 (translation my own). See also Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, 5.

to Calvin, the Christ that comes in preaching is a spiritual Christ.²⁵⁵ As Calvin wrote: 'If our Lord gives us this blessing of his Gospel being preached to us, we have a sure and infallible mark that he is near us and procures our salvation, and that he calls us to him *as if* he had his mouth open and we saw him there in person.'²⁵⁶ Likewise, he wrote: 'We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in His Word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever He speaks by His servants, *as though* He were nigh to us, face to face.'²⁵⁷ This 'as if' and 'as though' are of utmost importance, for within them we see Calvin's largely anti-sacramental (when 'sacramental' is understood in adaptable and material terms) understanding of preaching. As Parker notes of Calvin's theology: 'Just as Christ is present at the Supper *spiritually* [...], so he is present in the preaching *spiritually* [...].'²⁵⁸

To that end, while Calvin would wholeheartedly maintain the sacramentality of preaching, even quite possibly calling the act itself a sacrament, he does not understand the preacher's task in classic Christological and sacramental terms: that the fullness of the material Christ is conveyed through the material means of the words of the preacher. After all, if Calvin was willing to assert that within the Eucharist 'Christ's flesh itself *does not* enter into us,' would he not more ardently say the same of

²⁵⁵ J. Mark Beach, 'The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching,' in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999), 117.

²⁵⁶ Calvin, 'Sermon XXV on Ephesians 4:11-12,' translated in Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 42 (emphasis mine).

²⁵⁷ Calvin, *Commentary on Haggai 1:12*, translated in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 82 (emphasis mine).

²⁵⁸ Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 42 (emphasis mine).

preaching, the primary means of grace according to his theological system?²⁵⁹

It seems as though he would, precisely because, for Calvin, 'Christ's flesh itself does not' and, indeed, cannot 'enter into us.'²⁶⁰ For Calvin, preaching was a sacrament, but only because it took the leading didactic role in the life of the Church.

It is clear, therefore, that intrinsic to Calvin's understanding of the Word of the sermon as sacramental, is the notion of the Word's sole authority.²⁶¹ Calvin comes at this in a round about way when he notes the inadequacy and unnecessary nature of eloquence by begging the rhetorical question: 'What ought one to conclude except that the force of the truth of Sacred Scripture is manifestly too powerful to need the art of words?'²⁶² For Calvin, what led to the pre-eminence of preaching in the life of the Church was that for him it was 'easy to see that the Sacred Scriptures, which so far surpass all gifts and graces of human endeavour, breathe something divine.'²⁶³ In other words, for Calvin, divine inspiration trumped humanity, particularly the humanity of the preacher. In other words, how a preacher

²⁵⁹ *Institutes* 4.17.32.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Though what follows above is an illustration of Calvin's understanding of the sole authority of Holy Scripture by way of his appreciation (or lack thereof) for rhetoric, he is, however, at times a bit more direct. He writes, as a paragraph heading, that 'God bestows the actual knowledge of himself upon us only in the Scriptures' (*Institutes* 1.6.1). Moreover, Schaff writes that Calvin, 'though freely using reason and the fathers, especially Augustine, [...] always appeals to the supreme tribunal of the Word of God, to which all human wisdom must bow in reverent obedience' (*The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1, 448). For Calvin's 'whole theology is scriptural rather than scholastic, and distinguished for the skillful and comprehensive working up of the teaching of the Bible, as the only pure fountain of revealed truth and the infallible rule of the Christian faith' (*ibid.*, 458). See also Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, 55-56.

²⁶² *Institutes* 1.8.1. See also John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 84.

²⁶³ *Institutes* 1.8.1.

preached was of little importance. What mattered for Calvin, was the fact that the Lord gave intrinsic power to the Word, apart from anything that the preacher brought to the homiletical task.²⁶⁴

Ironically, however, what this indicates is that Calvin's understanding of the Word of God, as it was proclaimed in the sermon, was not unlike the narrowed definition of the sacraments proposed by the Scholastics. Consequently, speaking the word of sermon became almost like an incantation of sorts. If the preacher said the right words they would, in turn, have the right effect: the education of the faithful. Humanity was removed from the sacramental equation, causing an intrinsic tension to emerge in Calvin's theology: an admittedly sacramental understanding of preaching on the one hand and, at the same time (with his hyper-monergistic approach to preaching), a denial of the sacramental on the other (with his overemphasis on the divine at the expense of the medium of the preacher).

Yet, the centre of humanity is the incarnation and, specifically, the person of Christ. To deny any human involvement at the level of preaching appears to be a uniquely Christological mistake and, possibly, even a denial of the incarnation itself – the fact that Jesus took on flesh and blood and came as a human, with all that that entails: his speaking, his affect, his emotions, his rhetoric, etc. In other words, if Christ, in his humanity, adapted to his context, should not we, his preachers, do the same? For Calvin, it appears that the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God will take care of itself.

²⁶⁴ See Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 121: 'Among the Reformers Calvin is conservative in following the medieval principle of unadorned expository preaching.'

2. Lutherans, the Authority of Scripture, and Preaching

In a very strange way, however, Calvin's didactic and hypermonergistic understanding of preaching (where it is the authority and power of the Word of God, joined with the inner working of the Holy Spirit, which completes the preaching task), apart from any winsomeness of delivery, aligns him with many conservative Lutherans from the mid-twentieth century and vice versa.²⁶⁵ This is the case, precisely because even though 'questions concerning the Scriptures have not been the same in every generation,' the adamant confession in Lutheran circles remains, like Calvin, that of Scriptural authority.²⁶⁶

This obstinate, and often times stagnant, confession of the sole authority of Scripture, however, has not always been a positive emphasis for the Lutheran church.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the overemphasis of such a confession may have lead some in recent years to lose, like Calvin, the true essence of the Holy Scriptures, namely the *living Word* – Jesus Christ.²⁶⁸ In turn, confessional

²⁶⁵ *Institutes* 1.9.3. The internal testimony of the Spirit is quite significant in Calvin and, even, at times, appears to be what drives him authoritatively. Calvin notes in his *Institutes* that 'Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit' (Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, 57).

²⁶⁶ David Scaer, *The Apostolic Scriptures* (Fort Wayne IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1979), 7.

²⁶⁷ What follows is an attempt to heed the exhortation of Gerhard Forde in his work, *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*, eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2007): 'It is crucial for the church to assess its history in terms of its own internal problematics rather than simply to accept judgments from without' (170). Here, Forde is making reference to the church catholic, yet the same rules apply to the local church body.

²⁶⁸ One prime example is the 'Battle over the Bible' of the 1970s, where confessional Lutherans of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) were driven to adamantly confess the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures over and against the liberal contingent within the LCMS who rejected the same. From that time on, there has been a stagnant overemphasis on inerrancy and inspiration at the expense of a truly Christological (and hence, typological)

Lutherans have swayed into the realm of fundamentalism, thereby forsaking the sacramental and Christological nature of the Holy Scriptures and, consequently, of the preaching task.²⁶⁹ It should be noted that by fundamentalism, I am here *not* referring to the principles of inerrancy and inspiration per se. Rather, I am using the term ‘fundamentalism’ to describe the fact that Holy Scripture as an authoritative book has taken precedence over Christ and his gifts, making the ‘Formal Principle’ (that which gives form to theology, classically Holy Scripture) also the ‘Material Principle’ (that which gives content to theology, classically Christ and/or Justification).²⁷⁰ In short, Scripture has become both the form and the content of Lutheran theology and practice, particularly preaching. But how did this happen?

3. ‘Battle Over the Bible’

During the 1970s, the LCMS was engaged in a synodical civil war of sorts, often referred to as the ‘Battle over the Bible.’ Although there were many peripheral forces at play, the main issue of dissent was whether or not

reading of Holy Scripture. This will be explored in more depth in what follows. One would do well to also see Robert Benne, ‘A Confessional Lutheran Voice in the Contemporary Scene’ (Fort Wayne IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Symposia, 2007), 11. There, Benne suggested that the LCMS needs to ‘free itself from *quasi-fundamentalist foundational formulations*,’ which have their origin in the ‘Battle over the Bible’ (emphasis mine).

²⁶⁹ David Scaer, *The Apostolic Scriptures*, 7: ‘The question of the exact nature of the Holy Scriptures continues to be acute in the church today.’ See also, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, ‘Gospel and Scripture: The Interrelationship of the Material and Formal Principles in Lutheran Theology’ (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 4: ‘Two problems in particular merit our careful attention. One is the impression sometimes given by those who defend the authority of Holy Scripture that they have in effect made the Bible, rather than the Gospel, the heart and center – the “material principle” – of their faith. Such a view is frequently criticized as “fundamentalistic” or “biblistic.”’

²⁷⁰ See Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 50, footnote 19: ‘For many years Protestant theology has inappropriately distinguished between its formal principle (the authority of the Bible) and its material principle (the doctrine of justification).’ In many respects, Lutheranism has fallen prey to this Protestant authoritative principle, relying more upon the canon of Scripture than upon Christ and his gifts (justification).

‘the final determinative principle in theology was the Scriptures, as traditionally held, or the law and the gospel’ (law and gospel serving as a uniquely Lutheran hermeneutic for reading Holy Scripture).²⁷¹ This debate played itself out in a discussion over the nature of the Scriptures and the proper method for interpreting them.²⁷² Specifically, this question was asked: Are the Scriptures the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the sole rule and norm of faith and life, or can they be read as any other man-made document?²⁷³ The issue of the law and the gospel was at the centre of this debate because such an approach, where the law and the gospel (the Bible’s conviction of sin and promise of salvation) drive theology (and not inerrancy and inspiration), allowed ‘for a superficial reading of the texts without attention to the history behind them’ (i.e. Were the stories of the Bible true or not?).²⁷⁴ Those deemed ‘conservative’ gave a resounding ‘Yes’ to the question of authority and the centrality of Scripture, while those deemed ‘liberal’ took the other side. In turn, the more liberally minded left the LCMS and formed what is today called The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Those who were conservative stayed in the LCMS, and many of them are still in active ministry today. The end result, however, was a split in the LCMS of

²⁷¹ Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 94.

²⁷² See Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective* (Fort Wayne IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1977), 37-42. Liberal Lutheran theologians advocated the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation, whereas conservative Lutheran theologians accepted the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and, consequently, believed that the Scriptures could not be in error.

²⁷³ For a look at the central question surrounding the ‘Battle Over the Bible,’ see Robert David Preus, ‘How is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testaments?’ (Mankato MN: Reformation Lectures, Bethany Lutheran College, November 1 & 2, 1973), 1.

²⁷⁴ Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 97, fn 43.

monumental proportion, at least from the perspective of those within the LCMS.²⁷⁵

In reaction to the liberal theologians of the LCMS, the conservatives in the synod were pushed into making an over-adamant confession of divine inspiration and inerrancy and, further, the sole authority of Holy Scripture.²⁷⁶ Sadly, this has left the LCMS in a rut which extends even to this very day, namely, elevating Scripture above Christ and, thereby, leaving her preaching not wholly Christological but rather tending toward a neo-biblicism.²⁷⁷ Yet, one must ever remember that, contrary to Calvin, 'inspiration, inerrancy, or authority are not, and indeed *cannot* be the first things said.'²⁷⁸ And, as

²⁷⁵ For views from the conservative side of the split, see Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, 35-48 and Paul A. Zimmerman, *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2007). For views from the liberal side of the split, see Frederick W. Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood: The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri* (St. Louis MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1977). For a brief synopsis of the entire crisis from a non-theological source, see 'Lutherans at War,' *Time Magazine* 104:11 (September 9, 1974).

²⁷⁶ The natural progression in Lutheran theology is from inspiration and inerrancy to the authority of Scripture. One will note well the progression in Walther's own thought in *Walther and the Church*, ed. Th. Engelder (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), 14 as cited in Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, 41:

It is absolutely necessary that we maintain the doctrine of inspiration as taught by our orthodox dogmaticians. If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of *man* to sift the truth from the error. That places man *over Scripture*, and Scripture is *no longer* the source and norm of doctrine. Human reason is made the *norma* of truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine.

²⁷⁷ This was often the criticism of the founding father of what is now the LCMS, C. F. W. Walther. See Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, 41 where he writes the following, citing C. S. Meyer, 'Walther's Theology of the Word,' *Concordia Theological Monthly* (April 1972), 262: 'In light of such statements [i.e. previous Walther citations] it is perfectly clear why it had to seem to the latter-day "moderates" of Missouri that Walther's doctrine of the Word "was not wholly Christocentric but tended toward Biblicism"! See also Robert David Preus, 'Luther: Word, Doctrine, and Confession,' *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 60:3 (July 1996), 176.

²⁷⁸ Bruzek, 'A Five-Word Faith: The Eucharistic Theology of Martin Chemnitz' *Fundamenta Sanae Doctrinae*, 35-36, fn 13.

Wingren notes, even Luther himself was not terribly concerned with such things:

It is a very important fact that Luther, who was occupied all his life with the text of the Bible and had the task of opposing that Word to the authorities which had been growing up for almost a thousand years, *was uninterested in the question of the inspiration of the Bible and, without any embarrassment, could talk about how poorly the Biblical authors order and relate the historical material.* Luther resembles a man who is awaiting a sentence of death, but instead hears his acquittal being read aloud. Such a man is eager for the news that is to be made known to him and that will decide whether he is to live or die. It is the decision that is vital to him, and even if he observes that, for example, a place, name or something like that which is mentioned in the announcement is incorrect he will pay no attention to it. He who is irritated by such a things must be unharassed and sure of himself.²⁷⁹

Consequently, this 'Battle over the Bible' has turned classic Lutheran theology on its head, making the inspired and inerrant Scripture and not Christ the pillar and cornerstone of the faith and of the pastoral acts, creating a theological conundrum which has continued to affect the Church, specifically the LCMS, to this very day. This shift in emphasis becomes extraordinarily clear, even (and especially) in the pastoral act of preaching.

Caemmerer, for example, a leading LCMS professor of preaching from the mid-twentieth century, speaks particularly of the place of persuasion in the preaching task. Yet, for Caemmerer, persuasion does not necessarily involve winsomeness in delivery (rhetoric), but is simply the 'art of getting

²⁷⁹ Wingren, *The Living Word*, 47, fn 1 (emphasis mine). See also Horace D. Hummel, 'The Influence of Confessional Themes on Biblical Exegesis' in *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, eds. John Reumann, Samuel Nafzger, and Harold Ditmanson (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 222: 'The confession of inerrancy or verbal inspiration does not suffice to guarantee full confessional truth, as witnessed by the veritable host of positions that appeal to it.' For Luther's perspective, see Robert Rosin, 'Reformation Christology: Some Luther Starting Points,' *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71:2 (April 2007), 158: 'Luther's thinking about the Bible revolved not so much around a unifying idea as around a unifying person: Christ.'

the hearer to think the one thing you want him to think.²⁸⁰ From this definition, Caemmerer proposes the use of his own personal preaching form: *goal – malady – means*. According to Caemmerer, the *goal* of every sermon serves as the thing toward which the Lord wants the hearer to strive; the *malady* of every sermon is the ‘difficulty and deficiency’ which makes the goal difficult to attain (i.e. our sinful nature); and the *means* of every sermon is the person of Christ, who attains the goal for the hearer.²⁸¹

Interestingly, however, not unlike Calvin’s theology of preaching, this matrix rests fully and finally upon the inerrancy and inspiration of Holy Scripture. For while the matrix itself is somewhat artificial and humanly constructed, the only way to make disciples and make them stronger, according to Caemmerer, is by preaching the Word of God – i.e. telling hearers God’s goal for them (salvation), telling them how poorly they have striven after it (the law), and finally, telling them that all is well because Christ has died for their sins (the gospel). In other words, if the preacher just follows the homiletical directions (goal – malady – means) and speaks the Word of God (inspired and inerrant) he, as preacher, will be found faithful and his congregation will flourish. And, therefore, like Calvin, preaching becomes somewhat of a magical formula. If the proper Scriptural points are made in their proper order, the Word of God will have its proper effect.

Furthermore, since the ‘Battle Over the Bible’ and the development of Caemmerer’s preaching form (*goal – malady – means*) both appeared in the

²⁸⁰ Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 36.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.* Cf. *Ibid.*, 15-32.

1970s, what this suggests is that they are intrinsically connected in the fight against those who denied the fundamental principles of Lutheran Biblical theology, as explicated above (inspiration and inerrancy). Moreover, taken together, both the 'Battle' and Caemmerer's preaching form have caused two very sad realities to emerge in the preaching of the contemporary LCMS, both of which were first witnessed in Calvin: either 1) preaching has become dogmatic and didactic *or* 2) preaching has become rhetorically inattentive to its hearers and, consequently, ineffective, relying unreflectively upon inspiration and inerrancy. Allow me to explain.

The first reality occurs in those pastors who are still overcome by notion of the 'battle'. In their minds, defending inerrancy and inspiration is a war which is still being fought today and they believe that they are on the front lines. Therefore, when they preach, they do so with the intention of making a dogmatic point. Yet, in order to make a dogmatic point, their sermons, by necessity, must be didactic in character. They are, therefore, more like classroom lectures than Christological proclamation.

On the other hand, some preachers have accepted the 'conservative' Lutheran position and even taken it to its logical conclusion. In other words, this second reality occurs when preachers firmly believe that the Word of God is inspired and inerrant, that any saving work is the result of the work of the Spirit *alone* and, in turn, these preachers have given up on rhetoric and human involvement altogether. For them, often this means that sermons are poorly constructed and poorly delivered, with little or no connection to the people

who are listening. It becomes, very frankly, an incantation of sorts. In the minds of these preachers, the right words presuppose the right effect.

To that end, something has to change. For,

an authoritative Bible whose main characteristic is that it is verbally inspired is a book without a Master and consequently a book with a doctrine instead of a message, its only task to relate what God has already done instead of having to bring men into the sphere of God's continuing activity.²⁸²

Conclusion

What is desperately needed in the LCMS is a renewed look at the Christocentricity of both Holy Scripture and the pastoral and liturgical acts of the church, specifically preaching, where Christ becomes the first thing said, coming as the Word made flesh, encased in the Word written, and delivered homiletically in the word proclaimed.²⁸³ He is not there, first and foremost, as teacher or as magician, but as the living one who seeks to make hearers alive by virtue of his saving corporeal presence. Very simply, the Word of God is so much more than an inerrant and inspired text, to which pastors today are to fully subscribe and which guarantees full homiletical faithfulness. Rather, the Word of God is a Christological reality – a person – who is responsible for bringing the world into existence and the Church to faith by that which he is: the Word.

In what follows, therefore, particularly a look at the annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the intent will be to show that the only preaching

²⁸² Wingren, *The Living Word*, 56, footnote 1. Cf. The four Protestant confessions listed at the beginning of this dissertation.

²⁸³ Cf. Jn 1.14.

which is both sacramental and transformative is that which is centred first on Christ, flowing from Holy Scripture as the actual *viva vox Jesu* – the living voice of Jesus himself. For ‘to confess our preaching as *viva vox Jesu* is to also speak of the Christocentricity of the Holy Scripture.’²⁸⁴ Before we move to Mary, however, we must spend some time with the Word himself – the *viva vox*.

²⁸⁴ Arthur Just, “The Voice of Jesus: “He Interpreted to Them in All the Scriptures the Things Concerning Himself”” (Fort Wayne IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Symposia, 2003), 2.

Chapter 3

The Word as *Viva Vox*

Introduction

Having observed in the previous two chapters the narrowing in definition of both Word and sacrament and, consequently, how that narrowing has negatively affected the preaching of my own tradition, in this third chapter I explore the nature of the Word of God as a living voice (a *viva vox*) meant, first and foremost, to be delivered to its hearers as far more than mere information, but rather as the fullness of the person of Christ – divine and human – who not only came as man for us, but likewise was involved in the creation of the very matter which became the vehicle of his incarnation. Therefore, I begin this chapter by discussing the incarnation of Christ, from which I conclude that Christ delivered in the flesh (as in the incarnation) is truly *primary theology* and, moreover, the only theology which can be considered proclamation within the Church. Second, I explore certain aspects of the union of the divine and human natures in his person, from a specifically Lutheran perspective. I propose herein that this Christological exploration is necessary in order to understand precisely what it is that the Lord gives to Mary at the annunciation and, consequently, to all hearers of the Word. From this Christological discussion, I conclude that the incarnational life of Jesus is indeed sacramental, precisely because it repeatedly delivers the fullness of the person of Christ (divine and human) corporeally. Third, I shift my focus to the account of the creation and explore how it, likewise, can be

understood as sacramental for two reasons: 1) within the creation account, matter is declared *good* and *very good* and 2) the summit of creation is the incarnation of Jesus, who uses the matter of creation to enter into our world. In particular, I propose that, though sacramentality was damaged with the fall into sin, the incarnation has allowed once again for a realised sacramental potentiality of matter. Moreover, that potential for the sacramental, I propose, needs to be realised today in the preaching of the Church, where the fullness of the person of Christ – divine and human – is delivered by way of his *viva vox*.

Proclamation as Primary Theology

As established, the Word of God holds a central and defining place within confessional Lutheran theology. This was especially apparent in the ‘Battle Over the Bible’ of the 1970s. Yet, an important distinction must be made forthright: judging dogma is something very different than proclaiming Christ. Within the context of doctrinal controversy, the Word of God plays the sole role in determining the theological outcome of the dispute. Consequently, in these instances the Word of God is primarily informational. Therefore, “What do the Scriptures say?” is the only faithful question in the midst of dogmatic strife.²⁸⁵

However, it is not the Word of God, when narrowly understood as the Scriptures, which is preached and delivered to the hearers. For that, in and of

²⁸⁵ See Saarinen, ‘The Word of God in Luther’s Theology,’ 37. There Saarinen writes that ‘the external, revelatory language as given in Scripture remains the only criterium for distinguishing between orthodox and heretical doctrines.’ See also Oswald Bayer, *Doing Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2007), xiii and Braaten, ‘The Problem of Authority,’ 62.

itself, is not properly called the gospel.²⁸⁶ Rather, the gospel is Jesus Christ – the living Word – applied to sinners in a concrete, tangible, life-giving way. And even an ancient like Quintilian acknowledged the power of that *viva vox* when he wrote that the “‘living voice,’ as the saying goes, provides more nourishment’ than any written text.”²⁸⁷

Dogmatics, then, as the study and application of Holy Scripture, properly fits within the category of secondary theology. Secondary theology is the doing of theology in discussion and critique, and often takes place within the academic setting. Primary theology, on the other hand, is the doing of theology by the people of God. This occurs when the faithful enter into the presence of Christ and his gifts, specifically within the divine service, where baptism, absolution, preaching, and Holy Supper are present, delivered, and received in real time. Consequently, by means of the faithful participating in these gifts, they are instantly caught up in the doing of primary theology.

Aidan Kavanagh provided a helpful explanation of this distinction in his work, *On Liturgical Theology*. There Kavanagh noted the following:

This is how liturgies grow. Their growth is a function of adjustment to deep change caused in the assembly by its being brought regularly to the brink of chaos in the presence of the living God. [...] It is what tradition has called *theologia prima*.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Gerhard Forde, *The Preached God*, 44-46.

²⁸⁷ Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.2.8 as cited in Terence C. Mournet, *Oral Tradition and Literary Dependency: Variability and Stability in the Synoptic Tradition and Q* (Tübingen DE: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 143.

²⁸⁸ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville MN: Pueblo, 1984), 74.

Further, Kavanagh argues ‘that the theology which we most readily recognize and practice is in fact neither primary nor seminal but secondary and derivative: *theologia secunda*.’²⁸⁹ Simply, the theology which we are most accustomed to is that of the classroom. However, the act of ‘doing liturgical theology comes closer to doing *theologia prima* than *theologia secunda* or a “theology of the liturgy.”²⁹⁰ What happens in the liturgy, therefore, should be primary, not secondary. It should be a delivery of the gifts and not a dogmatic discourse with a purely didactic function.

From a uniquely Lutheran perspective, Forde also makes the helpful distinction between the doing of theology (primary theology) and the dogmatic discussing of theology (secondary theology), specifically in terms of proclamation, this way:

To delineate precisely what is meant by proclamation, it is necessary and helpful, at the outset, to distinguish between two different types of discourse employed in the church. We have already been explaining and proclaiming. This difference can be maintained as a difference between secondary and primary discourse. Explaining, talking, and writing about God and things theological is secondary discourse. It is the language of theology in general, the language of teaching, and particularly, for our purposes here, of scholarship or systematic theology. Secondary discourse is generally third-person, past-tense discourse. Proclamation, on the other hand, belongs to the primary discourse of the church. Proclamation in its paradigmatic or ideal form is first- to second-person, present-tense, unconditional address. [...] As such, it belongs to the primary discourse of the church, the chief way the church and the Christian address the world.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 75.

²⁹⁰ Ibid. (emphasis mine).

²⁹¹ Forde, *The Preached God*, 44-46.

Interestingly, however, even Forde cannot help but equate proclamation (primary theology) with the discourse and address of the Church, rather than with the delivery of the person of Christ, thereby limiting the sacramental implications of proclamation as he understands it.

On the other hand, what I am proposing herein is that what is delivered as the gospel in the liturgical assembly is not merely theological discourse (secondary theology), but, rather, the living Word of God incarnate (primary theology), who has been speaking and acting and blessing sacramentally since the creation of the world. Very simply, therefore, the liturgy – and all the individual liturgical parts, including preaching – is ‘the moment of the actual giving of the gift,’ because it is the moment where Christ is present and delivered, and so it is the moment of utter sacramentality.²⁹²

Incarnational

If Christ delivered and received *in the flesh* is considered primary theology (i.e. what happens in the liturgy) and, therefore, utterly sacramental, then it appears best to examine the incarnation of Jesus, the primary point of this primary theology. Admittedly, however, this approach may appear to be a bit odd, as the act of creation (and not the act of incarnation) was the first of God’s acts by which his creation had opportunity to know him and to receive his gifts. Yet, it may actually be helpful to begin with the incarnation, as opposed to the creation, for the incarnation is the constitutive event which sets the standard for a verbal sacramentality (the sacramental Word), for it is

²⁹² Ibid., 46.

the incarnational event which is, as Schillebeeckx, Rahner, and Semmelroth have shown, at the same time the primordial sacramental event. The incarnation is the communication of the divine into the flesh of Mary by way of a spoken word. Very simply, in the incarnation, 'we have God taking human form and thus through a specific, physical body disclosing himself to those willing to watch, or touch, or listen.'²⁹³ We will focus, particularly, on the latter of those three in what follows.

The message of the incarnation – that the Word of God which once brought creation into existence actually took on flesh and blood in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and tabernacled among his creation as the God-man, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14) – is the great Christian message, which distinguishes it from all other religions. Moreover, as a Lutheran Christian by confession, I presume that the Lutheran confessional article on the Son of God is correct, namely:

It is also taught among us that God the Son became man, born of the virgin Mary, and that the two natures, divine and human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ, true God and true man, who was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to propitiate God's wrath [...].²⁹⁴

This Chalcedonian Christological confession (451), 'the view that Jesus was simultaneously God and man,' was not intended to subordinate creation to its creator.²⁹⁵ Rather, the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, became

²⁹³ Brown and Loades, *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, 27.

²⁹⁴ *AC*, Article III.1-3. With this confession, the opponents of the Lutheran confession had no qualms (cf. *ApAC*, Article III.1).

²⁹⁵ David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (La Salle IL: Open Court, 1985), 102.

'interrelated with it [creation], in a reciprocal exchange with a particular aspect of it, namely the human nature.'²⁹⁶ In reality, therefore, the Word which once brought the cosmos into existence, entered his creation as a creature, in order to continue his work among us – his divine and creative speech – only now, robed with flesh and blood. Consequently, it is an utter impossibility that 'the New Testament [...] make sense of Jesus except by seeing his human life as the historical concretion of the very power through which God originally expressed himself in the creation of the world.'²⁹⁷ The central event of the cosmos, even more than that of the creation, is the union of God and man in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, Calvin understood Chalcedon, as evidenced by his Christological confession: 'the one person of Christ so consists of two natures that each nevertheless retains unimpaired its own distinctive character.'²⁹⁸ Yet, Chalcedon created its own questions, particularly related to the distance between the two natures in the person of Christ. In other words, just how much can be made of the 'unity' of the person of Christ? Using Chalcedon as a starting point, therefore, Luther and the confessional Lutherans who followed him moved the Christological confession of Chalcedon to the next logical step: an in-depth engagement with and discussion of the two natures in the one person, Jesus Christ.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹⁷ *The Christological Controversy*, ed. Richard A. Norris, Jr. (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 4.

²⁹⁸ *Institutes* 4.17.30.

It may be stated, therefore, that narrowly speaking, Calvin was more loyal to Chalcedon than Luther, and he pedantically followed the Christology confessed therein. Therefore, the particular understanding that there are *perpetually* two natures in this one person, Jesus, stood and continues to stand in opposition to Calvinistic thought about Christ. The Calvinist Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, for example, asserts the following: 'Therefore we do not think [...] that Christ, according to His human nature, is yet in the world, and so in every place.'²⁹⁹ It should be noted again, however, that Calvin did in fact hold to the traditional Christological confession, in so far as he understood both divine and human natures to be present in the person of Christ throughout his earthly life. Yet, this confession ceased for Calvin when Christ ascended into heaven. In effect, for Calvin, upon the resurrection, Christ transcended finitude and, moreover, cannot and does not 'descend again from heavenly glory to reassume the state of mortal life.'³⁰⁰ Very simply, 'in his flesh he is contained in heaven until he appears in judgment.'³⁰¹ The sacramental implications of this confession, in particular, are quite clear. God, in the corporeal person of Christ, is unable to enter water, word, bread, wine, or any other sacramental reality which one can conjure up via concrete, earthly elements, particularly because his human nature is not present for and in the contemporary world.³⁰² For Calvin, the

²⁹⁹ Cited in Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology, 4th Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 309.

³⁰⁰ *Institutes* 4.17.26.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* 4.17.30.

³⁰² This lack of Christ's humanity in the created world today was evident, particularly, in Calvin's understanding of both Word and sacrament and the way in which

Christian's relationship with Christ is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, who calls the Christian upwards to heaven. As I previously stated in chapter one, according to Calvin, 'the Spirit truly unites things separated by space,' making the Eucharist, for example, a '*spiritual banquet*,' in which the spirit of the believer is united with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁰³ As Calvin asserted: 'We must not dream of such a presence of Christ in the Sacrament as the craftsmen of the Roman court have fashioned – as if the body of Christ, by local presence, were put there to be touched by the hands, to be chewed by the teeth, and to be swallowed by the mouth.'³⁰⁴

Luther, on the other hand, appears to be much closer to Aquinas than to Calvin. Aquinas confessed that Christ returns to this creation corporeally in the Church's Eucharist, precisely in the act of transubstantiation. As Aquinas wrote:

It is absolutely necessary to confess according to Catholic faith that the entire Christ is in this sacrament. Yet we must know that there is something of Christ in this sacrament in a twofold manner: first, as it were, by the power of the sacrament [...]. By the power of the sacrament, there is under the species of this sacrament that into which the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is changed, as expressed by the words of the form, which are effective in this as in the other sacraments; for instance, by the words: "This is My body," or, "This is My blood."³⁰⁵

the sermon functioned, for him, as the only sacrament, though lacking a corporeal presence of Jesus.

³⁰³ *Institutes* 4.17.10 (emphasis mine).

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 4.17.12.

³⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, part III, Q. 76, Art. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Oxford UK: 1920), found online at <http://www.op.org/summa/letter/summa-IIIq76a1.pdf>.

Simply, according to Aquinas, Christ is located at the Father's right hand, but when his Church engages in the action of the sacrament, he comes from heaven to earth with the fullness of his person.

Like Aquinas, Luther also confessed that Christ is available to humanity with the fullness of both his divine and human natures: the entire Christ, in the words of Aquinas. This presence, however, was not limited to the seven sacraments confessed by the Catholic Church. Rather, Luther confessed a ubiquitous presence of the entire Christ, which implies that the full Christ is present everywhere, at every moment in time, precisely because his two natures cannot be separated. The Formula of Concord quotes Luther's *Great Confession Concerning the Holy Supper* of 1528 this way:

Since he is a man like this – and apart from this man there is not God – it must follow that [...] he is and can be everywhere that God is and that everything is full of Christ through and through, also according to the humanity [...]. Here you must take your stand and say that wherever Christ is according to the deity, he is there as a natural, divine person and is also naturally and personally there, as his conception in his mother's womb proves conclusively. For if he was the Son of God, he had to be in his mother's womb naturally and personally and become man. But if he is present naturally and personally wherever he is, then he must be man there, too, since he is not two separate persons, but a single person. Wherever this person is, it is the single, indivisible person, and if you can say, "Here is God," then you must also say, "Christ the man is present too." [...] Wherever you put God down for me, you must also put the humanity down for me. They simply will not let themselves be separated and divided from each other. He has become one person and never separates the assumed humanity from himself.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ WA 26: 332, 333, translated and cited in *SD*, Article VIII. 81-84.

According to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, therefore, the ubiquitous presence of the fullness of the person of Christ would allow, it would seem, for the possibility of Christ's corporeal presence in preaching.

All of the foregoing emerges from the fact that, for Lutherans, 'there is a complete incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ and apart from His incarnation there is no saving knowledge of God.'³⁰⁷ To that end, it is Christ's ongoing incarnational presence in the world today – with flesh and blood – which grants saving knowledge of God. Admittedly, this is a distinctively Lutheran confession. It is not, however, an invention. Rather it is an innovation, moving the classical Christological confession to its next logical step: the ascended Christ retains his humanity to this very day, but is now able to be present where and when he wishes in the fullness of his divine and human natures, as witnessed in the post-resurrection accounts in Holy Scripture.³⁰⁸

Yet, whether one holds to the Calvinistic understanding or the Lutheran understanding, this fact remains true: the defining characteristic in all of human history is the full communication of Christ's divine nature to his human nature *in the womb of Mary*. Without that single event, there would be no existence of the Son of God (*'logos non extra carnem*, apart from the flesh there is no existence of the Word, i.e, the Son of God,').³⁰⁹ Moreover, if one accepts the classic Lutheran Christological confession, this fact emerges as well: without the communication of attributes within the person of Christ,

³⁰⁷ David P. Scaer, *Christology* (Northville SD: The Luther Academy, 1989), 58.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Matt 28:9; Lk 24:39; Jn 20:19, 21:12.

³⁰⁹ Scaer, *Christology*, 58.

there would be no ongoing presence of that same Son of God in the flesh today. Very simply, with the incarnation, Jesus is not only present with Mary, but he remains present in and with his creation, as promised, to this very day.³¹⁰ Consequently, if the incarnation is misunderstood or neglected (both the first incarnation in Mary's womb and the continual incarnation in the Church and the world), so also will the sacraments, the Christian life and, applicable for this thesis, the sacramentality of preaching be misunderstood or neglected.

Christological

Having just explored the incarnation, one might wonder why a Christological discussion is necessary at this point. It is necessary, I would suggest, because unless one grasps what it is that constitutes the person of Christ, one will not be able to fully grasp what it is that is delivered to the flesh of Mary by way of the annunciation. Moreover, if one does not grasp what it is that is delivered to Mary in the annunciation by way of the angel's sermon, there is little chance that such an understanding will be grasped when it comes to the preaching of the Church and, consequently, what is delivered to the hearers therein.

To that end, one of the more noted Lutheran theologians of the last century, Werner Elert, wrote that the goal of Lutheran Christology was especially 'to preserve the unity of Christ's person in all circumstances,'

³¹⁰ Cf. Matt 28:20.

specifically the relationship between the divine and human natures.³¹¹ This it did (and does) specifically through the confession of three *genera*: the *genus idiomaticum*, the *genus maiestaticum*, and the *genus apotelesmaticum*.³¹²

The first genus, the *genus idiomaticum*, is a truth that all orthodox Christians share. The *genus idiomaticum* confesses that while Christ comes with two distinct natures – divine and human – which are not to be mixed, changed, divided, or separated (as the Council of Chalcedon declares), together, however, they constitute only one person – the person of Jesus Christ.³¹³ And because ‘the divinity and humanity are one person in Christ, the Scriptures ascribe to the deity, because of this personal union, all that happens to the humanity, and vice versa.’³¹⁴ Therefore, while the deity itself, according to its own unique nature, does not suffer and die, yet according to this specific genus and, more broadly, the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*), it is fitting to say that God in Christ did suffer and die and, in so doing, redeemed the cosmos.³¹⁵ Or by way of analogy, according to his divine nature alone, it is not meet, right, and salutary to call Mary, the most blessed virgin, his mother. No one can be God’s mother, just as God cannot, by virtue of his divine nature alone, suffer and die. Yet, because of the communication of attributes and, specifically, the *genus idiomaticum*, it is clear that in the one God-man, Jesus Christ, are living in

³¹¹ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 226-227.

³¹² *SD*, Article VIII and especially fn 6.

³¹³ See Bruzek, *A Five Word Faith*, 306.

³¹⁴ *SD*, Article VIII.41.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* 42-45.

harmony both the divine and human natures and, in fact, what happens to one nature is ascribed to the other, thereby necessitating that Mary be called the Mother of God, as her son is both God and man.³¹⁶

This confession of God and man in Christ is the cornerstone of Lutheran sacramental theology, even the sacramentality of preaching. For if the divine nature does not live in union with the human nature in the one person of Christ, the Lutheran sacramental system fails to exist and, consequently, preaching becomes merely a recitation of meaningless, empty words.

The second genus, the *genus maiestaticum*, is a specifically Lutheran confession, one first made by Martin Chemnitz (16th c.). This *genus* confesses that the human nature of Jesus Christ receives, by way of communication, the divine attributes belonging essentially to the divine nature of the eternal *logos*.³¹⁷ Chemnitz described the communication of majesty this way: ‘The human nature received and possessed this majesty in the very first moment of the union, when the whole fullness of the deity began to dwell bodily in Christ.’³¹⁸ The reception of the divine attributes, however, does not mean that they belong to the human nature *essentially*, as they do to the divine nature.³¹⁹ Rather, they are received by way of communication as a gift and, in turn, are made his own and are exercised by Jesus Christ, though not as belonging

³¹⁶ Ibid. 24.

³¹⁷ See Bruzek, *A Five Word Faith*, 309 and *SD*, Article VIII.67-68, 71.

³¹⁸ Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 71.

³¹⁹ *SD*, Article VIII.60.

essentially to the human nature.³²⁰ Therefore, even in his state of humiliation, ‘Christ performed all his miracles and manifested his divine majesty according to his good pleasure, when and how he wanted’ because his human nature was ‘personally united with the divine nature and had communion with it.’³²¹

While this second genus was subsequently reversed in the 19th century by the German Lutheran Gottfried Thomasius’ kenotic Christology, this earlier version of the second genus remains especially important because it signifies the possibility that the divine can indeed be communicated to the human.³²² Admittedly, Thomasius rightly goes in one direction by proposing that the human nature can indeed be more dominant and pervasive than the divine nature, insofar as Christ’s earthly life is concerned. However, I am attempting to explore the possibilities associated with a move in the other direction. Therefore, given the possibility of the *genus maiestaticum* as historically confessed by Lutherans, one might ask this question: If it was possible for Christ in his humanity to receive the divine nature, might it also be possible for us, his human creatures, to receive that same divinity?

The third and final genus, the *genus apotelesmaticum*, confesses that all that Christ does, according to his person, is performed not by one individual nature in separation from the other, but rather ‘by [...] both natures.’³²³ As

³²⁰ Ibid., Article VIII.32.

³²¹ Ibid., Article VIII.25.

³²² Cf. Gottfried Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk* (Erlangen DE, 1857). For a full treatment of kenotic Christology, see David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London UK: SCM, 2011).

³²³ Bruzek, *A Five Word Faith*, 309.

the Formula of Concord declares, 'the person [of Christ] does not act *in, with, through, or according to* one nature only, but *in, according to, with, and through* both natures, or as the Council of Chalcedon declares, each nature according to its own properties acts in communion with the other.'³²⁴ Both natures are engaged in every activity, though each nature contributes according to its own peculiarities and properties.

This third genus is likewise important because it signifies that whatever encounter we have with the person of Christ *today* will be an encounter with both his human and his divine natures.

The relationship between the two natures, therefore, is not unlike the relationship of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. By way of analogy, *perichoresis* – colloquially, though inaccurately, 'to dance' – is often used to describe the interaction and interpenetration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Peter Leithart helpfully commented on the origin and use of the word *perichoresis*:

Since the patristic period, 'perichoresis' has been a technical term to describe the interrelations of the Persons of the Trinity. The noun comes from a Greek verb (*perichorein*) that means 'to contain' or 'to penetrate,' and describes the three Persons of the Trinity as mutually 'indwelling,' 'permeating,' or 'interpenetrating' one another. Each person both wholly envelops and is wholly enveloped by the *others*. A similar Greek word, *perichoreuein*, which means 'to dance around,' has been used as a metaphor for the relation of the Persons. In Latin, the equivalent term was *circumincessio* ('moving around') or *circuminsessio* ('sitting around').³²⁵

³²⁴ *SD*, Article VIII.46.

³²⁵ Peter J. Leithart, 'The Dance of God, the Dance of Life' from an unpublished lecture given at the Ministerial Conference in Moscow and posted at <http://www.leithart.com/archives/000132.php> on September 26, 2003. See also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta GA: John Knox, 1975), 515-

Within the Godhead, there is a subtle, but yet real, back-and-forth-ness, where all three persons work together in harmony. No one person, however, dominates, but indeed, one person faithfully leads the perichoretic dance: the Father. He is the unbegotten one who begets his Son from all eternity, and from whom, together with his only begotten Son, proceeds the Holy Spirit.³²⁶ Yet, the Father is the one who leads the dance, with both the Son and the Holy Spirit faithfully and willingly following his guiding and direction. Gregory of Nyssa described it this way:

All activities which extend from God to creation are described by different names, in accordance with the different ways in which they are presented to our thought: but every such activity originates from the Father, proceeds from the Son, and is brought to fulfillment in the Holy Spirit.³²⁷

Similarly, within the person of Christ, there are two natures, divine and human, which live in perfect harmony (*genus idiomaticum*) within the one hypostasis, working together for one common goal (*genus apotelesmaticum*) – the redemption of mankind. Yet, even this dance must be led, and so the divine nature takes the lead, as the *genus maiestaticum* confesses. Consequently, while nothing can be added to the divine nature of Christ, something certainly is added to the human nature, specifically, the divine nature itself, which does not destroy it, but invigorates it in such a way that

519. Here, Grillmeier made special note of Nestorius' Christological formulation and thought pertaining to the "mutual compenetration" of the two natures in Christ' (515), with a special emphasis on Nestorius' intentional use of trinitarian parallelism (516).

³²⁶ See the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed.

³²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, 'An Answer to Ablabios: That We Should Not Think of Saying There are Three Gods,' in J.P., Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca* 45, 126 (Paris FR: Migne, 1858), 115-135 (hereafter *PG*) and translated in Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament*, 54.

flesh and blood can actually bear the sin of the entire cosmos. As Cyril of Alexandria wrote:

The Logos attached our nature to Himself in order that first in and through Himself He might restore it to its pristine beauty, and that He as the heavenly man and the Second Adam, having been first of all established in righteousness and spiritual sanctification, might bestow on our race all good things through Himself.³²⁸

These two distinct natures find communion (*koinonia*) in the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary and thereby constitute one person – Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And in coming to this creation with flesh and blood, he thereby set the standard for how he would be present for all time.

Therefore, the life of Christ is, most specifically, an incarnational life where he is continually present as the Word made flesh, in order to set the cosmos to rights and make all things new.³²⁹ The very same Word who was present at creation, in his incarnation shows the new and better way in which he will deal with his own creation: as one of his creatures. To that end, the whole of ‘religion can only be understood in the context of the incarnation of God the Son.’³³⁰

Edward Schillebeeckx, known primarily for his work with, and development of, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, is quite helpful when it comes to a broader understanding of the incarnation of Jesus

³²⁸ Cited in Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 468 under the chapter titled, ‘Comfort Derived by the Ancients from Christ’s Human Nature.’ One should note well that Cyril is not necessarily saying the same thing as Luther and the Lutheran confessions. He is, however, confessing the traditional understanding of the person of Christ, which was then taken a step further, in particular, by Luther and Chemnitz. To that end, even someone like Calvin could likely subscribe to what Cyril has written above.

³²⁹ Cf. Gal 6:15.

³³⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 18.

Christ. Narrowly, one can pin the incarnation down to the annunciation, gestation, and birth of Jesus by the Blessed Virgin Mary.³³¹ Yet, Schillebeeckx proposes something larger and grander, suggesting that the totality of Jesus' life – annunciation, gestation, birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension – come together to form a single incarnational life, precisely because who Jesus is and what Jesus does constitutes the very heart of the incarnation itself. And where there is the incarnational, there is also the sacramental, for as Osborne noted, 'sacramentality was seen [...] as a more profound aspect of the Christian Church with a primordial base in the Incarnation itself [...].'³³²

In turn, the incarnational life of Jesus is utterly sacramental because from start to finish, his life implies an *ongoing* fleshly reality.³³³ In other words, 'because the saving acts of the man Jesus are performed by a divine person, they have a divine power to save, but because this divine power to save appears to us in visible form, the saving activity of Jesus is *sacramental*.'³³⁴ Moreover, 'the man Jesus,' himself, 'as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of redemption,' is '*the* sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the Son of God himself, is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption.'³³⁵ Even to this day, therefore, when Jesus is delivered tangibly

³³¹ One should note well, however, that within some traditions, particularly the Anglican tradition, 'incarnational' usually refers to the totality of Christ's life.

³³² Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, 47.

³³³ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 19.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

to sinners, the encounter that takes place is not only a thoroughly incarnational one, but also a thoroughly sacramental one.³³⁶ Simply, whatever tangibility Christ has today, it necessarily has an impact on our world.

Therefore, given the fullness and concreteness of the life of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, it would be nearly impossible to limit the understanding of *logos* to simply the spoken 'word.' Rather, just as a broader understanding of the incarnation was possible, one which encompasses the whole of Christ's life, so also then, wrapped up in the *logos*, can be the totality of Christ's person and work, specifically who he is and what he does for man and man's salvation. And wrapped up in Christ's person and work is the one who is 'the expression of an intelligible creator.'³³⁷

Christ, as the Word, provides in himself 'a means of access to the nature of reality.'³³⁸ And all other words, taking their cue from the one who is Word, thus function as a means of access to another reality as well. In turn, while this may not have been the way of the Greeks for whom *logos* evolved to imply 'a connected rational element in speech,' thereby connoting, to a certain extent, man's 'ability to think,' for the Christian, *logos* depends not merely on the rationality or intelligibility of the words spoken, but also 'on

³³⁶ Schillebeeckx makes special note of the 'encounter with God' aspect of this understanding of Jesus as the primordial sacrament. When one encounters the Christ, he actually encounters God himself.

³³⁷ Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 25.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

the person who speaks' and all that constitutes him.³³⁹ The *logos*, therefore, is something larger and grander than a simple set of words. Instead, it is tangible access to another reality – a divine reality. And access to the divine reality by way of tangibility is wholly sacramental.

Also of importance is the fact that *logos* is not only a descriptor for Christ, but it is also his name. And a name is more than merely how one is to be addressed. Rather, a name also reveals the totality of the person who bears it.³⁴⁰ To be sure,

there was and is a world-wide belief that the name of an object, man, or higher being is more than a mere label only incidentally associated with the one who bears it. The name is an indispensable part of the personality. One might say that a man is constituted of body, soul, and name.³⁴¹

So when the Son of God is also known as the '*logos*,' it would be quite difficult to limit that name to merely the revelation of the fact that he is described as the 'word'. Rather, in the name *logos* is also 'the fullness of the being and work of Jesus Christ,' the totality of his person.³⁴² As the Word, Christ is the divine revelation of the Father, joined to man's flesh in Mary's womb, to give all of humanity access to the reality from which he came.³⁴³ To that end, one must consider 'whether as well as identifying the person of Christ with the

³³⁹ Maximos Aghiorgoussis, 'The Word of God in Orthodox Christianity,' Greek Orthodox Theological Review 31:1-2 (1986), 82 and 92, respectively.

³⁴⁰ See Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 26-27.

³⁴¹ *Dictionary*, vol. 5, 243.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁴³ One can observe the same sort of thing occurring with the other, more familiar, names of the *logos*. Take, for instance, his most basic, human name: Jesus. Very simply, this was the way he was addressed by his parents, family, friends, and even his foes. But more specifically, this name also revealed something about the one who bore it. One will recall that Joseph was ordered by the angel to give him this name, precisely because he [Jesus] was the one who 'will save his people from their sins' (Matt 1:21). And to this day, when we have his name – Jesus – we instantly know more about him than we did before.

Word he [St. John] assigns to Christ also to participate in that relation, in disclosing the divine' by way of human speech?³⁴⁴

To that end, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, where the divine nature joins itself to the human nature in the flesh of Mary, appears to be the primary sacramental event in all of Christian history, thereby making Christ the primordial sacrament.³⁴⁵ The goal of this sacramental event (the incarnation) and primordial sacrament (Christ himself) is to bring salvation to mankind by way of a Christological touch from creator to created – from divine nature to human nature, from Christ to Mary, from Christ to us. This might best be described as a personal encounter or, as Schillebeeckx has termed it, 'Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God.' And even to this day, as the same Jesus resides at the right hand of the Father *with his body, blood, soul, and divinity*, he is acting sacramentally each and every time he brings himself into corporeal contact with sinners. This is a sacramental life, and it is utterly natural for him. And within the fullness of his sacramental life, we see more clearly what it means for him to be the *logos*, the Word. We see the totality of who Jesus is and what Jesus does *for us* as he speaks *to us*.³⁴⁶

Creation

While the event of the incarnation was *itself* sacramental, the event of the creation was unique in that it was the event which *generated* the

³⁴⁴ Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 54.

³⁴⁵ The sacramentality of Jesus comes primarily from the fact that he, the second person of the Holy Trinity, joined himself to flesh, to matter, to something which could be handled, in order to bring redemption to the world (see Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament*, 71-72).

³⁴⁶ See Brown and Loades, *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, 3: 'But, at the very least, to identify word and flesh must draw "word" closer to the sense of "expression" or even "meaning" or "explanation", as the wider meaning of the Greek *logos* does indeed permit.'

sacramental, providing the necessary matter for the incarnation. Though not chronologically appropriate, it is fitting theologically to examine the creation second, as even the sacramentality of the creation can only be fully grasped through the lens of the Word made flesh and his incarnation. To that end, I should declare from the outset that I disagree with David Scaer's assertion that 'the doctrine of the pre-existence of the Son of God, which belongs to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, is the presupposition for a discussion of the Incarnation.'³⁴⁷ Interestingly, this same theological mistake was made before him by Francis Pieper who, as noted previously, was the leading systematic theologian in the history of the LCMS. Volume one of Pieper's famous *Christian Dogmatics* begins with the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not until volume two, after 626 pages, that one encounters the person of Christ.³⁴⁸ While Scaer and Pieper prioritize the Trinity over the incarnation, I, instead, propose that all theology is principally Christology and, therefore, the incarnation is the constitutive element in theology. Since the incarnational elements have been established already, it is now appropriate to discuss the creation.

Initially, it appears that there are at least three aspects of creation worth noting. First, that which was created was seen by God and it was deemed 'good' and 'very good.' Therefore, there is an inherent goodness to matter, to that which was created, which can be seen from the very beginning of the world. Moreover, matter is a key component to our quest for a fuller

³⁴⁷ Scaer, *Christology*, 21.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.

understanding of a sacrament and, consequently, to our understanding of the incarnation, where Christ took on our matter and became flesh for us. To that end, the second thing worth noting about the account of creation is that the matter of creation, particularly the matter of man and woman, finds its fulfilment in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is the summit of creation. Finally, it is important to note that the fall into sin damaged creation's inherent sacramentality and, yet, that sacramentality was restored and creation was once again re-orientated toward its Creator with the life of Jesus Christ.

1. *The Goodness of Matter*

Christopher West noted that 'all of creation is sacramental, in that it reveals something of the mystery of the creator.'³⁴⁹ What the created world does not reveal, however, is precisely *how* it was brought into existence by God. As I noted in the first chapter, some, most notably St. Augustine, have argued for a creation which came into existence without a verbal word.³⁵⁰ As St. Augustine wrote:

We ought to understand that God *did not say "Let there be light" by a sound brought forth from the lungs or by the tongue and teeth.* Such thoughts are those of persons physically preoccupied. To be wise in accord with the flesh is death. "Let there be light" was spoken ineffably.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's 'Gospel of the Body'* (Boston MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2003), 116.

³⁵⁰ For Luther's own critique of Augustine's position, see *AE* 1:18 and *WA* 42:15.

³⁵¹ Augustine, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 5.19 in *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 84:156-157 (emphasis mine).

Others, most notably Luther, have argued for a hyper-literal reading of the Genesis account, one which includes the pronouncement of a verbal word by the Father and which, in turn, did precisely what it said: spoke creation into existence.³⁵² Luther asserts this position in his Genesis commentary, a work which also laid claim to being his last. This indicates, therefore, that what is included therein is his most mature theological thought. To that end, Luther wrote:

Augustine explains the verb 'He said' somewhat differently. This is his interpretation: 'He said, that is, from eternity it was so determined in the Word of the Father and was so established with God, because the Son is the reason, the image, and the wisdom of the Father.' But the simple and true meaning must be adhered to: God said, that is, through the Word He created and made all things, as the apostle confirms when he says (Heb. 1:2): 'Through whom the worlds were created.' Likewise (Col. 1:16): 'All things were created through Him and for Him.' Within these limits our thinking concerning the creation must remain; and we should not go too far afield, because then we shall surely get into darkness and mischief.³⁵³

Previously, I offered an additional possibility, one which envisaged the creation as a conversation between Father and Son. Yet, it was just that: a possibility.

Here, however, I disagree with both Luther and Augustine, but not because I think either opinion is completely incorrect. Rather, I disagree with both for this reason: they assert, in their own ways, precisely *how* this creation came to be. I would argue, and the Biblical text would support this position, that no one can know precisely *how* the account of Genesis 1 took place. Was

³⁵² *AE* 1:16; *WA* 42:13-14. For the timing of this commentary, see Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Introduction' in *AE* 1:ix.

³⁵³ *AE* 1:18; *WA* 42:15

it a word, a thought, a conversation, or something else? Therefore, to assert that one does, in fact, know precisely *how* it occurred, would be to make an assertion that goes beyond the scope of Holy Scripture.

While the *how* of creation is debatable, what is certain is that all Christians would agree that something was, indeed, created. Moreover, none of those who believe in an actual creation would debate the fact that when God saw what he had made, he declared it, as the Bible says, 'good.' Why was it good? It was good because it bore the image and the mystery of the one who made it. Very simply, creation was good because God was good.³⁵⁴

Since creation bears within itself the goodness of its creator, St. Francis of Assisi could rightfully praise God for created matter and, moreover, for our solidarity with that created matter. In his *Laudes Creaturarum*, he wrote thus:

For Thee, O high and mighty, my good Lord,
 Praise, glory, honour, blessing be outpoured,
 Since only these do well become Thy fame;
 In worthiness no wight may say Thy name.
 Be praised, Lord, through Thy creatures one by one,
 But chiefly through messer and brother Sun
 Who lighteth up the day for us, and he
 Is beautiful and passing bright to see
 And doth Thee manifest, almighty Lord.
 Praised be through sister Moon and Stars that shine
 Up in the skies so clear and sweet and fine.
 Thy praise through brother Wind and Air and Cloud,
 Fair Time and every other be allowed
 With whom Thou dost Thy creatures all sustain.
 Praised be through sister Water, Lord, again,
 So useful, costly, chaste, and humbly dight.
 Praised be through brother Fire, who doth alight
 The darkness and is fair and gay and free.
 Praised, Lord, through sister Earth, our mother, be,
 Who feedeth and doth offer life unto

³⁵⁴ See David Wilkinson, 'Creation Accounts in the Old Testament' in *Creation and the Abrahamic Faiths*, ed. Neil Spurway (Newcastle UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 5.

All kinds of fruits, grass, flowers of every hue.³⁵⁵

Yet, the goodness of creation was not intended solely to be praised by humans. Instead, the goodness of creation was also intended to be infused into our way of worship and into our very way of life. Simply, creation was intended to be used by us.

As one example of this reality, historically churches were built to face *ad orientum* or, to the East. This was done, not only because Eden was located in the East (Gen 2:8) and it is from the East that Christ has promised to return (Matt 24:27), but, very simply, it is in the East that the sun rises. Therefore, in being situated toward the created sun, the church was situated toward that which was deemed 'good' and, in turn, the church was given a tangible touch of the creator behind the gift.³⁵⁶

Yet, the goodness of matter was not reserved just for Sabbath worship. Recently, in fact, programmes such as the *Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts* at the University of St. Andrews have been established in order to enable God's creatures to appreciate and engage more fully the gift that is the human imagination and, moreover, the art that can be generated by the human person. And this praise for and study of created matter – specifically,

³⁵⁵ Francis of Assisi, *Laudes Creaturarum* in *An Anthology of Italian Poems 13th-19th Century*, trans. Lorna de' Lucchi (New York NY: Knopf, 1922), 2-3. As the translator notes: 'Between 1222 and 1226 he [St. Francis] wrote in Latin the *Laudes Creatoris*, of which an autograph fragment is preserved in Assisi. The *Laudes Creaturarum* is probably a contemporary translation from the Latin in rhymed prose rather than in verse.'

³⁵⁶ For further insight, see Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2000), 74-84: 'The cosmic symbol of the rising sun expresses the universality of God above all particular places and yet maintains the concreteness of divine revelation' (76).

imagination and art – presupposes that which Madeline L’Engle so beautifully described in *Walking on Water*:

To paint a picture or to write a story or to compose a song is an incarnational activity. The artist is a servant who is willing to be a birth giver. In a very real sense the artist (male or female) should be like Mary who, when the angel told her that she was to bear the Messiah, was obedient to the command. [...] I believe that each work of art, whether it is a work of great genius or something very small, comes to the artist and says, “Here I am. Enflesh me. Give birth to me.”³⁵⁷

Therefore, every church that took the time to consider situating their building *ad orientum*, every imaginative thought of a human being, and every piece of art ever created is, at its core, an incarnational activity, precisely because it puts to good use that created matter which the Lord declared ‘good.’

It is clear, however, that creation has no goodness apart from its creator. Rather, in the act of being created, creation itself was endowed with divinization by the creator, precisely because the creator and the created were ‘co-extensive.’³⁵⁸ For this reason, Alexander Schmemmann, the prominent Eastern Orthodox priest and scholar of the 20th century, spoke of creation this way: ‘The World was created as “matter”, the material of one all-embracing Eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament.’³⁵⁹ The matter of creation, therefore, was intended to live perpetually as a

³⁵⁷ Madeleine L’Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (Wheaton IL: Harold Shaw, 1980), 18.

³⁵⁸ Aghiorgoussis, ‘The Word of God in Orthodox Christianity,’ 87. See also R. R. Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2010) who reads the opening words of Genesis, particularly, ‘Let there be light,’ not as the creation of literal light, but ‘the illumination and divinization of creation’ which God planned from the beginning (46).

³⁵⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, *The World as Sacrament* (London UK: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965), 16.

thanksgiving (a Eucharist) to the one who graciously did the creating. Moreover, man, particularly Adam, was given the task of *working* and *keeping* that created matter, which found its epicentre in the Garden of Eden.³⁶⁰ In caring for the Lord's material gift, Adam was displaying an act of utter gratitude for what he had been given. Adam's life was a Eucharistic life, a life of thanksgiving.

Interestingly, however, these same verbs (working and keeping - עָבַד and שָׁמַר) are used of the Aaronic priesthood, particularly the duties of the Levites: 'They shall *keep* (שָׁמַר) guard over him [Aaron] and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they *minister* [work] (עָבָדָה) at the tabernacle' (Num 3:7). The duties of a priest found their origin in the duties of Adam. This, in turn, implies that Adam was the proto-priest, and his sacred space – his church – was the material world.

2. *Incarnation: The Summit of Creation*

While creation bore an intrinsic goodness because of the Lord who created it, there was still a gap between creator and created. Indeed, creation was divinized, meaning it bore the fullness of the divine image, but it did not have the God behind the image in a form relatable to its own.³⁶¹ In other words, while creation was certainly 'good,' there was a need nonetheless for incarnation. There was a need for God to become man. However, in order for

³⁶⁰ Gen 2:15.

³⁶¹ Cf. CCC, 186: 704, citing Irenaeus: 'God fashioned man with his own hands [that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form.'

God to become man, he would need a human being from whom to come.

Why? Precisely because human beings are, in fact, the culmination of the Genesis account, receiving a declaration unlike all other created matter: 'very good.'

Moreover, there is a sense in which God, having foreseen all things before he created this world, likewise foresaw the fall into sin and the necessity of the atonement. Therefore, it can be assumed that even as he created this world and all its material parts, he foresaw that one day he would need to send his own Son, the *logos*, as matter, in order to set this material world to rights.

Therefore, the culmination of the Genesis account (the creation of man and woman) finds its summit only in the incarnation of Jesus, both because of what the *logos* needed (flesh) and what the *logos* came to do (atonement). In other words, the material bodies, created from the dust of the earth and the rib of Adam, provided the necessary matter for Christ to come as a New Adam for this fallen world. What this indicates is that the material bodies of Adam and Eve, fallen as they no doubt became, mediated nonetheless God's greatest gift to his creation: his Son in the flesh.

3. *The Fall: Damaging Sacramentality*

The fall into sin, of course, was not without consequence. In fact, with the fall into sin, the inherent sacramentality of creation (its potential to receive and convey the divine), particularly that of human beings, was damaged. In essence, no longer were men and women (comprised of matter) ready and

willing and able to receive all that the Lord had to give *to* them and *through* them.³⁶² Moreover, even the cosmos itself, which was 'subjected to futility' (Rom 8:20) with the fall into sin and 'has been groaning [...] in the pains of childbirth' (Rom 8:22) to this very day, longs for the moment when it 'will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain [...] freedom' (Rom 8:21).

It was not, however, as though the inherent sacramentality of creation was altogether lost with the fall into sin. Matter did not cease to exist, nor did the divine cease to exist. Rather, the ease of creation's sacramental realisation was lost.³⁶³ In other words, it was at times hard to see that this creation, this material world, was, in fact, still 'good.'

With the life of Jesus, however, there was a dramatic shift in potentiality. As Thomas Lane has noted, by giving his Christological touch to creation, 'the exalted Christ has given a new significance to everything in the universe.'³⁶⁴ For it is within the life of Christ, particularly within the fullness of his humanity, that he is himself a sacrament.³⁶⁵ Consequently, when the fullness of creation had been touched by the creator made flesh, the primordial sacrament, suddenly its vast potentiality could once again be realised. Creation received the utter self-giving of the sacramental Jesus and, in so doing, creation received into itself the fullness of his sacramentality. As

³⁶² Cf. Rom 8:7 and the inherent inability of the sinful mind.

³⁶³ Cf. Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament*, 74, who argues that the sacramental nature of creation was, in fact, lost with the fall into sin. The operative word here is 'nature.' Certainly, creation still bore the potential for the sacramental. The Lord, for instance, could still come to Israel as a rock (1 Cor 10:4) and use a voice to raise the dead (Ezek 37:1-14), both of which are examples of the divine being conveyed through matter.

³⁶⁴ Thomas Lane, 'The Sacraments Revisited' in *The Furrow* 33 (1982), 272.

³⁶⁵ Kenan B. Osborne, 'Jesus as Human Expression of the Divine Presence: Toward a New Incarnation of the Sacraments,' 30.

the vision of John declares, Jesus was and is 'making all things new' (Rev 21:5) and, in making things new, he is transforming them from what they once were to what they were intended by him to be in Eden: 'very good.'

The Lord is not, however, changing the ontological 'what' of these things. It is not as though he has caused trees to become birds and human beings to become rocks. Rather, he is changing the ontological 'who' of things.³⁶⁶ Trees are still trees, humans are still humans and, yet, having received a Christological touch, everything that comprises this creation has once again been reoriented toward the creator, particularly the creator made flesh. And it is precisely 'in the possibility of thus being transformed' that 'the sacramentality of the natural world lies.'³⁶⁷ One need not look further, in fact, than the very 'things' of this natural world – water, bread, wine, and words – to see the vast potentiality and sacramentality of matter, particularly when it bears the Christological touch of its creator, and is thus sacramentally transformed into Baptism, Eucharist, absolution, and preaching.

Conclusion

In order to move forward within my own tradition, however, which is, as demonstrated, rooted completely in the Word of Holy Scripture, a Biblical example in support of this proposed broader sacramentality, particularly one that encompasses preaching, is needed. However, in order to remain faithful to my own tradition's confession of the person of Christ, any example offered

³⁶⁶ I am indebted to William Weinrich for this helpful insight into the ontological 'who,' particularly with reference to the annunciation to Mary.

³⁶⁷ John Habgood, 'The Sacramentality of the Natural World' in *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, eds. David Brown and Ann Loades (London UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995), 21.

will need to include a tangible presence of Jesus and the fullness of his person – divine and human. Moreover, any example offered will need to presume that such a delivery of the person of Jesus is the only theology appropriate for the public proclamation of the gospel (primary theology). Finally, any example offered will need to presume that Christ rejoices in the materiality of this world, even using it to come as one of us for all of us. To that end, while there are certainly a number of examples of preaching in Holy Scripture, along with its subsequent sacramentality, one example seems quite helpful in this endeavour: the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Chapter 4

Adaptability: A Marian Example of a Christological Reality

Introduction

Knowing now that the Word of God, by its very nature as a Christological reality, bears within itself more than mere information (secondary theology), but the fullness of the *logos* made flesh (primary theology), in this fourth chapter I begin to develop one central theme of this thesis: Mary as the icon of sacramental hearing. Additionally, I press hard to see how we, too, might live like Mary as sacramental hearers of the Word of God and, consequently, how preaching might function more like the annunciation than a theological lecture. I first examine, however, the preaching contained within the annunciation event, specifically the words used by the angel to address Mary, along with their overall theological significance within the framework of the Lord's plan of salvation. I then explore Mary's response to the angel's sermon, demonstrating that the physicality of the preacher (the Angel Gabriel) mattered for her, specifically because it engaged her on her level. I continue by proposing that this angelic sermon bears within itself an innate adaptability and is, therefore, preached at two levels: a first level for Mary and a second level for us. Finally, I propose that this two-level approach, where the Word of God has adaptability, is both faithful to the Biblical account and, more importantly, faithful to our quest for a robust sacramentality of the Word of God and preaching.

The Necessity of a Woman

Christopher West, noted lay theologian and author of numerous works explicating Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, cites one of the pope's general audience addresses: "The "body, in fact, and it alone is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus to be a sign of it."³⁶⁸ Aidan Nichols links this visibility to the incarnation when he writes: "A faith based on divine Incarnation will eventually find expression in the realm of the visible."³⁶⁹ Incarnation, therefore, is the key to visibility, and visibility presupposes a connection to the body. Therefore, the body appears to be utterly incarnational.

It is hoped that, at this particular point, there is little doubt that all of creation can be seen as inherently sacramental and, in particular, that part of creation which the Lord deemed *very good*: man and woman.³⁷⁰ This sacramentality comes from the fact that human beings are part of the creative will and act of God and, moreover, make visible the image of the invisible God. In turn, human beings have a renewed sense of potentiality through the redemption of Jesus Christ. In other words, human beings again have the potential to be and to do what God intended them to be and to do in Eden. Yet, there would also appear to be another aspect which plays into creation's

³⁶⁸ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 116.

³⁶⁹ Aidan Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Hampshire UK: Ashgate, 2007), 21

³⁷⁰ Cf. Gen 1:31.

inherent sacramentality, and that is the incarnation of Jesus, the Christ. In other words, by virtue of the incarnation, all created matter once again bears a divine touch.

As noted above, the incarnation was a cosmic event in the fullest meaning of the term. It was a condescension of God into man, and a union thereof, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This union of realities forever changed the course of this world, returning every created thing (from light to human beings) to its intended use before the fall into sin. Into this service of recapitulation, the Lord drew Mary. Her womb would serve as the waiting place for God, until the fullness of time had come.

Yet, the good news of the Gospel, the message that Christ came to be born, live, suffer, die, rise, and ascend for humans and their salvation, is always more than what is initially perceived by the fallen eye.³⁷¹ Therefore, while it may appear that the Lord accomplished this work of incarnation and redemption *alone*, there is indeed more. In fact, when examined closely, it is clear that the Lord continually drew faithful men and women into his service to assist him in carrying out his sacred plan. And it is the Virgin Mary who played a leading role in this great narrative, for it is in her very womb that we see the vast potentiality of creation, particularly of human beings, and self-giving-ness of her creator, who counted her worthy to be called his mother, delivering a son to her through the speaking of the annunciation.

³⁷¹ I owe this simple yet, profound, insight – that the Gospel is always more – to Scott Bruzek.

So the pivotal question of this thesis is this: Might this gracious action on the part of the divine show us something about preaching and hearing, that is, about the nature of divine communication more generally? More specifically, might this show us the way in which the Gospel, through its *viva vox*, is always giving us more than we could ever want, need, or imagine, precisely by way of a living and sacramental Word?

Mary Among the Lutherans

There is always some risk involved, however, when a Lutheran proposes to use Mary as the icon for various aspects of the Church's corporate life together (preaching and hearing), particularly when those aspects are being pursued on the grounds of their proposed inherent sacramental character.³⁷² This risk is heightened when the discussion moves to the broader evangelical realm.³⁷³ As Timothy George has written: 'To be an evangelical meant *not* to be a Roman Catholic. To worship Jesus meant *not* to honor Mary, even if such honor were Biblically grounded and liturgically

³⁷² One of the few exceptions might be the little book by the Lutheran pastor, Charles Dickson, where he notes that a 'rereading and enlightened understanding [of Catholic teaching on Mary] on the part of the Protestant community will help to refocus the attention of the entire Christian world on Mary, not as a point of division, but as a real bridge to unity for us all' (Charles Dickson, *A Protestant Pastor Looks at Mary* [Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996], 109-110).

³⁷³ See Giovanni Miegge, *The Virgin Mary: The Roman Catholic Marian Doctrine*, trans. Waldo Smith (London UK: Lutterworth, 1955), 9: among Protestants, 'the cult of Mary is disquieting and perplexing.' See also Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in the Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4. This latter work by Kreitzer is especially helpful as it examines the sermons of the Lutheran fathers of the sixteenth century on Mary and the Marian feasts. Beginning with Luther, she traces the concerted attempt by Lutheran pastors to 'completely recast the image of Mary' (141); Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Chicago IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 7: 'The majority of Protestants have drifted away from the proper attitude towards Mary, which Martin Luther had indicated on the basis of Holy Scripture.'

chaste.³⁷⁴ In what preceded this section, I have already proposed that preaching and hearing can be considered sacramental acts (see Chapter 1). Yet, while George's assertion is true, that a defining characteristic of Lutheranism (or Evangelicalism for that matter) is a denial of Mary simply because of her status in the Roman tradition, I do not believe that misuse should constitute disuse. To that end, in what follows, I will, in fact, use Mary as an icon for the sacramentality of preaching and hearing in an attempt to bring out its uniquely Christological (and not Marian) characteristics. In other words, here I align myself with Pope Benedict XVI: 'Thus in Mariology Christology was defended. Far from belittling Christology, it signifies the comprehensive triumph of a confession of faith in Christ which has achieved authenticity.'³⁷⁵

While engaging the task, I will do so from within the Lutheran theological milieu, which has long held with special reverence the Blessed Virgin Mary.³⁷⁶ The Smalcald Articles (1537), for example, describe Mary's fleshly condition during the conception and birth of Christ this way: 'The Son

³⁷⁴ Timothy George, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,' in *Mary, Mother of God*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 117.

³⁷⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, trans. John M. McDermott (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 1983), 36.

³⁷⁶ While Lutherans, at least to start, continued to honour Mary, not all from the Reformation tradition did the same. For a helpful look at the Virgin Mary in Reformation Germany, see Bridget Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500 – 1648* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge, 2007). The following is of note:

While the Protestant reformers were unanimous in their condemnation of the invocation of saints, some, in particular Martin Luther, still had many positive things to say about Mary. [...] Indeed, some of Luther's statements were so traditional that his writings were cited by contemporary Catholic commentators seeking to defend Mary's cult.

became man in this manner: he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of man, and was born of the *pure, holy, and virgin Mary*.³⁷⁷

The Formula of Concord (1577-1580) describes Mary's subsequent role as Mother in the following ways:

Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that Mary conceived and bore not only a plain, ordinary, mere man but the veritable Son of God; *for this reason she is rightly called, and truly is, the mother of God*.³⁷⁸

On account of this personal union and communion of the natures, Mary, *the most blessed virgin*, did not conceive a mere, ordinary human being, but a human being who is truly the Son of the most high God, as the angel testifies. He demonstrated his divine majesty even in his mother's womb in that he was born of a virgin without violating her virginity. Therefore *she is truly the mother of God* and yet remained a virgin.³⁷⁹

Both of the foregoing citations from the Lutheran Confessions endorse the early patristic understanding of Mary as Theotokos, as formulated by the Council of Ephesus (431). In some cases, however, the Lutheran Confessions and confessors were prepared to go further.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1530-1531) describes Mary's saintliness this way: 'Granted that blessed Mary prays for the church,' and while 'she is worthy of highest honors, she does not want to be put on the same level as Christ but to have her example considered and followed.'³⁸⁰

Luther, like many Reformers, became slightly more conservative with age and, consequently, slightly more restricted in his appreciation for Mary. As will be seen below, however, this was certainly not the case for his final sermon in Wittenberg (1546).

³⁷⁷ SA, Part I.4 (emphasis mine). The footnote in Tappert inserts 'ever' as a connotation for the Virgin Mary from the Latin text.

³⁷⁸ FC, *Epitome*, Article VIII:7.12 (emphasis mine).

³⁷⁹ SD, Article VIII.24 (emphasis mine).

³⁸⁰ Both of the foregoing are from ApAC, Article XXI.27.

And Luther, in his final sermon at Wittenberg in 1546, confessed Mary's ongoing intercession on behalf of the church this way: 'Indeed, shouldn't we also honor the holy mother of Christ? She is the woman who bruised the head of the serpent. Hear us, Mary, for thy Son so honors thee that he can refuse thee nothing.'³⁸¹

According to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, Mary is the pure and holy mother of God, who at this very moment is in heaven, doing precisely what her Son does: offering prayers for the Church. Her purity and holiness come as a gift from the Holy Spirit who, by taking her flesh, purified it, and made it the blameless sanctuary for her son.³⁸² Working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, she was enabled to give her sanctified flesh to her son as a gift, in order that he might be enabled to come as the sinless saviour of the world, joining his divinity to creation's humanity 'in his mother's womb.'³⁸³

³⁸¹ *AE* 51: 375; *WA* 51:128. Here, Luther might well be alluding to Mary's role as Queen Mother, who intercedes on behalf of others to her son, the King. See particularly Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 33 where he explicates this view by citing a portion of 1 Kings and the exchange between Bathsheba and Solomon:

So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him about Adonijah; the king got up to meet her and bowed before her; he then sat down on his throne; a seat was brought for the king's mother, and she sat down on his right. She said, "I have one small request to make you; do not refuse me." "Mother," the king replied, "make your request, for I shall not refuse you" (1 Kings 2:19-20).

³⁸² While the understanding of Mary's sinlessness (or lack thereof) changed throughout the time of the Lutheran reformers, some of the most formidable teaching on the subject comes from Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586). See Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 41 who cites Chemnitz in the following way: "'Besides, Mary is a sinner, exactly like us, but the flesh that the Lord took from her was purified by the Holy Spirit, so that it would be pure.'" The question which emerges, of course, is just how much of Mary's flesh did the Holy Spirit need and use? Chemnitz seems to suggest a bit of her flesh, possibly even just her womb. However, that would presume that the rest of her remained tainted with sin, creating a Gnostic-like conundrum which is not easily solved.

³⁸³ *SD*, Article VIII.26. As for Mary working 'in conjunction' with the Holy Spirit, see *LC*, Second Part: Creed, 31: 'That is to say, he became man, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit *and* the Virgin' (emphasis mine). Admittedly, some of the earliest versions of the Apostles' Creed utilize 'from' and not 'and' in reference to Mary's involvement with

Consequently, in receiving the sanctification of her flesh, and in delivering that flesh to her son, she is worthy of all honour, most especially for her exemplary model of the Christian life, a life shaped by participation with the divine, and a life which has as its origin a corporeal, concrete, tangible connection to the flesh of Jesus Christ, which began when she heard the angel's word. This tangible connection, by way of a word, will be discussed in more detail later.

The Preaching of the Annunciation

In order to use the annunciation to Mary as the icon for sacramental preaching and hearing, one must first analyze precisely what was spoken into her ear, and precisely how that speaking revealed something about the speaker and the hearer.

1. The Speaking

The account of the annunciation is riddled with words bearing meaning behind the meaning, many of which can only be uncovered with the help of a qualified Biblical scholar. Arthur Just, one of the foremost Lukan scholars in the LCMS, has noted that the clear teaching of this text is the conception of Jesus *by a virgin*.³⁸⁴ While I agree with Just, particularly that this may be the clear teaching of the text, especially from a confessional Lutheran perspective (where the veracity of the Biblical text, especially those sections

the Holy Spirit in the incarnation. According to Schaff, 'and the Virgin Mary' first appeared in A.D. 341 and again in A.D. 450, soon after the Council of Ephesus. Today, 'and' is used by the Catholic Church, while the Lutheran Church, among others, confesses 'of' or 'from' (*The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. II, 53*).

³⁸⁴ Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50* (St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 60 (emphasis mine).

containing miracles [not least of which is the virgin birth] is of utmost importance), I must assert that this is certainly not the *only* teaching contained therein.³⁸⁵ In other words, while the Enlightenment brought with it a denial of the virgin birth of Christ, particularly because the virgin birth, in some respects, defies reason, the account of the annunciation is not merely meant to serve as a defence of an historical Lutheran dogma.³⁸⁶ Rather, as with all things pertaining to the Christ, there is more here for the reader and hearer than meets the eye or ear.

Before examining a few specific words spoken, it must be noted that while the annunciation takes on a particular shape and dialogue, the Lord could certainly have delivered a child to Mary in any manner he saw fit. He could have simply thought her into pregnancy, zapped her into pregnancy, or given her a husband like every other woman before and after her. Instead, however, he chose to *speak* to her. And in his speaking, he did not simply deliver the facts of the matter ('You are going to have a child'), but it can be interpreted as giving a full recitation of Israel's history, Mary's place in that history, and how the Lord would be using her to move his creation one step closer toward the fullness of the new creation. In other words, he preached a sermon which, in turn, made Christ present. This fact is highlighted by

³⁸⁵ Cf. McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 278.

³⁸⁶ See Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia PA: Fortress, 1984), 546. There, Braaten makes the rather interesting argument that 'it is possible to hold to the virgin birth as a biological fact and miss its point. It is also possible to make the same point without reference to the virgin birth, as the writings of Paul and John prove by not mentioning it' (546). He says further that 'it is important, then, not to let the story get bogged down in biology, but to read it as a symbol witnessing to the truth of the kerygma' (ibid.).

Jerome who, in his Vulgate, called the angel's message a *sermo*.³⁸⁷ This, no doubt, evidences the unique place of words, of a sermon even, in the divine plan. And, for Mary, the most important word of the sermon was the first: Rejoice!

a. 'Rejoice!'

Initially, to eye and to ear, this comes as a rather informal greeting, one comparable to an exchange between friends, similar to our 'hello'.³⁸⁸ McHugh notes that 'before 1939, nearly all writers took the word *χαῖρε* to be simply an everyday greeting, devoid of doctrinal significance.'³⁸⁹ And, in fact, at its most basic level, *χαῖρε* is just that: a simple greeting. But there is more. The meaning of 'Rejoice!' is not unlike that of 'good bye'. Most basically, 'good bye' is devoid of any doctrinal significance and simply serves as a parting word. However, its original meaning intended to convey the blessing: 'God

³⁸⁷ Lk 1:29.

³⁸⁸ Pope Benedict XVI describes it this way: "'Rejoice": at first sight, this word appears to be no more than the formulaic greeting current in the Greek-speaking world, and tradition has consistently translated it as "hail"' (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2005), 64).

³⁸⁹ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 37. For the various interpretations of this greeting, see Stefano M. Manelli, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, trans. Peter Damian Fehlner (New Bedford MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2005), 162, fn 22. Opponents of a richer, more typological meaning often assert that the angel's greeting was nothing more than an everyday greeting, as noted by Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Annunciation to Mary: A Story of Faith – Luke 1:26-38* (Chicago IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 69-73: 'More basic [to *chaire*] is the formal function of the greeting, whose basic purpose is to acknowledge, recognize, and relate to someone personally' (73). Proponents of a richer meaning to the angel's greeting, however, often agree with Lyonnet, particularly that 'in scenes with a Semitic background Luke uses *eirene*, "Peace" (Hebrew *shalom*), not *chaire*, as the ordinary greeting (10:5; 24:36)' (*Mary in the New Testament*, 130). As far as this latter position is concerned, see also *Mary in the New Testament*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann (London UK: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), 130, fn 290, which notes that 'the Greek writers from Origen to the Byzantine period took Luke's *chaire* as "Rejoice."'

be with (by) you,' which is filled with doctrinal significance. The same, it would seem, is true of χαῖρε.³⁹⁰

And so it was in 1939 that Lyonnet, in his article, 'Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη,' pushed for a translation of the word χαῖρε as 'rejoice' instead of 'hail', playing off the Old Testament's imagery of the Daughter of Zion.³⁹¹ The Biblical texts used by Lyonnet included the following:

- Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil (Zeph 3:14-15).
- Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech 9:9).
- Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! [...] Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before' (Joel 2:21, 23).

Since the inception of Lyonnet's proposition, such prominent theologians as Pope Benedict XVI have adopted his line of thought and have carried it to its logical conclusion: by the mere fact that Mary is greeted in this way, she is the

³⁹⁰ Interestingly, this expansion of χαῖρε in 1939 took place just seven years prior to the inauguration of the *Nouvelle Théologie* movement by Jean Daniélou in 1946, where he proposed (along with his colleagues) a return to the sources and, thereby, a broader understanding of the notion of sacrament (see Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 1-8).

³⁹¹ Stanislaus Lyonnet, 'Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη,' *Biblica* 20 (1939), 131-141. See also McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 38. Interestingly, de la Potterie notes that reading the opening word of the annunciation as 'Rejoice' instead of 'Hail' was a uniquely Eastern perspective. 'The Latin Fathers, on the other hand, retained the Latin translation "Ave Maria"; hence, the echoing of joy was practically absent in the West' (Ignace de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, trans. Bertrand Buby [Bandra Mumbai: St. Paul Press, 1998], 56, fn 11).

embodiment of the daughter of Zion.³⁹² While these typological theologians often appear to be few in number, Pope Benedict XVI asserts that ‘today hardly anyone disputes that these words of the angel recorded for us by Luke take up the substance of the promise to daughter Zion [...] that announces to her that God dwells in her midst.’³⁹³ Likewise, de la Potterie asserts that while this particular word [χαῖρε] and its typological meaning (or lack thereof) has been discussed for a number of years now, ‘it seems the time of discussion is accomplished.’³⁹⁴

While I agree with Pope Benedict XVI and de la Potterie, particularly that in the post-Vatican II Catholic milieu this may well be the preferred reading of the annunciation text, I do not agree that this is the universally accepted reading of the annunciation, nor has the discussion been accomplished in every theology circle. In fact, when the connection between the Virgin Mary and the Daughter of Zion has been rejected, it usually has been Lutheran theologians who have done so, particularly because that connection appears to them to be a bit contrived, reading more into the text than the Lord intends to be read.³⁹⁵ Even Luther himself, in an open letter

³⁹² See Joseph Murphy, *Christ our Joy: The Theological Vision of Pope Benedict XVI* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2008), 39: ‘For Ratzinger, the evangelist, in using the term “*chaire*”, is deliberately alluding to the messianic joy proclaimed in the Daughter of Zion oracles found in the prophets Zephaniah and Zechariah.’ As for Pope Benedict XVI himself, see Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 9-37.

³⁹³ Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 88. See also René Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, trans. Charles Neumann (Washington DC: AMI Press, 1991), 24. Laurentin, considered one of the preeminent Marian scholars, agrees with Benedict XVI that this greeting is ‘the echo of the greetings of Messianic joy addressed by the prophets to the Daughter of Zion.’

³⁹⁴ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 55.

³⁹⁵ ‘χαῖρε, the present imperative, is the common form of greeting in the Greek. No person now greets another, either on arriving or on leaving, by saying, “Hail!” yet this translation persists. Perhaps the translation, “Greeting!” will do as well as any’ (Lanski, *Luke*,

(1530), translated the first words of the annunciation this way: ‘Suppose I had taken the best German, and translated the salutation thus: “Hello there, Mary” – for that is what the angel wanted to say, and what he would have said, if he had wanted to greet her in German.’³⁹⁶ To state, as a Lutheran, therefore, that this typological reading of the annunciation is also the predominate reading, would be to make a false assertion.

However, for the purpose of our investigation, the simple questions must be raised: Is there a connection? Is there a way in which Mary embodies the whole story of Israel? Is there a way in which the Lord is about to do to her what he promised to do to his beloved people? While a connection between Mary and the Daughter of Zion may appear to be arbitrary, one must acknowledge that in the providence of God, it is significant that all Old Testament references ultimately point to the Incarnation. Therefore, to grasp the underlying significance of this greeting, one should begin by examining the Septuagint’s usage of the same word.³⁹⁷

Here, in the account of the annunciation, the greeting is in the imperative: ‘Rejoice!’ In the Septuagint, when this same greeting is used in

62). See also Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: New Testament*, vol. 1 (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 264, where he translates the opening word of this greeting as ‘Hail!’ rather than ‘Rejoice!’; and McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 150. For insight into the issue on a ecumenical level, see *Mary in the New Testament*, 130, where the ecumenical committee made up of Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars asserts, with regard to Mary’s connection with the Daughter of Zion, that ‘the task force was not convinced by much of the proposed symbolism, even if we have elected to discuss it briefly.’

³⁹⁶ *AE* 35:191-192; *WA* 30²:638 (‘Gott grusse dich, du liebe Maria’).

³⁹⁷ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, trans. N.D. Smith (New York NY: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 9, fn 7: ‘We are taking fully into account here the Greek Septuagint, which St. Luke knew and used.’ See also *Mary in the New Testament*, 114: ‘[...] the format [of the annunciation to Mary] imitates OT annunciations. Such an annunciation was a standard biblical way of preparing the reader for a career of a person who was destined to play a significant role in salvation history.’

that same present imperative form, every instance is a reference to the 'joy attendant on the deliverance of Israel.'³⁹⁸ The three instances in the Septuagint are as follows:

- Zeph 3:14-17 - χαῖρε σφόδρα θύγατερ Σιων
- Zech 9:9 - χαῖρε σφόδρα θύγατερ Σιων
- Joel 2:21 - χαῖρε καὶ εὐφραίνου (καὶ τὰ τέκνα Σιων χαίρετε)

Both Zeph 3:14-17 and Zech 9:9 explicitly name the 'Daughter of Zion,' while Joel 2:21 (22-23) references Zion's children, which necessarily implies that they do, in fact, have a mother who does her rejoicing with them. Moreover, Zeph 3:15, 17 gives the rationale for rejoicing: the Lord is in midst of the Daughter of Zion as King of Israel (15) and saviour (17): βασιλεὺς Ἰσραηλ κύριος ἐν μέσῳ σου; κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐν σοί δυνατὸς σώσει σε.³⁹⁹ This theme is picked up by Zech 9:9 who reiterates the reason for joy: the one who is king and saviour is coming to her -ιδου ὁ βασιλεύς σου ἔρχεται σοι.

Given the Septuagint's use of the word χαῖρε, therefore, it appears that 'Rejoice' may be a better translation of the angel's greeting, rather than the oft noted, 'Hail'.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, these texts from the Septuagint suggest a natural

³⁹⁸ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 39. See also Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 61.

³⁹⁹ Of note is the use of the Hebrew word, בֶּרֶךְ, for 'in your midst' in verse 15, as it can also be alternatively defined as 'in your womb,' as in Gen 25:22: 'The children struggled together within her.' Therefore, it is clear that the Lord is a king who will deliver his beloved Jerusalem from all danger and harm, precisely on account of the fact that he is *in her* in similar fashion to a child being in the womb.

⁴⁰⁰ See Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 7, fn 3: 'S. Lyonnet has provided convincing proof that *chaire* does not mean "Hail!" in St. Luke, but "Rejoice!" (*laetare*). What we have here is that note of joy which characterizes every messianic annunciation; it is therefore not a mere greeting (*ave*).' To that end, for an examination of the use of 'Rejoice' as opposed to 'Hail' in the Church Fathers, see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 1999). Interestingly, while the *Ave*

connection between the Daughter of Zion and the Blessed Virgin Mary, one which goes further than a simple greeting: 'Hello'.

Both the Daughter of Zion and Mary are greeted with a hearty present imperative, bidding them to 'Rejoice!', and both have the incorporation of the king and Saviour *into them* as the reason for that rejoicing.⁴⁰¹ Mary, in reality, appears to embody the double promise given to the Old Testament Daughter of Zion: that the Lord will come to *save*, and that he will come to *dwell*.⁴⁰²

It makes sense, therefore, that when the Lord is given as a gift to Mary and, in turn, given as a gift to the world through Mary, he is given in specificity as 'Jesus,' the one whose name means 'saviour'.⁴⁰³ And as the saviour, he dwells within Mary as God in the flesh, for he alone can save people from their sins. The self-same God, who promised the Daughter of Zion that he would come as saviour and would dwell within her, has fulfilled his promise in the womb of Mary.

b. *The Depth of Mary's Connection to Zion's Daughter*

Mary's connection to the Daughter of Zion and the history of Israel in this one little word, 'Rejoice!', extends even further when one realizes that the locatedness of God's salvific dwelling in Israel was in the Ark of the Covenant, which, in some sense, is the *womb* of the people of Israel, for like

Maria continues to be translated as 'Hail', in the Orthodox Church, a quick scan of the more recent translation of the Annunciation Akathists show a replacement of 'Hail' with 'Rejoice'.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 66.

⁴⁰² Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 65.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Matt 1:21.

the womb of Mary, the Ark is seen as enclosing the living presence of God.⁴⁰⁴ And precisely how was God present in the Ark? In his word. It was, after all, the words (דְּבָרֵי) of God, which were given to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod 20:1), and which they, in turn, were directed to place in the womb of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:21). Consequently, with God's words came his presence, for when his words dwelt securely in the Ark, the Lord promised to be there with them to meet with his people (Exod 25:22). Moreover, where the Lord was present for his people, he was invariably there as their saviour, the one who brought them out of Egypt, out of bondage, and into freedom (Exod 20:2).

Israel's history was found in the particularity of the words of God dwelling in the womb of the Ark of the Covenant. Likewise, the Church's history (the history of the new Israel) is found in the particularity of the Word made flesh dwelling in the new and greater Ark of the Covenant: the womb of the Virgin Mary.⁴⁰⁵

Therefore, by virtue of the angel's annunciation to Mary (particularly the opening word of his address), Israel is, in some sense, summated in her. For the entirety of Israel's history, from her calling to her struggles to her

⁴⁰⁴ Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 65. See also Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 8, fn 6: "In thy midst" – in exceptional cases [Gen. 25. 22], this can mean the same as "in thy womb."

⁴⁰⁵ Hugo Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, trans. Sebastian Bullough (Bethesda MD: Zaccheus Press, 2004), xi. Later, Rahner notes that Mary's *Fiat* marks the end of the Old Testament [...] and in her womb the New Testament begins, the kingdom of the true David, of whose "kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33) (9). This theme of Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant will be picked up below.

ultimate redemption, finds its fulfilment in her, the new and greater Daughter of Zion, the one greeted by the angel with 'Rejoice!', the most Blessed Virgin.

As noted, however, I am quite aware that many theologians of Protestant descent, including Luther, have argued that the angel intended a more informal address with his greeting, some even asserting that a more 'typological identification of Mary with the daughter of Zion [...] would tend to distract attention from the coming Messiah to the mother.'⁴⁰⁶ And in some sense, they may be quite right. Practically speaking, *χαίρει* would appear to be a very helpful way to relax a young, unwed girl who is about to find out that she is pregnant with a baby who is God in the flesh. Yet, in exploring a deeper, more typological meaning to this greeting, I am simply attempting to look at the text as text, particularly as it is read in light of the other texts of Scripture. Certainly, anything could distract from the coming Messiah, but I have attempted to show above that even if Luke had not intended this richer, fuller meaning for his hearers (and even if the angel had not intended it for Mary), there is some value for the contemporary reader in exploring it further, particularly because it takes the focus off of Mary and places it on the Lord, who promises to deliver his good gifts by being *in* and *for* his beloved people as the Word and, consequently, as their saviour.

2. *Mary's Response*

Within just moments of this encounter, however, Mary appears to realise that something is not quite right. Yet, it does not appear that Mary's

⁴⁰⁶ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 65.

problem is with the message itself. Instead, as some versions of the text have recorded, Mary reacted in the following way: Ἡ δὲ ἰδοῦσα διεταράχθη ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἶη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος.⁴⁰⁷ What is of note is the precise moment of Mary's trouble. As the text declares, it ensued when she *saw* (ἰδοῦσα) the angel.⁴⁰⁸ This particular reading of the text, translated into English by the Authorized Version, appears to imply that the words of the angel, in and of themselves, were not what troubled Mary. Instead, it was the addition of the image of the one speaking (particularly her vision of the angel), which pushed her into a state of trepidation. In other words, it was the combination of word and sight which led to Mary's bewildered reaction.

It should be noted that whether or not the addition of ἰδοῦσα should be included in a proper textual study is debatable, and Fitzmyer, for example, would say that it is not.⁴⁰⁹ However, even if this particular word was not proper to the original text, it does indicate that someone felt it important enough to record it and include it. That, in and of itself, should be enough of a reason to carry on with this line of thought to see where it might take us.

To that end, it appears from the foregoing that this angelic greeting, standing alone, would have quite possibly been unbelievable for Mary and

⁴⁰⁷ See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX*, 346 for those relevant manuscripts.

⁴⁰⁸ It is worth noting that in the Scriptures, being greatly troubled is often a reaction to seeing something or someone. For example, Zechariah was troubled when he saw the angel (Lk 1:12) and the disciples were troubled when they saw the risen Christ (Lk 24:37). Why would this encounter be any different? One should see also LaVerdiere, *The Annunciation to Mary*, 80-81, who takes precisely the opposite view of that outlined above, while yet conceding the point that trouble often ensues upon seeing someone or something.

⁴⁰⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX*, 346. Fitzmyer is not an arbitrary choice, but, rather, he is selected because of his commentary's widely accepted status as 'the most complete and best commentary' currently available on the Gospel of St. Luke (Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, xi).

even misunderstood by her. In effect, had she simply heard this message from an unnamed voice from heaven, it would have left her, at best, doubting and, at worst, unbelieving. Yet, the word combined with the image of the Lord's messenger likely made the message all too convincing and, consequently, she was 'bewildered by it.'⁴¹⁰

This may, of course, seem unusual for us. Today, we often think of angels as gentle and beautiful, with glowing and glittering wings. It is hard to imagine, in fact, that anyone today would be afraid of an angel. Yet, in the ancient world, angels were awesome and terrifying. One thinks of the many depictions of St. Michael the Archangel, who bears not only a muscular body, but also a deadly sword.⁴¹¹ In the Old Testament alone, both Ezekiel and Daniel offer detailed descriptions of an Archangel. Ezekiel describes him this way: 'Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal' (Ez 8:2). Likewise, Daniel, who wrote:

I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude (Dan 10:5-6).

⁴¹⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 8.

⁴¹¹ Alternatively, one might consider the angel of death as described in Revelation 9 (Abaddon). While performing a very different function from the Archangel, this angel is likewise anything but gentle.

Suffice it to say, the appearance of an Archangel, or any angel for that matter, is foreign to us today. But what did this angelic reality mean for Mary and, additionally, what does this mean for us?

A few things seem especially apparent. First, it would seem that she knew from the history of her own people that angels, in fact, represent the presence of God. Simply, when an angel was present, it was because God had sent him in his [God's] place as his *mal'ak*. Second, it would seem that she would also know that angels usually say something awesome, though what they have to say is not always positive.⁴¹² Finally, it would seem that this is not always how we, today, envision the cherubs of movies and art.

So while the inclusion of ἰδοῦσα may not fully register with us, given our preconceived notion of angels, it is important nonetheless, precisely because a physical presence matters to human beings. We are, as Mary was, physical creatures and, therefore, we think through our bodies. For example, when we encounter a terrifying situation, we do not simply rationalise how terrifying it is, but our bodies react to the situation physically. Our hearts race, our breathing increases, and sometimes even our stomachs become upset. Though we are rational creatures, we are not *only* rational. One must wonder, therefore, if God knows this about us, would he not engage us on our level, both rationally and physically? And would this not be especially true for Mary?

⁴¹² See, for example, Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1998) and his chapter entitled 'Holy Angels as Messengers & Militants' (154-176).

In the past, of course, one will recall that it had been the Lord himself, speaking by his prophets, who told his beloved Daughter of Zion to rejoice with great joy over the salvation that he would bring by being present with and for his people.⁴¹³ And now, through the physical presence of his heavenly-sent messenger, he is telling his true Daughter of Zion, the Virgin Mary, that through his most sacred presence with her and for her – this time as God in the flesh – he will give her a reason to rejoice.

What the foregoing is attempting to demonstrate is that it may have quite possibly been the combination of sight and word, in the specificity of the annunciation event, which gave Mary reason to ‘be troubled at the saying’ and ‘to discern what sort of greeting this might be’ (Lk 1:29). This seems appropriate, particularly given the way in which the Lord had engaged his people previously: on the level of matter.

In fact, one will recall that upon Mount Horeb, it was not the voice of the Lord alone that convinced Moses of his impending action on Israel’s behalf, but it was the voice of the Angel of the Lord *combined* with the appearance of a flame of fire in the midst of a bush which moved Moses to deliver his people.⁴¹⁴ This combination of word, sight, and divine revelation stands in direct contradiction to the ancient cultic rites of mystery, where the god behind the mystery, though visible, often did not speak.⁴¹⁵ Hence, the

⁴¹³ Here, one will recall the words of Zechariah in the Benedictus: ‘[...] as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us’ (Lk 1:70-71).

⁴¹⁴ Exod 3:1-7.

⁴¹⁵ For this insight, I am indebted to John Kleinig.

phrase often applied to initiates of the cultic rites of mystery: 'Happy is he among men upon earth who has *seen*.'⁴¹⁶

Therefore, the words of the angelic greeting alone, contrary to the thinking of some prominent exegetical scholars such as Joseph Fitzmyer, do not appear to be the cause for Mary's perplexity. On the contrary, the words seem to be intended to calm her down, following her unnerving vision of the angel.⁴¹⁷ To that end, it was the combination of word and sight which was all to convincing for Mary and, as far as she was concerned, this encounter was for real, precisely because God had engaged her on her level.⁴¹⁸

The Adaptability of the Angel's Sermon

In the opening word of the angel's sermon to Mary (*χαίρει*), it is clear that there is already something going on with words, particularly when those words are captured in the context of a personal address. In some sense, the uniqueness of words is that they bear the constant possibility of a deeper meaning, even when that deeper meaning is not gleaned at first glance, but only upon further exposure to and participation in the words themselves. For example, when a husband tells his new wife he loves her, she may not recognize the full depth of those words until many years later, after having been exposed to those same words innumerable times.

⁴¹⁶ E.g. Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Loeb Classical Library, 1914), 480. The full text can be found online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/demeter.htm> (emphasis mine). The introduction online states that this hymn was composed approximately around the seventh century B.C. Moreover, it served as the canonical hymn of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

⁴¹⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX*, 346.

⁴¹⁸ The purpose of this discussion of Mary actually beholding the angel is to highlight the calming effect that the words were intended to have on her. So stunned by what she saw, would not the angel speak to Mary in simple words which would bring comfort and peace to her troubled soul?

I am well aware, however, that many contemporary scholars, particularly Protestant ones, would disagree with the proposal that Mary knew her place in salvation history based *solely* on the opening word of the annunciation. Moreover, I am aware that many scholars would also disagree with the proposal that Luke, in particular, somehow intended a deeper, more typological meaning with his retelling of the annunciation event, particularly that Mary embodied the role of the Daughter of Zion. I am not, however, demanding that either of those disagreed upon positions be accepted in full. On the other hand, where a wider consensus is more likely is in an understanding of words themselves being capable of serving as the foundation for the incarnational and, consequently, the sacramental.

Within the four gospels, for instance, the words of address are the particular context provided by the authors for the incarnation. Therefore, all of the gospels use words of address to precede the establishment of the incarnational event; an incarnational event which is, in essence, the deeper meaning present behind the words themselves.

John, for example, begins with a *new word*, the same one which brought creation into existence, but which now comes to that same creation with flesh and blood to tabernacle among us. Luke and Matthew both begin with Mary and her virginal conception of the Christ child by way of the angel's word (the former more explicitly). Mark seems to have a double first word. He begins his gospel with the proclamation: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1). Already, therefore, we know that Mark is writing a book, a

gospel, which will tell us of Jesus Christ and all that can be found in the robustness of his divine name. From there, however, he moves rather quickly to the baptism of Jesus, which appears to serve as a second distinguishing characteristic of the incarnation for his gospel. Of note, however, is that the baptism of Jesus in Mark's gospel is defined by the descent of the Holy Spirit *combined* with the Father's heavenly word. This epiclesis establishes the ministry of Jesus and is the starting point for Mark's gospel.

This priority of the *word* in the gospels demonstrates that there is something already in words which gives them a rather unique place in the story of Scripture: they bear the constant possibility of a deeper meaning, precisely because they are used by the evangelists to establish the incarnational event. But how do the opening words of the annunciation establish the incarnation for Mary and for us, and how might those establishments be different?

1. *Two Levels of Meaning*

If there is something to words, then a canonical reading (and by 'canonical' I am simply referring to the gospels as we have them in the Church today) of this annunciation text naturally pushes the hearer toward a more incarnational reading of the text and, consequently, toward a more sacramental reading of the text.⁴¹⁹ In short, the text of the canonical Gospels

⁴¹⁹ In reference to the 'canonical gospels,' I am not equating authorial intent with final meaning. Rather, the gospels, as we have them today in the canon of Scripture, may very well *not be* precisely (or in any way) what the authors intended to convey in their original context. There is value, however, in reading the gospels, not only from a purely historical perspective, but also in their canonical and ecclesial contexts. This particular understanding of canonical meaning (or criticism) finds its origin in the work of Brevard Childs. He describes

(especially Luke), ultimately pushes the reader to the event of the incarnation (the climax of the gospel), which is the fulfilment of all divine revelation, as God became man in the Word who became flesh. And in pushing the reader to the incarnation, the canon of Scripture mediates that Word made flesh to us through the living voice of the text, just as the angel's word did to Mary. And that mediation of the Word made flesh is utterly sacramental.

Therefore, if there is, in fact, something to words, particularly the words of the gospels, then with every passing read or listen, we are drawn into the deeper and richer meaning which they intend to mediate: the Word made flesh. And the uniqueness of such canonically read, incarnationally driven, and sacramentally received words is that they can be continually applied with specificity to people, places, and times.⁴²⁰

Particularly for Luke, what this means is that there is opportunity for him to accommodate the words of the angel to his immediate audience and, at the same time (and whether he knows it or not), to those audiences who would come reading his gospel after them. And this accommodation seems to reveal an inherent sacramentality behind the Word itself. For the sacramental character of the annunciation address from the angel to Mary is found, to a certain extent, in its ability to be read at any number of levels by

his approach this way: 'Interpretation begins with the canonical form of the text [...]. The move is obvious because to speak of the New Testament canon is to identify that corpus received as Scripture' (*The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* [London UK: SCM, 1984], 48).

⁴²⁰ Cf. Brown, *God and Mystery in Words*, 29. There, Brown makes a similar multi-level move within the Cana account of John 2.

any number of people, as the words (and the Word made flesh which they deliver) are continually accommodated to various audiences.

Yet, this sort of audience accommodation happens all the time, it would seem. A churchly example of how one comes to a deeper meaning might be the Christian's understanding of a simple meal. At a first level, meals are merely sustenance for the body. However, as one grows more deeply into the Christian life, particularly as that life is shaped and nourished by the Holy Eucharist, he or she will likely begin to see every meal as inherently Eucharistic; as not merely food for the body, but as a gathering of family around a common table with a common food for the common good of those present.⁴²¹ And the same appears to be true of words, particularly the words of the annunciation.⁴²²

At a *first level*, these openings words are meant merely to calm the poor, young, simple virgin.⁴²³ They are, it would seem, meant to relax her, ease her nervousness, and allow for a smooth delivery of the gifts. It is, very simply, an angelic 'Hello'. Moreover, at this first level, Mary does not appear to know the fullness of her place in redemption history, nor does she likely

⁴²¹ Cf. David Brown, *God of Grace and Body* (Oxford UK: Oxford, 2007), 120-184.

⁴²² Even within the Eucharist itself, a deeper, second level meaning is not always known at first glance. C.S. Lewis, for example, recounts his own struggle: 'For years after I had become a regular communicant I can't tell you how dull my feelings were and how my attention wandered at the most important moments. It is only in the last year or two that things have begun to come right - which just shows how important it is to keep on doing what you are told' (C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Children*, eds. Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead [New York NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996], 26).

⁴²³ While renowned Mariologists such as de la Potterie support a deeper, more typological meaning behind the angel's greeting, they would suggest that 'the Greek word "*chaire*" in effect can have two meanings. It can be a simple salutation [...], but it can also have a stronger meaning, a more pregnant meaning of an invitation to joy' (de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 55).

recognise the connection between the angel's call to 'Rejoice!' and the Daughter of Zion who, years before her, received that same imperative call. This same unfamiliarity with the fullness of the divine plan can even be seen twelve years later when Mary and Joseph went looking for the young boy, Jesus. As Luke records:

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" *And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.*⁴²⁴

Indeed, it is unrealistic to say that Mary was completely ignorant of the divine plan. Yet, it is equally as unrealistic to assert that 'by infused knowledge she received "the whole tract on the incarnation,"' as Laurentin notes that 'a pious author once wrote.'⁴²⁵ In other words, it is unhelpful to assert, as some have done, that the angel's words were fitting and effective *precisely because Mary knew that of which he spoke*. Sadly, however, it appears that some have followed in the wake of this 'pious author' in proposing a nearly supernatural understanding on the part of Mary.⁴²⁶

Manelli, for example, favourably cites Manuel Varón Varón who wrote that

Mary is profoundly acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures as she shows in her canticle, the Magnificat, and realizes that the angelic salutation contains a profound messianic mystery. Mary suddenly is brought face to face with the depth of the mystery, but she is not disoriented. Rather, she reflects. She does not lose

⁴²⁴ Lk 2:49-50 (emphasis mine). See Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, 31.

⁴²⁵ Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, 31.

⁴²⁶ See Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 43, where he proposes a similar reality to that discussed by Laurentin.

that inner poise which prudence gives her, and so she thinks before speaking.⁴²⁷

From this, Manelli concludes that Mary's 'familiarity with Sacred Writ must have allowed her quickly to grasp that the angelic greeting was the premise of something great to which she was being called.'⁴²⁸ Likewise, Judith Gentle, one of the most prominent Mariologists in the American Episcopal tradition asserts that

in the context of the Judaism of Our Lady's times, where all the Messianic prophesies had been pronounced, including those of the suffering Messiah by the prophet Isaiah, *the Blessed Virgin had to know*, deep in her heart, even without knowing all the details, that she was giving consent not only to the miraculous, virginal Incarnation of God the Son from her flesh but also to all the yet unknown aspects of His Messianic Mission.⁴²⁹

While the proposals made by Varón Varón, Manelli, and Gentle are intriguing to say the least, here I disagree with each of them, precisely because they do not remain faithful to the Biblical texts, and one need not look further than Lk 2:49-50, as previously cited, to witness this. Very simply, if Mary, along with Joseph, 'did not understand' what Jesus himself said to them, how much more would she not understand what the angel said to her?

Instead, throughout the gospel stories, there is with Mary, as with all Christians, a natural progression in self-awareness. What she did not recognise at the annunciation, she may well have recognised at the foot of the cross of her son. In other words, the more that she was in contact with the

⁴²⁷ Manelli, F.I., *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed*, 165-166, fn 34, translating and citing Manuel Varón Varón, *María en la Sagrada Escritura*, 44.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴²⁹ Judith Gentle, "'The Lord has Created a New Thing on the Earth,'" in *De Maria Numquam Satis*, eds. Judith Marie Gentle and Robert L. Fastiggi (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 2009), 21 (emphasis mine).

person of Christ, the deeper she understood her own special place in the economy of salvation. As the Venerable Bede wrote:

Consider the most prudent woman Mary, mother of true Wisdom, as the pupil of her Son. For she learned from him, not as from a child or man but as from God. Yes, she dwelt in meditation on his words and actions. Nothing of what was said or done by him fell idly on her mind. As before, when she conceived the Word itself in her womb, so now does she hold within her his ways and words, cherishing them as it were in her heart. That which she now beholds in the present, she waits to have revealed with greater clarity in the future. This practice she followed as a rule and law through all her life.⁴³⁰

This makes sense, of course, for ‘the divine words *grow together* with the one who reads them’ or, in this case, with the one who hears them.⁴³¹

Therefore, by means of this mediation of the divine Word, it is quite possible that Mary, looking back from the foot of the cross, would have seen herself in a new light – as the new and greater Daughter of Zion – simply by reflecting upon the angel’s call to ‘Rejoice!’ and all that she had seen and heard since that sacred moment in time. Very simply, her progression came about ‘in the course of her Son’s preaching.’⁴³² Her progression in self-awareness came about by way of the living voice of Jesus throughout his earthly life, which caused a deeper union to emerge between the speaker and the one spoken to. Yet, at the moment of the annunciation, it is inappropriate to assert the same.

⁴³⁰ Bede, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, 2.51 in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, trans. and ed. M. F. Toal (Chicago IL: Henry Regnery, 1958), 1:240. See also *Lumen Gentium*, VIII: II, 57-58 in Flannery, 83-84; Pope John Paul II, ‘Behold Your Mother: Mary in the Life of the Priest,’ 2 in *Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church*, ed. Marianne Lorraine Trouve (Boston MA: Pauline, 2001), 322; and Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, xix.

⁴³¹ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* I, VII, 8 in *PL* 76:843D, translated and cited in Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 55 (emphasis mine).

⁴³² *Lumen Gentium*, VIII: II, 58 in Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II* (Northport NY: Costello, 1982), 84.

Not unlike the fact that the Word was made flesh and 'was in every way made like men,' in order that he might relate uniquely to all men, the Holy Scriptures themselves have an innate adaptability which allows them to adapt to a given context or people 'with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature.'⁴³³ Therefore, the Scriptures are not intended for one specific moment or people in history. They are not merely given to one person, one audience, or one congregation. Instead, they are living, breathing, moving, and active. They are meant to be read in all places and throughout the entirety of human history. This means, of course, that the words recorded by Luke should naturally have meaning for us today as well. But how is the meaning for our present context different from the meaning which those words had for Mary?

From our contemporary perspective, having at our fingertips the fullness of Scripture's sacred story, it may well appear to our eyes and ears that there is more here than a calm encounter between an angel and a virgin. In other words, there may appear to be more for us than there was for Mary.

This *second level* of meaning is only understood, however, when we read Luke's account from the perspective of the Christian Church.⁴³⁴ Very simply, the angel's address to Mary was not merely an address to a poor,

⁴³³ *Dei Verbum* III: 13 and John Chrysostom 'In Genesis' 3, 8 (Homily 17, 1) in *PG* 53:134, translated and cited in *Dei Verbum* III: 13, respectively.

⁴³⁴ Roman Catholics might read this second level as the *sensus plenior*, or deeper sense of sacred scripture. This deeper sense was not necessarily intended by the original author, but it was intended by God. Raymond Brown describes the reality of the *sensus plenior*: 'That additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a Biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation' (Raymond Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* [S.T.D. dissertation, St. Mary's University, 1955], 92).

virgin girl, but also to a community of believers who, living in the aftermath of the cross and resurrection, have a clearer view of salvation history than even Jesus' own mother. Yet, this is not a bad thing. Rather, in this reality rests the beauty of the Lord's words: *Through them, God works at different kinds of levels!*

For us today, the opening address of the angel's annunciation bears with it the full range of messianic possibilities. In particular, it bears with it the fullness of God's promise to his beloved people, a promise which was embodied by the new and greater Daughter of Zion, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Moreover, the combination of word and sight which was so very startling for Mary, connects her today with the Daughter of Zion in an even deeper way than does the greeting standing alone. For when the Lord arrived in visible form (either in the person of his prophets or, in this case, the angel Gabriel) and began to speak, the one being spoken to was inevitably about to be caught up in the Lord's saving activity. Had there not been an angel, the words would have quite possibly appeared nonsensical, both for her and for us, for tangibly and visibly had been the Lord's former way of dealing with his people, particularly his Daughter of Zion. In turn, therefore, the recognition of her particular role as the new and greater Daughter of Zion comes precisely in the words which were spoken to her by the visible angel. With sight and word working together, there is every chance that *we* might

understand Mary to be the fulfilment of the prophecies of old and the embodiment of Israel, a fact which, no doubt, is cause for trembling.⁴³⁵

2. *A First Level of Meaning for Mary*

Since the foregoing is proposing that Mary was only privy to a first level of meaning, I would like to address the assertion often made by Catholic scholars that Mary's Immaculate Conception *directly correlates* to her perfect knowledge of the divine plan as preached by the angel. This is a correlation, it should be noted, which did not hold true for her own son who, though sinless, grew in 'wisdom' throughout his earthly life (Lk 2:40; 52).⁴³⁶ Schillebeeckx, however, in his more traditionalist days, attempted to do just that: connect Mary's knowledge of the divine plan, as announced by the angel, primarily to her Immaculate Conception. He wrote thus:

It can be no idle fancy or haphazard guess to presume that Mary, by reason of her immaculate state of grace, came to realize in and from the personal experience of her religious life that the inner messianic impulse of her people was rapidly drawing near to its fulfilment. [...] There was some element of it [the message] which, even before it was uttered, sought a way into Mary's heart.⁴³⁷

While this is a rather interesting theological move, particularly to argue for an understanding of the angel's message by Mary from the perspective of piety

⁴³⁵ See Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 43, citing Laurentin:

Her fear is removed, since the Lord is in her midst to save her. [...] 'Her fear comes not from lack of understanding nor from that small-hearted anxiety to which some would like to reduce it. It comes from the trepidation of that encounter with God, that immeasurable joy which can make the most hardened natures quake.'

⁴³⁶ It is a commonly held belief, particularly among Roman Catholics, that 'Mary in the first instant of her conception [...] was preserved free from all stain of original sin' (Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, 15). On the other hand, confessional Lutherans would confess Mary's sinfulness, though they would locate her absolution in the annunciation event, while not extending thereafter (Cf. Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 41, citing Chemnitz).

⁴³⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 55.

influenced and energized by her sinlessness, it appears, at first glance, to miss the theological mark.

This position, however, cannot be credited solely to the Roman Catholic tradition.⁴³⁸ Luther himself, in coming free of the perceived offences within the Roman Church, likewise taught that Mary was immaculately conceived through the special gift of a second conception: a purifying of her soul before it was joined to her body (a body which was created through a first conception: the union of her father and mother).⁴³⁹ Interestingly enough, Luther was so convincing in his argument for Mary's Immaculate Conception, at least early in his career, that the Spanish Franciscan friar, Pedro d' Alva y Astorga, actually cited Luther in defence of that doctrine.⁴⁴⁰ Later in his career, however, Luther gradually moved closer to the position explicated by Martin Chemnitz, particularly that Mary was a sinner, but was purified of her sin in the act of being granted the Holy Spirit at the annunciation.⁴⁴¹

Yet, if Schillebeeckx is right, and I do not believe he is, then Mary would be, in reality, the only person in all of history to have such an understanding, both of the Lord and herself. Consequently, however, this would appear to remove Mary from the whole of the human race in general, and the whole of the Christian Church in particular. No longer could she serve as a model for believers or an icon of sacramental hearing, for she would have previously received a special dispensation which enabled her to

⁴³⁸ For a helpful explanation of the Roman Catholic position on the matter of the Immaculate Conception, see Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 62-71.

⁴³⁹ WA 17:288.

⁴⁴⁰ Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 56, fn 136.

⁴⁴¹ See WA 52:39 and WA 53:640, from 1532 and 1543, respectively.

faithfully hear, to receive, and to live within the angel's message, which had not been given to anyone else. The rest of creation, it would then seem, could never be capable of such participation in the Lord's plan, particularly in the act of sacramental hearing.

Moreover, this particular understanding of Mary's Immaculate Conception, as advocated by Schillebeeckx, would eliminate the possibility for multiple levels of meaning within the text and, therefore, any particular meaning for the contemporary Christian Church, other than that which was originally found at the time of the annunciation. In other words, if the sinless Mary could comprehend everything in a first level way, what would lead anyone to believe that we – sinful humans – could comprehend anything more than that? Very simply, the perfect knowledge of an immaculate Mary is an impediment to the sacramental Word.

The opposite perspective from that of the aforementioned, however, is that Mary was a sinner (both originally and actually), and should be praised *solely on account of her faith* in the divine plan as announced by the angel. Interestingly, this is equally as subjective and, consequently, equally as troubling. Yet, it appears that some Lutheran fathers of the sixteenth century chose such a perspective, highlighting Mary's faith at the expense of her connection with her son, particularly her connection with his flesh.⁴⁴² This perspective, while standing in contrast to the classic Roman Catholic position,

⁴⁴² See Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 125, especially her brief look at Corvinus (1501-1553), who, no doubt, is representative of much of the Lutheranism which reacted against Rome, along with much of contemporary Lutheranism, which continues to be defined by what they do not agree with. See also Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 61.

unfortunately appears to run contrary to any notion of the sacramental, which comes to fruition, broadly speaking, by one's connection with the tangible touch of Jesus.⁴⁴³ One would expect the Lutheran fathers, however, who strove mightily for a sacramental theology driven by a robust Christology (where tangibility mattered), to have such an understanding of Mary's life.⁴⁴⁴ Unfortunately, though, the abstractness of faith was valued over the tangibility of Christ's touch.

Both errors – the error of Schillebeeckx, who promotes a perfect knowledge on account of an immaculate state, and the error of the Lutheran reformers, who praise Mary's faith over her connection with her son – fail to draw us closer to a sacramentality of the Word and preaching. The former has no need of an adaptable Word, while the latter has no need of a corporeal presence.

Conclusion

From the entirety of the foregoing (from the speaking to the hearing and to the meaning of it all), it should be clear that a new perspective on Mary needs to emerge, both within the Lutheran church and within the broader Church catholic. In particular, as I have mentioned, I would propose that this annunciation needs to be read on at least two levels, though possibly more. On a *first level*, Mary needs to be seen for who she truly is: a daughter of Israel who, while having possibly known the stories of promise and

⁴⁴³ This, of course, if Jesus is the primordial sacrament.

⁴⁴⁴ Mary, the model believer, is a key theme, especially for the sixteenth-century Lutheran fathers and, moreover, particularly in their interpretation of the annunciation (see Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 29).

deliverance in the Old Testament Scriptures, was spoken to in such a way as was befitting to her as a young virgin about to be granted a child outside of marriage. She was spoken to in a way that would calm her, relax her, and ease her fear, particularly as she stood in the presence of an awesome angel who, by being in her midst, indicated the presence of the divine. At a *second level*, however, we also need to be open to the possibility of hearing these same words *today*, primarily in light of *our* piety and *our* knowledge of salvation history. In other words, we need to be open to the possibility of hearing these words differently now than Mary did then. We need to be open to hearing these words as explicating more than a young, unwed mother, but instead the new and greater Daughter of Zion who embodies, in her womb, all of salvation history in the person of her son.

To that end, this double-level of meaning highlights the sacramentality of the Word of God and preaching, as opposed to diminishing it, for at least two reasons. First, a multi-level approach highlights the gracious activity of the Lord. In order to deliver his gifts to all people, the Lord speaks to them where they are at, delivering to them the 'medicine of immortality' in its proper dosage.⁴⁴⁵ Second (and this is the particular Marian principle that I am proposing), what leads to a deeper, second-level of understanding is precisely the taking in, the reception of the Word. The more one comes in contact with the Word's tangibility, the more one takes it in and consumes all it has got and, consequently, the more one comes to love and know those things which

⁴⁴⁵ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 20:2.

the Word contains. Just as a wine connoisseur has a sophisticated palate and can, therefore, taste and enjoy the intricacies of a good wine, while the inexperienced drinker is able only to tell that it *is* wine, so the mature Christian can rejoice in the fullness of the Lord's good gifts, while the one who is spiritually immature does not yet know the joys contained therein. Yet, both the delivery and the reception highlight the sacramentality of the word.

In sum, therefore, I would suggest that from our current perspective the opening word of the annunciation – 'Rejoice!' – does align Mary, at least to some extent, with the Daughter of Zion, even if she was not aware of such a connection. For in these opening words, she is being prepared to receive the Messiah in her womb, just as he had promised to dwell within his beloved people in days of old. Moreover, I would also suggest that these opening words reveal the innate adaptability of the Word of God. When the Lord spoke to Mary through the angel, he did so at her level and for her good. Likewise, when he speaks to us through his pastoral messengers, he does so at our level and for our good. And this adaptability, it would seem, highlights the sacramentality of the Word of God.

Chapter 5

Tangibility: Mary's Joyful Receptivity of the Angel's Sacramental Sermon

Introduction

In this fifth chapter, I explore how Luke presents the way in which the words of the angel are actually received by Mary, and their potential implications for a sacramental understanding of preaching. I examine three things in particular: Mary's question, the angel's sacramental response, and Mary's active and joyful *fiat*. Moreover, I observe how Mary is both a fulfilment of the creative act by receiving the 'Let there be' of creation and, also, a representation of the new and greater temple by bearing in her womb the Word of God. I then demonstrate how the words of the angel actually *deliver* the person of Jesus Christ, tangibly and corporeally. This tangibility and corporeality, I suggest, is indicative of the Word's inherent sacramentality. These sacramental words proclaimed by the angel, however, do not merely justify Mary (declaring her forgiven in the sight of God), but actually join her to the divine life of her Son by joining her flesh to his. Therefore, while the words of the angel are often interpreted as proclamation, I also explore how they might actually develop into a kind of preaching. To that end, I propose that the same sacramental Word of preaching today, taken in by us with joyful, optative receptivity, brings about in us a similar effect as it did in Mary: participation with the fullness of the person of Christ who is both human and divine (as explored in Chapter III). With this proposal, I look to the recent Finnish Lutheran scholarship for support. In particular,

with help from the Finnish work, I demonstrate that, contrary to popular opinion, Luther does, in fact, leave room for a more ontological understanding of the Christian's life and the Christian's participation in the divinity of the person of Christ. I also demonstrate, however, that while the Finnish work is extraordinarily helpful, they do not go far enough, leaving preaching out of their discussion. In turn, I conclude this chapter by explicating how preaching can, indeed, bring about divine participation between Christ and his hearers, just as it did for Mary, thereby providing a logical conclusion to the question of the Word's sacramentality.

The Climax of the Angel's Proclamation

If one were to examine the annunciation chiastically, one would see that at the centre of the chiasm stands Mary's question in response to the angel's greeting, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Lk 1:34), along with the angel's response, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Lk 1:35a).⁴⁴⁶ In some sense, therefore, the placement of Mary's question, along with the angel's answer, appears to be quite significant, insofar as these are likely the most important words of the entire annunciation event, standing at the centre of the chiasm. Before proceeding to the sacramentality of these words, however, we must first explore Mary's question.

Many attempts have been made to peer deeper into Mary's question, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Lk 1:34), somewhat in an effort to psychoanalyze her. Just what was she thinking? Was there something in her

⁴⁴⁶ See Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 63 for the chiastic structure of the annunciation.

past that led her to react to the angel in the way she did? Was she surprised by the angel's words? Was she angered by them?

Regardless of how profitable such an approach to the text may be, it is important to note some of the oft-cited conclusions. A few are as follows:⁴⁴⁷

- a) Mary's reaction is evidence of her vow of perpetual virginity;⁴⁴⁸
- b) Mary's reaction is seen as a protest, especially since she is engaged to be married, while knowing that the mother of the Lord is said to be a virgin;⁴⁴⁹
- c) Mary's reaction is seen as a demonstration of surprise;⁴⁵⁰
- d) or Mary's reaction is seen in the context of the past tense, particularly that she has, to date, not known a man (hence, the translation, 'since I have not known a man'), and yet believes that she is, at the moment of the angel's speaking, in fact pregnant.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ These are delineated from a rather exhaustive and well-explained list in Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX*, 348-350.

⁴⁴⁸ This is the most ancient interpretation, and it is also, classically, the position held by Roman Catholic exegetes (Ibid., 348). Interestingly, it was Augustine who first delineated Mary's vow of virginity from this particular text. Yet, as McHugh notes, 'Augustine makes it clear that he is giving his own inference from the text when he writes "Presumably (*profecto*) she would not say that, if she had not previously vowed her virginity to God.'" His use of the word *profecto* indicates for certain that he is giving his own opinion' (McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 446). Therefore, while Fitzmyer notes that this interpretation dates back to the fathers of the church, it should be duly noted that this mode of interpretation came simply by way of inference and not dogmatically; see also McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 64 and 173-187. Moreover, so far as Judaism was concerned, there was little to no place for virginity or consecrated virgin life like there was in the vestal virgins of the Rome. Rather, Jewish men and women were and are defined by marriage. To that end, there are historical problems with this approach.

⁴⁴⁹ Fitzmyer notes that this interpretation 'depicts Mary as a pious Israelite' who was 'aware of the import of the Isaian prophecy, that a virgin would be the mother of the Messiah [...] Hence her perplexity' (Ibid., 349).

⁴⁵⁰ Fitzmyer suggests that this interpretation 'is the best of the four psychological interpretations,' yet 'it tends to obscure the future tense that the angel used in v. 32 and will use in v. 35' (Ibid., 349-350).

⁴⁵¹ Fitzmyer notes that 'this interpretation would mean that Mary understood the angel to mean that she was already pregnant' (Ibid., 350).

To a certain extent, each of these possibilities has some value attached to it. Interestingly enough, the one that appears to be the most unhelpful is the first, particularly that Mary had previously made a vow of virginity, and by way of her question, she was expressing her desire to follow through on that vow for the remainder of her earthly life.⁴⁵²

The second possibility is helpful, insofar as it highlights Mary's piety, something which was explored in the foregoing. Indeed, if she knew the stories of the Old Testament Scriptures, she would have certainly known that the Lord's mother was to be a virgin. The protesting then ensued, the line of thought goes, when she realized that she was both engaged to be married (which normally presumes that one would not remain a virgin) and, at the same time, engaged to be the Lord's mother. It should be noted however, that the oft-cited Is 7:14 does not suffice to guarantee a virgin birth in the way we understand Mary's to have been. In Isaiah's immediate context, any virgin, with the help of a man, could have become pregnant. Therefore, a virgin very easily could have conceived and bore a son. It was not, at least it would not seem, until Matthew encountered the person of Christ that he could read Mary's virgin birth back into Is 7:14 as a fulfilment of that particular text. A two-level of meaning approach, however, would seem to eliminate this possibility from consideration altogether, particularly because there is no evidence that an ordinary Jewish girl would have been capable of reading the Old Testament stories, nor is there evidence that, even if she was capable, she

⁴⁵² I am in no way attempting to discount the perpetual virginity of Mary. Rather, I am simply stating that her question alone does not appear to be reason to confess the *semper virgo*.

would have been privileged to do so. In other words, while she certainly may have heard the stories, she likely did not have them at her fingertips.

As for the third possibility, Fitzmyer may be right. It does, in fact, look to be the best of the four interpretations, at least psychologically speaking. It is helpful, in particular, because it highlights the rhetoric of the angel within the sermon of the annunciation, particularly the rhetoric of humour.

Therefore, to the angel's promise of what is to come, Mary, almost as though with a smile on her face and a chuckle in her voice, begs the question: 'Wait one minute. I'm going to become pregnant? How can this be? I am only a young girl and I am only betrothed. Our wedding is not for a few months!' Consequently, just as it was with the exchange between Jesus and rich young man, here, too, humour appears to reveal something of the speaker and the hearer. While the angel could have zapped Mary into pregnancy, he instead chooses to speak to her, to engage her, and possibly even to humour her.

The fourth possibility, which casts Mary's reaction in the past tense, seems rather unlikely, especially given the future tense of the words both preceding and following Mary's question, as helpfully noted by Fitzmyer.

While the best interpretation of Mary's question may be that of surprise, it goes without saying that her question, in and of itself, appears to be free of scepticism.⁴⁵³ While Mary may be surprised or humoured, it does not appear that she has come to the point of doubt or disbelief. Rather, as

⁴⁵³ Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 63.

mentioned previously, it appears that she, to a certain extent, has begun to recognize the reality of this physical encounter with the angel and his sermon.

Sacramental Speech

To Mary's question, the angel speaks the central and defining words of the annunciation event: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God' (Lk 1:35).⁴⁵⁴ Instantly, it appears that there are multiple images at work here, two of which are important for our study: the image of creation and the image of the temple.⁴⁵⁵

1. *Fulfilment of the Creative Act*

The first half of the angel's words, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you,' direct our attention back to the first instance of the Spirit's appearing. It was at creation, when the earth was formless and void and darkness held sway, that the Spirit of God was said to be 'hovering over the face of the waters' (Gen 1:2b), serving as 'the source of life.'⁴⁵⁶ When the Lord was doing his creating, therefore, the position proper to the Spirit was that of *hovering over*. That was, however, the Lord's old creation. With the incarnation of Jesus, the Lord was beginning the process of making all things new and, thus far, Mary has been an integral part of that process, as displayed especially in the opening word of the annunciation: 'Rejoice!' To that end, the angel's

⁴⁵⁴ See McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 56: 'Gabriel's words in Lk 1:35 are the most momentous in his message.' See also Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 87.

⁴⁵⁵ See Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 43-44.

⁴⁵⁶ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 56-57. Obviously, this same position of the Spirit can be seen in the work of the Old Testament prophets as well.

announcement of the position of the Spirit 'characterizes the event as a new creation,' coming up out of the old, but leading toward a new and better one to come.⁴⁵⁷

There is no doubt that while this new creation will not come to full realisation until the return of Jesus in glory, there are points along the way where it appears to be coming with more force. One of those points is the resurrection of Jesus, particularly when the resurrection is seen in light of the significance of the eighth day, the day often referred to as the day of the new creation. Yet, this annunciation is one of those points along the way as well. In other words, all that creation was intended to be, at last finds its gracious reception in the person of Mary, as the Holy Spirit hovers over her, just as he did the waters of creation.⁴⁵⁸

2. *New and Greater Temple*

The second reference in this defining section of the angel's sermon is to the power of the Most High who will overshadow Mary. Like the previous reference to the Holy Spirit hovering over Mary, this, too, seems to direct our eyes and ears back to another defining moment in Christian history, particularly the presence of the Lord as he overshadowed the temple.

Here, it is important to note two things. First, in the Greek Old Testament, words meaning 'to overshadow' are very rare, though when they

⁴⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 44.

⁴⁵⁸ There is also a sense in which the Lord can be seen hovering over the people of Israel in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (see Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 69). While this is not the primary image which is evoked by the angel's words, it is indeed a secondary image. It becomes a bit more primary, however, if one does, in fact, see Mary as the Daughter of Zion, the embodiment of Israel.

do occur, they almost always refer to God's presence.⁴⁵⁹ Second, the verb employed here by the angel, ἐπισκιάσει, is the same word used in the Septuagint's translation of Exod 40:34-35, where the cloud overshadowed (ἐπεσκίαζεν) the tabernacle, while at the same time, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (and where the Lord's glory was present, there the Lord was simultaneously present for his people). Therefore, given the rarity of the word in the Septuagint, along with its use here, some consideration of a connection between Mary and the temple must naturally be granted.

With the foregoing, this second image employed by the angel, where Mary has been promised a share in the Lord's overshadowing presence, appears to connote the fact that she is, in some sense, 'the sacred tent [temple/tabernacle] over whom God's hidden presence becomes effective.'⁴⁶⁰ And if that is indeed the case, then suddenly, with a spoken word – a sermon – Mary has been both *declared* and *made* a place of God's salvific presence.⁴⁶¹ What the Lord did in the temple, one will recall, was visit his people for the primary purpose of delivering his gifts. And it appears from the foregoing that the Lord, through the angel, is declaring to Mary (and to the rest of creation) that he will once again visit his people, precisely on account of what he is about to do *in Mary*.⁴⁶² Consequently, the old temple, 'the space delineated by Israel to accommodate the presence of God is finally reduced

⁴⁵⁹ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 59.

⁴⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 44.

⁴⁶¹ See Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 88.

⁴⁶² McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 58.

and expanded to Mary's womb, the container of Immanuel.⁴⁶³ The Lord declares it and the Lord does it.

Taking this line of thought (particularly that the angel's words are meant to connect Mary with the temple of old and, moreover, that she is connected therein precisely because the Lord will now be dwelling *in her*), it appears logical to also connect Mary with the Ark of the Covenant, as that is the specific location of the Lord *within the temple*.⁴⁶⁴ Jenson makes the helpful observation that the uniqueness of the Ark was that it contained the Word of God in *written form*, and the Word of God, in written form, is itself unique because 'the character of written documents [...] is that, unlike speech per se, they occupy space.'⁴⁶⁵ What is unique about the annunciation, therefore, is that the oral word, which had previously been perceived as place-less, now occupies a place in the womb of the Virgin, just as it did in the womb of the Ark. For it is precisely in the sermon of the angel, accompanied by the overshadowing of the Most High, that the Word made flesh appears, and takes his place within 'the Container of the Uncontainable,' Mary, the Most Blessed Virgin and Mother of God.⁴⁶⁶ And, lest one think this is simply a

⁴⁶³ Robert W. Jenson, 'A Space for God' in *Mary, Mother of God*, 55.

⁴⁶⁴ The imagery of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant can be seen in the Litany of Loretto (see Jenson, 'A Space for God,' 51, fn 1 and McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 56, both of which reference this litany). For an explanation of how the Visitation of Mary with Elizabeth furthers this notion of Mary as Ark, see McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 61-63, especially fn 8 and Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 72. For a contrary opinion, see *Mary in the New Testament*, 132-134.

⁴⁶⁵ Jenson, 'A Space for God,' 55. Here, Jenson also notes that 'a book of law or prophecy is the very Word of God taking up space. Thus to this day a Torah-scroll is sacred space in Judaism.'

⁴⁶⁶ This title for Mary comes from the icon of the Virgin of the Sign (often abbreviated on the icon). Jenson suggests that the most accurate translation of the Greek inscription would be: 'the space embracing that which can be encompassed by no space' (Ibid., 51). For an Eastern Orthodox perspective, see also *Stichera of the Annunciation* in *The Festal Menaion*,

Roman Catholic idea [though Jenson is a Lutheran], the same imagery can also be found in the 17th century Anglican poet George Herbert, who beautifully refers to Mary as ‘the cabinet where the jewel lay.’⁴⁶⁷

Given the foregoing, it can be said that Mary is, at least from the perspective of the Old Testament, when coupled with the angel’s sermon, a picture of creation and, moreover, the temple, the ark, and, consequently, every Christian church building, precisely because within each of the latter three, the Lord was and is present for his people at every hour of every day.⁴⁶⁸ Yet, it is within the church building that we, too, are identified. For it is within the church building that God comes to enter, not only into sacred space, but also into sacred people. To that end, Mary will thus not only serve as the dwelling place for the Lord and an icon of the church building, but she will also serve as an icon of the faithful who dwell therein and receive as a gift the presence of her son. Very simply, Mary is an icon of the church (building) and the Church (faithful). And if Mary stands as an icon of the Church, then what goes for her should also go for us.⁴⁶⁹ And Mary is primarily a hearer, one in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily by way of the word spoken into her ear.

trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware (London UK: Faber, 1969), 459: “Rejoice! You shall conceive him whom the world cannot contain; he shall be contained within your womb.”

⁴⁶⁷ George Herbert, ‘To All Angels and Saints,’ line 15 in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Tobin (London UK: Penguin, 1991), 71.

⁴⁶⁸ As such, Joseph ‘thus becomes the icon of the bishop, to whom the bride is betrothed,’ and to whom is given the care and protection of the Church (Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 88). The same can be seen in the Litany of St. Joseph, which concludes by calling him the ‘Protector of Holy Church.’

⁴⁶⁹ See Cyril of Alexandria’s sermon at the Council of Ephesus of 431 (Cyril of Alexandria, Homily 4 in *PG* 77, 996).

Mary's Response

While textually it would seem obvious now to discuss the implications of the angel's words, particularly the delivery of the person of Christ, along with both the declaratory and participatory motifs, it appears to be more helpful to proceed to Mary's response, prior to working through the effect that these words had both on her and in her.⁴⁷⁰

In the interim between the angel's words and Mary's response, it was as though the entire cosmos was on edge, just waiting to hear what Mary had to say. Bernard of Clairvaux attempted to capture that moment this way: 'The angel awaits an answer. [...] Give, O Virgin, the response in haste. O Lady, answer the word that earth, that hell, that heaven awaits. [...] Oh, what if he should pass by while you hesitate? [...] Arise, run, open!'⁴⁷¹ And to the angel's unimaginably gracious words of offer, Mary gave her 'Yes', her *fiat*, her personal consent. It was a simple set of words: 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word,' (Lk 1:38) which yet bore profound significance for the history of salvation. For Mary's 'Yes', that 'priceless jewel,' was a profound demonstration of faithfulness toward all that the Lord was doing in her, through her, and for her, for the life of the world.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ This is especially important as the effect that the word had upon Mary is the central and defining point of this dissertation. It is one that has been wholly neglected in the various works on both preaching and the annunciation. Therefore, it should be given pride of place and allowed to stand on its own later.

⁴⁷¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In laudibus Virginis Matris Hom.* IV, 8 in *PL* 183, 83-84 (translation mine).

⁴⁷² Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 69.

And therein rests the primary point of *Mary's activity* within the annunciation event.

The angel simply revealed to her the divine choice of becoming the Mother of the Son of God and Messiah Savior. Mary, on her part, *actively accepted with full freedom*, after being informed of the modalities according to which she would have to realize the divine will, and only after having pondered and evaluated the words of the heavenly messenger.⁴⁷³

The gracing and the gifting of a Son were the Lord's doing and his alone. But Mary said 'Yes', and in saying 'Yes' to the Lord's unimaginable offer, the knot of Eve's corruption was suddenly being untied.⁴⁷⁴ In other words, because Eve actively engaged the fallen angel's words and gave her 'Yes' to them, so Mary needed to actively engage the living angel's words and give her 'Yes' to them as well.

So the question must be asked: Is there more here than Mary's submission to the Lord's plan? Might there also be a picture of God himself (who he is and how he works) contained within Mary's simple response? Moreover, might there also be a picture of how the entirety of creation (one which was brought into existence with a 'Let there be') is being renewed and restored in the humble 'Let it be unto me' of Mary?

⁴⁷³ Settimio M. Manelli, 'The Virgin Mary in the New Testament,' in *Mariology*, 74 (emphasis mine).

⁴⁷⁴ See Judith Marie Gentle, *Jesus Redeeming in Mary* (Bay Shore NY: Montfort, 2003), 24: 'By recirculation, Irenaeus saw that it is also God's plan that the process of restoration must correspond inversely to that of the fall, somewhat as a knot is untied.' Irenaeus described the process of recirculation this way: 'Thus [...] the back-reference from Mary to Eve, because what is joined together could not otherwise be put asunder than by inversion of the process by which these bonds of union had arisen; so that the former ties be cancelled by the latter, that the latter may set the former again at liberty' (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 22.4).

1. *The Way of the Lord: Freedom through Grace*

When talking of Mary, it is always best to begin with the Lord. As demonstrated, he is the one who initiated this annunciation event; he is the one who graced Mary to the full; and he is the one who is about to give Mary her son. Yet, even within the 'Yes' of Mary, we can see that the Lord is still the one who makes the first move, bringing Mary graciously into the fullness of joy and the freedom necessary to make her choice. This means, of course, that the entirety of the annunciation event, and particularly the delivery of Jesus into Mary's flesh, happens not by force, but as a gift. It is freely offered and, as will be shown, joyfully received. Before proceeding, however, it is important to note that there appear to be at least two possible ways in which to read this portion of the text, both of which provide their own unique set of troubles.

On the one hand, some might be rather unwilling to attribute any action within the milieu of the Christian life to the Christian and, consequently, are quite unwilling to attribute any action to Mary within the milieu of the annunciation. This makes the annunciation event, in some sense, an act of complete and utter divine monergism. The Lord is the divine puppeteer, as it were, and Mary is merely his puppet. And in reality, this makes her (and us) somewhat sub-human when it comes to the reception of this angelic sermon. Consequently, allowing this line of thought to drive the annunciation makes Mary merely (and only) a vessel. Very simply, the Lord had need of flesh, hers would do, and so he put his Son into her womb for her

to carry to term. Therefore, the angel's sermon becomes an assertion, and Mary's *fiat* becomes one of utter passivity and utter enslaved obedience. She is nothing more than a surrogate mother, forced to carry the Son of God. To that end, Mary's *fiat* is often read this way:

This is neither a prayer that what has been foretold may take place, nor an expression of joy at the prospect. Rather, it is an expression of *submission*, -- 'God's will be done' [...]. Mary must have known how her social position and her relations with Joseph would be affected by her being with child before her marriage [...] and what likelihood was there that he would believe so amazing a story?⁴⁷⁵

One can be fairly certain that reformed theologians from the school of Karl Barth, particularly early Barth, would likely adhere to the aforementioned interpretation of the *fiat*. Barth himself, in fact, described the incarnation this way:

Man is involved [in the incarnation] in the form of Mary, but involved only in the form of the *virgo Maria*, i.e., only in the form of non-willing, non-achieving, non-creative, non-sovereign man, only in the form of man who can merely receive, merely be ready, merely let something be done to and with himself. This human being, the *virgo*, becomes the possibility, becomes the mother of God's Son in the flesh. It is not, of course, that she is this; but she becomes it. And she does not become it of her own capacity; she acquires capacity by the act of the Son of God assuming flesh. It is not as though this non-willing, non-achieving, non-creative, non-sovereign, merely ready, merely receptive, virgin human being as such can have brought anything to the active God as her own, in which her adaptability for God consists.⁴⁷⁶

How does Barth reach this conclusion? As McGrath explains:

⁴⁷⁵ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh UK: T. & T. Clark, 1922), 26 (emphasis Plummer's).

⁴⁷⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*, (Edinburgh UK: T&T Clark, 1956), 191-192. Here, Barth also explains Mary's virginity as that which 'can merely receive.'

Barth [...] totally inverts the cognitive structure of the God-man relation, as expressed by the liberal school, insisting that man must be regarded as an *object* to whom the divine subject addresses his Word. By emphasizing man's passivity and God's activity [...], Barth believes it is possible to exclude *anthropological* considerations altogether from theology.⁴⁷⁷

For Barth, God's work is God's work, and man plays no part in what God does. In terms of the annunciation, therefore, the Lord appears to be working by force, and Mary's 'Yes' appears to flow from fear and subservience, rather than from joy and freedom.⁴⁷⁸

Barth, however, is not solely responsible for this perspective. In fact, as Beth Kreitzer has demonstrated, this perspective of Marian passivity was one of the primary outcomes of the Reformation and, particularly, a product of Lutheranism. As Kreitzer noted, in the preaching of the Lutheran Reformers, Mary was deemed nothing more than the "'instrument" of God's work.'⁴⁷⁹ Consequently, Mary became even 'less important than the church that she represents.'⁴⁸⁰

What this first possibility fails to recognize, however, is the energizing power of grace: that following a Christological touch, the human will is once again free. In other words, when someone is graced by God, their humanity, previously bound by sin, is suddenly freed to cooperate, to a greater or lesser degree, in the redeeming work of the Lord. For, when God works on sinners, there is a renewed capacity within human beings to receive his Word and use

⁴⁷⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology* (Oxford UK: Oxford, 1986), 103.

⁴⁷⁸ According to Barth, only God possesses true freedom (see Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 191).

⁴⁷⁹ Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 135.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

it well.⁴⁸¹ This is primarily a distinction between *being forgiven* and *living forgiven*. Having been graced, Mary is forgiven. Yet, having been forgiven, Mary is now free to live forgiven. And part of her living forgiving is to say 'Yes' to holy things, not least of which is bearing the Son of God.⁴⁸²

The second possibility for reading this text, it appears, is to allow Mary so much freedom in the act of receiving her son that the annunciation event becomes her verb and her verb *alone*. As one who may grant such freedom, Schillebeeckx notes that Mary's *fiat* was 'the first case of explicit and free consent to the specifically *Christian* plan of redemption.'⁴⁸³ While Schillebeeckx places the emphasis on 'Christian', it seems as though it should actually be placed on 'free', for as he later notes: 'The *fiat* was *first and foremost* Mary's explicit appropriation of the Christian aspect of her own personal redemption. Her free acceptance of divine motherhood [...] was [...] her own sublime "subjective redemption."⁴⁸⁴ It is rather clear that for Schillebeeckx the verbs belong, first and foremost, to Mary. This is especially the case, and

⁴⁸¹ Trevor A. Hart, 'A Capacity for Ambiguity? The Barth-Brunner Debate Revisited' in *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993), 301.

⁴⁸² This change in perspective took place, primarily, within the context of the Reformation. As Kreitzer has noted: 'Because of the theological changes inaugurated by Luther and the social conservatism of the Lutheran clergy, Mary could no longer be portrayed as an active figure, but rather must serve as a passive representative of the faithful Christian' (*Redeeming Mary*, 25). One should see also de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 314, where he cites Luther: 'Whether it were the justification of each one of the faithful or the coming-down of the Word among us that was in question, it seemed to them [Reformers] equally clear that we should believe that everything takes place "by the grace of God alone and the sole working of the Holy Spirit, without any human action."' Further, as de Lubac notes, one can find the theological equivalent to the aforementioned section from Luther currently 'among his spiritual descendants' (*ibid.*). However, any perspective on Mary which limits or eliminates her participation fails to recognize the Eve/Mary typology. Eve brought condemnation to the world by her action. Mary, it would seem, brought redemption to the world *by her action* (See Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 39).

⁴⁸³ Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 69 (emphasis Schillebeeckx').

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 70 (emphasis mine).

understandably so, if one proposes that Mary was, in fact, immaculately conceived, as Schillebeeckx no doubt would and did. For lacking the stain of original sin, it is said that Mary also lacked a will that was bound by that inherited transgression, as 'anyone affected in some way by original sin would be incapable of such a guileless openness to every disposition of God.'⁴⁸⁵ Mary, therefore, was whom Eve was created and intended to be, which included the ultimate freedom of choice. This line of thinking is summed up rather succinctly in the following from Schillebeeckx:

The objective gift of her immaculate conception and the subjective holiness corresponding to her immaculate conception – her virgin state of openness – [...] prepared the way for the central, sublime event of the Annunciation within the plan of the gradual unfolding, in history, of the mystery of the Redemption.⁴⁸⁶

It was, therefore, *her doing* which brought about this great act of mercy, both for herself and for the entire world, and her *fiat* is evidence of that fact.

This second possibility, however, fails to recognize the ongoing destructive power of sin and the necessity of divine love: that even following a Christological touch, it is the Lord who lovingly and continually forgives us toward a life of active service. Pope Benedict XVI, who shares a similar theological starting point as Schillebeeckx, seems to endorse a more Christological reading of the *fiat*, similar to what I have attempted above. He writes that:

⁴⁸⁵ Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 105.

⁴⁸⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 70-71. It should be noted that Schillebeeckx' rather extreme theological position is related to his push for Mary to be declared 'co-redemtrix,' a position which he later held with less force following Vatican II.

The dogma of Mary's freedom from original sin is at bottom meant solely to show that it is not a human being who sets the redemption in motion by her own power; rather, her Yes is contained wholly within the primacy and priority of divine love, which already embraces her before she is born.⁴⁸⁷

While I disagree with Pope Benedict XVI, in so far as he understands, *by necessity*, the Immaculate Conception as the starting point for Mary's freedom, I agree with the primary theological point which he is trying to make: that Mary's *fiat* is a result of divine love having had its way with her.⁴⁸⁸ It is God first and Mary second, but it is Mary nonetheless.

Given the two foregoing possibilities, it is helpful at this point to observe two things. First, the Lord did the verbs, and in doing the verbs, he *graced* Mary, just as he had done to her throughout her life up until the moment of the annunciation. Second, the primary intention behind the Lord's doing of the verbs and Mary's having been graced, is that she be freed to 'Rejoice!' and, in her rejoicing, to give her 'Yes' to this eternal plan of redemption. Any interpretation of this particular section of the annunciation which fails to incorporate both the passivity and activity of Mary within the annunciation, fails to hit to the theological mark, or so it would appear from text.

To that end, it is vitally important to note the translation of Mary's *fiat* in Luke's account of the annunciation. The verb, γένοιτό, or, 'let it be,' is

⁴⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 89.

⁴⁸⁸ Pope Benedict XVI's secondary theological point, that this divine love is bestowed through Mary's Immaculate Conception, need not be asserted, for it removes Mary from the whole of creation and, in effect, narrows the reach of divine love which he is trying hard to prove.

rather unique in this instance.⁴⁸⁹ On other occasions, when this same verb is used, it is often translated as an aorist imperative, which bears with it the connotation of ‘submissive resignation.’⁴⁹⁰ Thus, if the verb was translated here in the imperative, it would appear that the Lord is doing this by force, and Mary is resigning herself to that fact. Yet, this passage from Luke is actually translated in the optative, which comes from the Latin word, *optare*, meaning ‘a wish or desire,’ and connotes an attitude of hopefulness and earnestness.⁴⁹¹ As de la Potterie has noted:

The resonance of Mary’s “fiat” at the moment of the Annunciation is not that of the “*fiat voluntas tua*” of Jesus in Gethsemane, nor that of a formula corresponding to the Our Father. [...] The “fiat” of Mary is not just a simple acceptance and even less, a resignation. It is rather a joyous desire to collaborate with what God foresees for her. It is the joy of total abandonment to the good will of God. Thus the joy of this ending responds to the invitation to joy at the beginning.⁴⁹²

Consequently, this appears to demonstrate that any translation of Mary’s *fiat* which highlights, particularly, her servitude, almost to the point of displaying a lack of humanity, should be questioned and possibly

⁴⁸⁹ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 75.

⁴⁹⁰ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 65. E.g. The Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:10; Lk 11:2 [KJV]) and the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:42).

⁴⁹¹ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 75 and McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 65, respectively. See also Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, 76:

In γένοιτο we have one of the few optatives that are found in the Koine, it is here the optative of wish: ‘may it be to me.’ It is thus volitive – Mary wills that what the angel has said to her may come to pass [...] in exact accord with the utterance [...] that has fallen from his lips. This is holy submission, mighty confidence, blessed readiness – all of this in one so young.

As for the use of the optative, see James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar* (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 263: ‘The chief usage of the optative in the New Testament concerns *wishes*. It is used as a main verb of a clause to express a strong desire’ (emphasis Voelz’).

⁴⁹² de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 75.

disregarded (e.g. the Lutheran Reformers and Karl Barth).⁴⁹³ Contrarily, any translation which highlights Mary's self-interest, particularly on account of her utter freedom in the matter, should also be questioned and possibly disregarded (e.g. Schillebeeckx), for it would be hard to imagine her finding such joy and delight and, especially, wishful thinking, if she were already envisioning herself as the cause of such great news.

Instead, the delivery of a child into Mary's flesh by way of her ear happens not by force, but by grace. And in being graced, Mary is free to give her 'Yes' to the Lord's divine plan. For 'he [the Lord] does not simply employ his power to command. [...] To be sure, Mary's Yes is wholly grace. [...] Yet grace does not cancel freedom; it creates it.'⁴⁹⁴ And this reality, in particular, highlights the inherent sacramentality of this event: it is a free and gracious gift, freely given by a *viva vox*, and freely and joyfully received *in the flesh*.

In sum, within the annunciation event, the Lord provides Mary with an unimaginable offer: to bear in her body the body and blood of the Messiah. Moreover, it is in the very act of gracing her and forgiving her that he grants her the freedom to give her own 'Yes' to that plan. Indeed, on the far side of the passive reception of grace is the energy to live a life of redeemed activity for the good of the Lord and his Church. It appears that Mary has been energised in such a way. Therefore, the gracing is the Lord's verb and the living within that grace-filled life of 'Yes' is Mary's verb.

⁴⁹³ See McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 66.

⁴⁹⁴ Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 89-90.

It goes without saying, however, that if Mary had chosen to say ‘No’, the Lord would have had to find another virgin. Yet, at the same time, saying no appears to be out of the question for her, precisely because the offer is so great. It is, therefore, not as though she is without a choice in the matter (force), but it is as though the choice is so obvious and so wonderful that one cannot imagine her choosing anything else (gift). For all of that, she is anxious and eager and hopeful and full of joy, rounding out rather nicely the entire annunciation event, which began with the call for her rejoicing!⁴⁹⁵

2. *The Way of Mary: Receiving the ‘Let there be’ of Creation*

The foregoing parallels rather nicely my proposed reading of the creation account in Chapter I of this thesis. There, one will recall, I proposed that one possibility for reading the Gen 1 narrative was to understand it as a conversation between the Father and the Son. In particular, as the Father spoke to the Son, the Son received into his possession that of which was spoken to him by his Father. And the Father spoke, one will recall, within the particularity of the words, ‘Let there be.’ In the Septuagint’s rendering, the word used for ‘let there be’ is γενηθήτω, which is an aorist imperative, connoting a command toward action.⁴⁹⁶ In other words, in his speaking, the Lord is doing what he says: he is creating and, in his creating, he is delivering that creation to his Son as a gift. Interestingly, however, this is the same word which Mary employs in her answer to the angel, yet she does so in the optative mood, connoting a wish or deep desire.

⁴⁹⁵ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 67.

⁴⁹⁶ See Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 215, 217.

It is also worth noting that the Lord spoke this command, 'Let there be,' *eight times* within the account of the creation.⁴⁹⁷ This, no doubt, bears with it the connotation of the new creation, represented by the number eight. Moreover, it is this number, in theological thinking, which is thoroughly eschatological, proving, in some sense, to have no end.⁴⁹⁸ In essence, therefore, it appears that the creative word of the Lord, his 'Let there be,' is a word and an action which also has no end. Very simply, the Lord continues to create with a word until the fullness of the new creation is realized and a creative word is no longer necessary.

And if the foregoing is indeed the case, then it also appears as though Mary, with her own 'Let it be unto me,' her own optative, is joyfully receiving the eight times spoken 'let there be' of creation: the sacramental speaking of realities which carries on to this very day. In other words, if it is a possibility that at creation the Father spoke to the Son and gave possession of the world to him as a gift, then might it be equally possible that in the speaking of the angel to Mary, the angel gave possession of that which he spoke to her? And if it is true that the angel, in his speaking, gives possession of the Christ to

⁴⁹⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 22. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Waco TX: Word, 1987), 6. Here, Wenham lists the verses which bear the command to 'let there be' within the narrative of Genesis 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26.

⁴⁹⁸ For instance, Jesus' resurrection occurs on the eighth day, which means that his resurrection, and that particular resurrection day, will not cease. It is always and forever the eighth day. See also Just Jr., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 959 where he notes the following connection between creation and resurrection, particularly the interplay between the first day and the eighth day:

Since light was created and separated from darkness *on the first day* of creation (Gen 1:1-5), *viewing the resurrection from the perspective of darkness and light would enhance the thesis that in Lk 24:1 the evangelist is introducing 'the first day of the week' as the eschatological, eighth day, which ushers in the new creation represented by the new week* (emphasis Just's).

Mary, then it is as though the perfect command of creation ('Let there be'), so broken by the transgression of Adam and Eve, is being put back together and carried to eschatological fulfilment in the annunciation and, particularly, in Mary's *fiat* ('Let it be unto me'), her reception of what was intended at creation. She is, very simply, actively engaged in reversing the curse of the first Virgin, Eve. To that end, Mary embodies all of humanity, standing firm where Eve (the mother of the living) stumbled. Moreover, it is as though creation itself is being renewed, restored, and recreated into what it was intended by the Lord to be within the particularity of the womb of Mary, in the particularity of the person of Jesus, in the particularity of the angel's sermon, and in the particularity of Mary's *fiat*.

The Tangibility of the Angel's Sermon

Having heard the angel's sermon and witnessed Mary's reaction, what precisely is going on in her womb? In other words, just what is it of which she is taking possession? It will be most beneficial to examine a passage from Luther which, while lengthy, sets the stage nicely for an examination of the particular gift delivered through the *viva vox*.

Luther, in discussing the power of the voice to bring about the sacramental realities, particularly the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, turns to the annunciation for Biblical support. He wrote thus:

Now see, as I have said, how much the poor bodily voice is able to do. First of all, it brings the whole Christ to the ears; then it brings him into the hearts of all who listen and believe. Should it then be so amazing that he enters into the bread and wine? Is not the heart much more tenuous and elusive than bread? You will probably not attempt to fathom how this comes about. Just

as little as you are able to say how it comes about that Christ is in so many thousands of hearts and dwells in them--Christ as he died and rose again--and yet no man knows how he gets in, so also here in the sacrament, it is incomprehensible how this comes about. But this I do know, that the word is there: 'Take, eat, this is my body, given for you, this do in remembrance of me.' When we say these words over the bread, then he is truly present, and yet it is a mere word and voice that one hears. Just as he enters the heart without breaking a hole in it, but is comprehended only through the Word and hearing, so also he enters into the bread without needing to make any hole in it.

Take yet another example. How did his mother Mary become pregnant? Although it is a great miracle when a woman is made pregnant by a man, yet God reserved for him the privilege of being born of the Virgin. Now how does the Mother come to this? She has no husband (Luke 1:34) and her womb is entirely enclosed. Yet she conceives in her womb a real, natural child with flesh and blood. Is there not more of a miracle here than in the bread and wine? Where does it come from? The angel Gabriel brings the word: 'Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, etc.' (Luke 1:31). With these words Christ comes not only into her heart, but also into her womb, as she hears, grasps, and believes it. No one can say otherwise, than that the power comes through the Word. As one cannot deny the fact that she thus becomes pregnant through the Word, and no one knows how it comes about, so it is in the sacrament also. For as soon as Christ says: 'This is my body,' his body is present through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the Word is not there, it is mere bread; but as soon as the words are added they bring with them that of which they speak.⁴⁹⁹

For Luther, there is no doubt that the conception of Jesus took place via the spoken word.⁵⁰⁰ Indeed, for Luther, it is through oral communication, through the voice that comes to us, that the living 'Christ comes to us' as well.⁵⁰¹ And when the Lord comes to us in that way, in a voice and with a word in the power of the Holy Spirit, he comes as one who is for us and not

⁴⁹⁹ *AE* 36:341; *WA* 19:500-501.

⁵⁰⁰ See Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 69.

⁵⁰¹ *AE* 35:361 and *AE* 35:121; *WA* 10:I/1:13,22-14,1, respectively.

against us. He comes to us, writes Luther, 'as a gift.'⁵⁰² And it appears to be this way with the annunciation. With a voice and a sermon, connected with the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to Mary, and he comes to her as a gift: freely given, only to be joyfully received. If it were not so, would she have so hopefully and wishfully said, 'Let it be unto me according to your word'?

Long before Luther, the sixth century Syrian bishop, Jacob of Serug, likewise located the conception of Jesus *in Mary's ear*. He wrote the following:

See how Eve's ear inclines and hearkens
to the voice of the deceiver when he hisses deceit to her.

But come and see the Watcher instilling salvation into Mary's
ear
and removing the insinuation of the serpent from her and
consoling her.

That building which the serpent pulled down, Gabriel built up;
Mary rebuilt the foundation which Eve broke down in
Eden.⁵⁰³

And that word was connected, of course, with the Holy Spirit:

As our father generated our mother without marital union,
she [Mary] also generated because she was as Adam
before he sinned.

The Holy Spirit, which had blown on Adam's face
and generated Eve, she also received and gave birth to a
Son.⁵⁰⁴

So it was with an ear, a faithful ear, that Mary received these sacramental words of the angel. This means, of course, that one point of materiality and, therefore, one point of sacramentality, is located in the actual

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Jacob of Serug, Homily I, 627, in *On the Mother of God*, trans. Mary Hansbury (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1998), 30. Jacob of Serug was best known for his metrical homilies on the Mother of God.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, 634 in *On the Mother of God*, 36.

act of the word hitting Mary's ear. It is, in one sense, as St. Augustine has said: 'A word comes to an element and a sacrament is there.'⁵⁰⁵ The word is the sermon of the angel, combined with the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which, when it hits the material element of Mary's ear, brings to reality that of which it speaks: the person of Jesus Christ.

Luther made that same connection in the 16th century;⁵⁰⁶ and before Luther, it was St. Thomas Aquinas, who, in the 13th century, likewise made the connection between the consecratory act and the annunciation this way: 'The word is joined to the sensible sign, just as in the mystery of the Incarnation the Word of God is united to sensible flesh;'⁵⁰⁷ and before Aquinas, it was St. John of Damascus who, in the seventh and eighth centuries, with a much broader understanding of what constitutes the sacramental (particularly a broader understanding of the consecratory act) than Luther and even Aquinas, likewise compared the annunciation to the consecration. For our discussion, however, John of Damascus' explanation will prove to be the most helpful. He wrote:

And through the invocation the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost becomes a rainfall for this new cultivation. For just as all things whatsoever God made he made by the operation of the Holy Ghost, so also it is by the operation of the Spirit that these things are done which surpass nature and cannot be discerned except by faith alone. 'How shall this be done to me,' asked the blessed Virgin, 'because I know not a man?' The archangel Gabriel answered, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.'

⁵⁰² *In Evangelium Johannis*, tract 80, 3 (*PL*, 35, col. 1840), translated and cited in *Christ, the Sacrament of Encounter with God*, 92.

⁵⁰⁶ *AE* 36:341; *WA* 19:500-501.

⁵⁰⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, part III, Q. 60, Art. 6, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine and water the blood of Christ. And I tell you that the Holy Ghost comes down and works these things which are beyond description and understanding.⁵⁰⁸

It is vitally important to note the broadness with which John of Damascus speaks, sacramentally, of all three events: creation, annunciation, and Eucharist. In other words, for John of Damascus, it is not the *verba* alone which, in coming to the elements of bread and wine, makes the Eucharist a sacrament. Rather, it is the totality of the Eucharistic event, particularly the *epiclesis* together with the *verba* ('the invocation'), which makes the body and blood of Jesus a reality, both on the altar and in Mary's womb. For this reason, it is clear that John of Damascus falls in line with the early church fathers who 'thought of the sacraments as the bringing together of an earthly and a heavenly element, which was manifested externally in the liturgical action and [...] *epiclesis*.'⁵⁰⁹ And the same can be said of the annunciation event.

While, narrowly speaking, the annunciation to Mary embodies the Augustinian sacramental formulation ('A word comes to an element [...]'), it also bears with it broader sacramental implications. The annunciation, therefore, cannot be narrowed to a repeatable set of words or a set liturgical action, for the sermon of the annunciation was well-chosen for that particular woman and that particular event. Rather, it is in the *totality* of the

⁵⁰⁸ St. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* 4.13 in *The Fathers of the Church* 37:357. It is interesting to note the connection that John of Damascus makes, not only with the act of consecration, but also with the act of creation. In some sense, therefore, it appears that he not only sees the annunciation as sacramental (by connecting it with the Eucharist), but he also sees the act of creation as sacramental by the mere fact that he includes it in his discussion.

⁵⁰⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 92.

annunciation event (the power of the Holy Spirit hovering over Mary, just as he did over the water of creation and the tabernacle of Israel, connected with the living voice of the angel who spoke a sermon of reality that was particularly suited for her and adaptable for us) that one can see its thoroughgoing sacramentality.

The actual conception of Jesus, therefore, occurs through the preaching of a sermon and the working of the Holy Spirit. And yet, this word and Spirit are not two distinct realities which, coming together, form a sacramental word, as Calvin has proposed (see Chapter II).⁵¹⁰ Rather, just as the *epiclesis* can never be separated from the *verba* so, too, the sermon of the angel bears within it the power and work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit bears within himself the power and work of the sermon. As Jesus himself said: 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (John 6:63b). Words are Spirit, and the Spirit is words; one cannot be separated from the other, particularly when it is the Lord who is doing the speaking.⁵¹¹ Therefore, in the annunciation, just as it is in the sacraments when broadly understood, it is the *pneuma* and *Logos* working together in perfect harmony to bring about a new reality by delivering the corporeal presence of the Word made flesh.

The sacramentality of the annunciation, therefore, can be seen elsewhere than in the narrowness of the word hitting her ear. More broadly speaking, the sacramentality of the annunciation also lies in the fact that in the speaking of a spirit-filled word, a tangible presence is mediated to Mary. In

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Calvin, *Commentary on Ezekiel 2:2*, translated in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 90.

⁵¹¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 4.3: 'The words that I have spoken with you are spirit, that is, [...] of the Spirit, and they are life.'

other words, matter (words, voice, breath, tone, aura, and rhetoric) actually *does* convey the divine. Henri de Lubac may have noted it best:

That which is sacramental – “the sensible bond between two worlds” – has a twofold characteristic. Since, on the one hand, it is the sign of something else, it must be passed through, and this not in part but wholly. Signs are not things to be stopped at, for they are, in themselves, valueless; by definition a sign is something translucent, which dissolves from before the face of what it manifests – like words, which would be nothing if they did not lead straight on to ideas. Under this aspect it is not something intermediate but something mediatory; it does not isolate, one from another, the two terms it is meant to link. It does not put a distance between them; on the contrary, *it unites them by making present that which it evokes.*⁵¹²

Moreover, these words do not merely mediate the divine to Mary on one occasion (i.e. the annunciation), but it is this same divine Word which continually brings Mary and others into a deeper relationship with the corporeality of the person of Christ, and one need not look further than the start of the Christian Church in the Acts of the Apostles to see this reality taking shape.

For example, while Mary was at the foot of the cross, in part out of maternal necessity (Jn 19:25), she is quite silent throughout the gospels. However, she is actively engaged in the Christian mission in Acts (1:14). What happened to her between the annunciation and the beginning of the Christian Church? Likewise, James, the brother of Jesus, while mentioned briefly in the gospels, does not become a prominent figure in the Church until the book of Acts where he takes the lead at the Jerusalem Council (15:13-21). Again, what happened to him between the birth of his brother, Jesus, and the

⁵¹² de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 202, citing Joseph de Maistre, ‘Lettre a une dame russe,’ in *Oeuvres*, 8:74 (emphasis mine).

beginning of the Church? One has to believe that it was through the spoken mediation of the Word made flesh (his preaching, his teaching, his stories, his late night conversations, and the liturgical preaching which attempted to embody the foregoing after his ascension) that even those closest to Jesus (his mother and his brother) became connected more deeply with his divine life and, in turn, were devoted more fully and more actively to him.

To that end, not only can the Word come to an element and make a sacrament, but the Word has both adaptability and the ability to draw people in. In short, the Word can be mediated tangibly to all people of all times and places, and in being mediated as such, it brings its hearers into a deeper relationship with the Word made flesh. For the aforementioned reasons, the annunciation to Mary is, most basically and broadly, a sacramental event.

1. *Sacramental Words: Justifying, Divinizing, or Both?*

Sacramental events are encounters with Jesus that are tangible and concrete. They are encounters in which Jesus touches people, and in the act of touching them, he delivers himself. In essence, who Jesus is and what Jesus does is given to humans as a gift through these sacramental events.

Therefore, the annunciation, as demonstrated above, is a thoroughly sacramental event precisely on account of the fact that it delivers Jesus to Mary by way of the Christological touch of spoken word and Holy Spirit. Yet, when one comes in contact with Jesus, it is important to remember the fullness of what they receive via that sacramental event.

Particularly within the context of the annunciation, it is striking to see the way in which things proceed. With an angelic sermon and the hovering of the Holy Spirit, Jesus *simultaneously* takes up residence in Mary's flesh. In reality, therefore, the Lord is both *on* her and *in* her. He is on her by way of the Spirit and in her by way of the Son.

Before examining more fully the way in which the Lord is *in* Mary, it is of first importance to note the way in which he is *on* her and, particularly, how that fits rather nicely within the framework of a uniquely Lutheran confession of the Lord's declarative, forensic work on sinners. I should note, however, that this is a necessary first step, precisely because within the theological framework of forensic justification, as confessed within the LCMS, the Word of God never actually gets *inside* of sinners. Yet, in failing to get inside of us, the Word lacks tangibility. Consequently, lacking tangibility, the Word necessarily lacks sacramentality. And a sacramentality of the Word and preaching, within the Lutheran theological framework, is what I am aiming at in this thesis.

Historically, in Lutheran theology, there has been an aversion to talking about the Lord residing, corporeally, within a person.⁵¹³ This aversion becomes even stronger when that talk of residing *in the Christian* is presented within the context of justification or the forgiveness of sins, which is the

⁵¹³ See Jonathan Linman, 'Martin Luther: "Little Christs for the World"; Faith and Sacraments as Means to *Theosis*' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, eds. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 189-190.

article upon which Lutherans believe that the Church stands or falls.⁵¹⁴

Consequently, if one gets justification wrong, one has also got Christianity wrong, or so the thinking goes.

As for the classic Lutheran understanding of justification, Pieper has summed up the Lutheran understanding quite succinctly. He notes: 'Justification is not a physical, but a forensic act.'⁵¹⁵ In other words, justification, or the giving and receiving of the forgiveness of sins by way of the giving and receiving of the person of Christ, does not take place within the flesh, but *extra nos*, or outside of the person, particularly through the verbal pronouncement or declaration of grace.⁵¹⁶ When the justification discussion is moved internally, however, it is instantly disregarded by Lutherans as having conceded to either or both of the following rejected positions on the matter: Rome's concept of infused grace or the East's concept of *theosis*. Instead, as it is often said of the Lutheran understanding of justification: 'According to the forensic model of justification, it is *as though* we are righteous, while in reality we are not.'⁵¹⁷ In other words, 'the *Christus pro nobis* (Christ for us) is separated from the *Christus in nobis* (Christ within us).'⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 404.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 403. See also *ibid.*, 525.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fn 13: "'To justify' is always used in Scripture in the forensic sense.' See also the *ApAC*, Article IV.252: "'To be justified' here does not mean that a wicked man is made righteous but that he is pronounced righteous in a forensic way [...].'

⁵¹⁷ Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, 'Preface: The Finnish Breakthrough in Luther Research' in *Union with Christ*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998), viii.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The annunciation to Mary, therefore, appears to fit rather nicely within this particular Lutheran schema of justification, for it appears that the primary activity within the annunciation event is that of the Lord speaking by way of the angel, and in his declaration, hovering over Mary in a solely forensic sense. To a certain extent, this makes Mary the icon for forensic justification.

Yet, what this appears to do is relegate the word to something *merely* external. In other words, while the Word of God may be living and active, it is only living and active insofar as it *declares* us to be something that we are not (sinners are declared saints; a virgin is declared a mother).⁵¹⁹ Or, as Elert has noted: 'Christ's righteousness is my righteousness because the Word pertains to me. *But it pertains to me only if this righteousness remains unentangled with my empirical existence.*'⁵²⁰

Much of this theological perspective can be attributed to Luther who understood justification in purely relational terms, or so the common consensus in Luther scholarship has asserted (there are more details from Luther himself in what follows). Recently, however, there has been a concerted effort to re-examine Luther's writings on the subject of the Christian's place before God, particularly by the Finnish Lutherans, led by Tuomo Mannermaa, professor emeritus at the University of Helsinki. Following his retirement, his students have carried on the tradition of

⁵¹⁹ One question not often asked by proponents of a hyper-forensic understanding of justification is why the declarative speech does not actually do what it says? In other words, in all of Holy Scripture, the Lord speaks realities: he means what he says and says what he means. With forensic justification, however, he appears to only be speaking perceptions. In other words, he says we are something we *really* - in our existence - are not.

⁵²⁰ Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 412 (emphasis mine).

examining justification in terms of divine participation (*theosis*), rather than solely in terms of divine declaration. This groundbreaking study was introduced to the English speaking audience by Carl Braaten and Robert Jensen in their edited work, *Union with Christ*.⁵²¹

To that end, within the annunciation event, there appears to be more than a mere representation of forensic justification. To be sure, had Mary not conceived a child *in her body*, the only thing worth noting would have been the hovering of the Holy Spirit and the divine declaration by way of a spoken word. But there is indeed more. With this *epiclesis* (this combination of Spirit and word), Jesus actually *does* take up residence in Mary's flesh: corporeally, tangibly, concretely, and sacramentally. And in the joining of fleshes, Mary and her Son are not independent entities, merely sharing a similar space. Rather, this joining of fleshes gives Jesus a share in Mary's flesh and Mary a share in his, not unlike the union of husband and wife or that of Christ and the Church.⁵²² And while the flesh of human beings avails little, the flesh of Jesus (his body) contains the fullness of the Godhead and, therefore, avails much.⁵²³ So when Mary receives the flesh of Jesus in her flesh, she receives the fullness of that which his flesh contains. And as St. John of Damascus noted, 'the body which is born of the holy Virgin is in truth body *united with*

⁵²¹ For further insights, one should see also Linman, 'Martin Luther: "Little Christs for the World,"' 189-199.

⁵²² To see how Luther uses bridal imagery in his discussion of divine participation, see Jonathan Linman, 'Martin Luther: "Little Christs for the World,"' 191-192. Interestingly, this marriage imagery in Eph 5 is called a 'mystery' by St. Paul and translated as *sacramentum* by Jerome.

⁵²³ Col 2:9.

divinity, and it is also a body united with humanity, Mary's humanity.⁵²⁴ Mary, in reality, receives the fullness of the Godhead, and actually becomes one flesh with it in the very act of becoming one flesh with her son. Jesus receives from her all that he needs for life and health and, in turn, she receives from him all that he has as Word made flesh.⁵²⁵ Mary, through her connection with the flesh of Jesus, participates in the divine nature of God himself as the 'Mother of the Logos' and even becomes divinized (though here I understand 'divinized' to entail participation in the divine nature, but not possession of that divine nature in her own right).⁵²⁶

Not unlike the communication of attributes which occurred in Jesus' own body, 'an exchange of attributes (a sort of *communicatio idiomatum*) therefore occurs between Christ' and Mary, the one who gives him that flesh.⁵²⁷ And this participation, this *koinonia*, this communication of divine attributes, comes when the Word is preached to her at the annunciation.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ St. John of Damascus, 'Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,' Bk. 4, Chap. 13 (emphasis mine).

⁵²⁵ As the Formula of Concord declares: Jesus first acquired his human nature 'in his mother's womb' (*SD*, Article VIII.26).

⁵²⁶ Robert W. Jenson, 'An Attempt to Think About Mary' in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 31 (1992), 263.

⁵²⁷ Tuomo Mannermaa, 'The Doctrine of Justification and Christology,' trans. Thomas F. Obersat in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64:3 (July 2000), 210.

⁵²⁸ Participation in the divine nature can be clearly seen in the Church fathers, not least of whom was St. Athanasius who, interpreting 2 Peter 1:4, wrote:

Further it is through the Spirit that we are all said to be partakers of God. [...] If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we should have no participation of God in him. If indeed we were joined to a creature, we should be strangers to the divine nature inasmuch as we did not partake therein. But, as it is, the fact of our being called partakers of Christ and partakers of God shows that the Unction and Seal that is in us belongs, not to the nature of things originate, but to the nature of the Son, who, through the Spirit who is in him, joins us to the Father. This John tells us, as is said above, when he wrote: 'Hereby we know that we abide in God and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit' (1 Jn 4:13). But if, by participation in the Spirit, we are

Therefore, it is the combination of declarative word and divine participation with what that word delivers, the Son, which makes Mary who she is in the sight of the Lord and the world: the most blessed of all women.⁵²⁹

Though not commonly confessed, the aforementioned understanding of Mary's life and, consequently, of our own lives, seems to fit rather nicely with Luther who, himself, wrote:

And that we are so filled with "all the fullness of God," that is said in the Hebrew manner, meaning that we are filled in every way in which He fills, and become full of God, showered with all gifts and grace and filled with His Spirit, Who is to make us bold, and enlighten us with His light, and live His life in us, that His bliss make us blest, His love awaken love in us. In short, that everything that He is and can do, be fully in us and mightily work, that we be completely deified [*vergottet*], not that we have a particle or only some pieces of God, but all fullness. Much has been written about how man should be deified; there they made ladders, on which one should climb into heaven, and much of that sort of thing. Yet, it is sheer piecemeal effort; but here [in faith] the right and closest way to get there is indicated, that you become full of God, that you lack in no thing, but have everything in one heap, that everything that you speak, think, walk, in sum, your whole life be completely divine [*Gottisch*].⁵³⁰

In the hovering of the Spirit, Mary receives God's favour and, consequently, is forgiven.⁵³¹ Yet, she also receives a gift, the Son, in whom she partakes of his

made 'sharers in the divine nature' (2 Pet 1:4), we should be mad to say that the Spirit has a created nature and not the nature of God. For it is on this account that those in whom he is are made divine (*Ep. Ser. 1. 24* in *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. and intro. C.R.B. Shapland [New York NY: Philosophical Library, 1951], 125-126).

See also Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples FL: Sapientia Press, 2007).

⁵²⁹ Cf. Lk 1:42. As previously noted, the Lutheran sermons of the sixteenth century, in the height of the Reformation, consider Mary to be blessed 'because of her faith, not her physical connection to Christ' (Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary*, 24).

⁵³⁰ WA 17:438, translated in Kurt E. Marquart, 'Luther and Theosis' in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64:3 (July 2000), 196-197. See also Mannermaa, 'The Doctrine of Justification and Christology,' 213-214, who asserts that, according to Luther, 'the believing subject partakes in the "divine nature."'

⁵³¹ It is no coincidence that Mary is called the 'favoured one.'

most divine nature. Mary, it would seem, by virtue of her annunciation, is the icon of both forensic justification and divine participation.

What goes for Mary, however, also goes for the Church. Moreover, what goes for the Church also goes for those who compose it. As Cyril of Alexandria (370-444) noted in his sermon at the Council of Ephesus (431),

But it happens to us, to honor the union and adore [...] [the] undivided Trinity we worship. And celebrate the praises of Mary ever Virgin, who is the Temple of the Holy God, and the same Son, the immaculate bridegroom. To God be glory forever and ever. Amen.⁵³²

And likewise, de Lubac:

As far as the Christian mind is concerned, Mary is the “ideal figure of the Church”, the “sacrament” of her, and the mirror in which the whole Church is reflected. Everywhere the Church finds in her her type and model, her point of origin and perfection: “The form of our Mother the Church is according to the form of his Mother.”⁵³³

And Rahner, who summarizes the view of the early church this way:

Thus the early Church saw Mary and the Church as a single figure: type and antitype form one print as seal and wax. And Irenaeus of Lyons, whose thought derives from Polycarp, the disciple of John, and therefore directly from the heart of Christ Himself, sees in the words of the angel to our Lady a prophecy of the Church’s kingdom to come (Luke 1:33). [...]

Thus we find ourselves at the heart of the early Church’s teaching about our Lady and the Church. This is the fundamental doctrine, that Mary is a type or symbol of the Church, and therefore everything that we find in the Gospel about Mary can be understood in a proper biblical sense of the mystery of the Church.⁵³⁴

⁵³² Cyril of Jerusalem, Homily 4 in *PG* 77, 996 (emphasis and translation mine). One will note well that, in the Greek, the word for ‘temple’ is *Ecclesian*.

⁵³³ de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 320.

⁵³⁴ Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, 9-10; 13.

Therefore, given our shared reality with Mary, might it be safe to say that, with her, we can be certain that both a forensic declaration and divine participation with the Godhead come by way of a corporeal connection with the second person of the trinity? Moreover, might we propose, particularly with the annunciation to Mary as our guide, that this corporeal connection comes by way of the spoken word? As Tertullian wrote:

God recovered His own image and likeness, of which He had been robbed by the devil. For it was while Eve was yet a virgin, that the ensnaring *word had crept into her ear* which was to build the edifice of death. Into a virgin's soul, in like manner, must be introduced that Word of God which was to raise the fabric of life; so that what had been reduced to ruin by this sex, might by the selfsame sex be recovered to salvation. As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel. The delinquency which the one occasioned by believing, the other by believing effaced.⁵³⁵

While this spoken word certainly finds expression in the sacraments of the Church, the spoken word also finds sacramental expression in the preaching of the Church, and the annunciation to Mary is the clearest example of this reality.

2. *Preaching: A Word that Bestows Divine Life?*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer described the activity of the preached Word this way:

The proclaimed word has its origin in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. [...] The proclaimed word is the incarnate Christ himself.

⁵³⁵ Tertullian, 'On the Flesh of Christ,' Chap. 17 (emphasis mine). Interestingly, this perspective on Mary as the new Eve was, according to John Henry Newman, 'the greatest rudimental teaching of Antiquity from its earliest date' (*Mary: The Second Eve from the Writings of John Henry Newman*, ed. Eileen Breen [Rockford IL: Tan Books, 1982], 2). For a fuller treatment of the topic of the Second Eve, see Gentle, *Jesus Redeeming in Mary*, 18-70.

[...] The proclaimed word [...] is the Christ himself walking through his congregation as the word.⁵³⁶

For Bonhoeffer, the preached Word is, first and foremost, a person. This person has his concrete, fleshly origin in the incarnation, particularly the annunciation to his mother, Mary. Since Christ, the Word, has taken on flesh, however, he moves about, even today, looking for those in whom he might reside. This naturally bears with it all sorts of ontological implications.

As noted briefly, the Finnish Lutherans have attempted to reinvestigate Luther's own theology, searching for its more ontological characteristics, against the backdrop of contemporary Luther scholarship, which often tends to be rather neo-Kantian in its method of interpreting Luther, particularly by reducing 'the ontological and cognitive of Christian faith to subjective experiences [...] and "effects" [...] of God.'⁵³⁷ Here, a deeper exploration of the Finnish work may be helpful.

One Finnish scholar, Simo Peura, offers this description of the current theological struggle in Luther research and Lutheran theology:

Characteristic of neo-Kantian theology is the radical separation of God's being (*esse*) and his effects (*Wirkungen*) from each other. This means either that only certain effects (of God) exist or that God is in no way present in the effects he produces. Because of this separation, such theological ideas as the union of God and the Christian (*unio cum Deo*) become impossible. The neo-Kantian theological school has had a wide and comprehensive influence on Luther research until now.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Worldly Preaching*, ed. Clyde E. Fant, (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1975), 125.

⁵³⁷ Risto Saarinen, 'The Presence of God in Luther's Theology' in *Lutheran Quarterly* 3:1 (1994), 4.

⁵³⁸ Simo Peura, 'Christ as Favor and Gift (donum): The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification,' in *Union with Christ*, 46.

What Peura has described in theological terms is the philosophical split made by Kant between perception and reality. Kant describes the split this way:

Whatever is given us as object must be given us in intuition. All our intuition, however, takes place only by means of the senses [...]. [...] The senses never and in no manner enable us to know things in themselves, but only their appearances, which are mere representations of the sensibility [...].⁵³⁹

To that end, Saarinen offers this explanation of recent Luther scholarship:

The neo-Kantian division between *Geist* and *Natur* is one of the major explanations of the so-called anti-metaphysical character of Luther's thinking as seen in "neo-Protestant" Luther scholarship. [...] In these interpretations faith is for Luther a reality referring to "Geist" and thus can be articulated by ethical or relational concepts and not through ontological "*Seins-Aussagen*."⁵⁴⁰

This theological shift has resulted, as noted by Mannermaa, in 'the view that the relationship of a human being with God should be seen as an "ethical relation" [...].'⁵⁴¹ In other words, while God is a God who acts, his action for us remains outside of us. Therefore, the faith of the Christian becomes volitional obedience in an external promise, rather than divine participation with an ontological reality. Hence, the emphasis in Luther research and Lutheran theology is on the relational event par excellence, forensic justification, and the Christian's faithful response to that external gift.

In reaction to this neo-Kantian theological move, the Finnish Lutherans have examined how Christ moves both about the congregation and,

⁵³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Paul Carus and rev. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1977), 32:288.

⁵⁴⁰ Sammeli Juntunen, 'Luther and Metaphysics' in *Union with Christ*, 130-131, discussing Saarinen's view.

⁵⁴¹ Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, ed. Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 1.

particularly, *inside the flesh of the Christian*. Admittedly, however, as the Finnish Lutherans and others have discovered, this theological perspective was most prominent in Luther's early writing, which are often discredited because of his inexperience as a theologian, coupled with his residual Catholicism.⁵⁴² However, the theological assertions made by Luther are striking nonetheless and, thus, need proper consideration.

For this current thesis, recovering a proper understanding of divine participation (one that is Christologically centred and incarnationally driven) would seem to further the sacramental character of the Lord's saving work, particularly as it is delivered through the spoken word of preaching.⁵⁴³ In other words, it is only when matters are mixed (Christ's and the Christian's) that one can envision a robust sacramentality behind the word of preaching.

Tuomo Mannermaa has led the charge in discovering Luther's own theology of divine participation. In turn, Mannermaa described the Christian life this way: 'The life that the Christian now lives *is*, in an ontologically real

⁵⁴² See William T. Cavanaugh, 'A Joint Declaration?' in *The Heythrop Journal* XLI (2000), 278: 'Their [Finns] work is controversial among Luther scholars, some of whom object that inordinate attention is paid by the Finns to the early Luther.'

⁵⁴³ While the goal of this section is to recover a proper understanding of divine participation from a uniquely Lutheran perspective, it should be noted that two other perspectives have emerged on the matter over time. I should note, however, that for these two perspectives, I am indebted to the brilliant work of a recent St. Andrew's graduate, Julie Canlis, in the newly published revision of her doctoral thesis: *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2010). On the one hand, as noted by Canlis, Osiander proposed an understanding of divine participation with the divine nature of Christ as the key to our union with him (139-144). What this perspective fails to recognize, however, is the unique place that Christ's humanity also has in our union with him, as evidenced by the annunciation to Mary. On the other hand, Calvin also proposed an understanding of divine participation, in opposition to Osiander. His understanding, however, rests fully and finally upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into union with the humanity of Christ, for he [the Holy Spirit] is 'the one who mediates the human, crucified, ascended life of Jesus to us' (Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 144). While Calvin's perspective is closer to the goal of this thesis (union with the full person of Christ), it still makes the Holy Spirit the 'central player' instead of Jesus himself (Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 143).

manner, Christ himself.⁵⁴⁴ And Luther himself asserted: '*Christus ergo, inquit, sic inhaerens et conglutinatus mihi et manens in me hanc vitam quam ago, vivit in me, imo vita qua sic vivo, est Christus ipse. Itaque Christus et ego iam unum in hac parte sumus*' or, as the American Edition translates him, "'Christ," he [St. Paul] says, "is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one."⁵⁴⁵ 'Cemented to me and abides in me' might be read as code for residing *on* and *in* the Christian or, in more technical terms, forensic declaration and divine participation. Since there are a plethora of other examples in the theology of Luther, it should be quite clear that while the prominent Lutheran theologians of late may have eliminated divine participation from talk of justification it would not be uncharacteristic for a Lutheran to speak in those terms.⁵⁴⁶

However, while the Finnish Lutherans have provided an invaluable resource to the Lutheran Church and beyond, they have, more often than not, located this divine participation in the sacramental realities most often confessed by the Church, particularly Holy Baptism. As Simo Peura has asserted: 'Union with Christ is effected in baptism.'⁵⁴⁷ Peura is right. Yet, I would propose that the Finnish Lutherans have not said enough.

⁵⁴⁴ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 39.

⁵⁴⁵ WA 40:283, 30-32; AE 26:167.

⁵⁴⁶ See Linman, 'Martin Luther: "Little Christs for the World,"' 190: 'This understanding has been reinforced since the late nineteenth century in Germany and elsewhere by neo-Kantian philosophical influences on Lutheran theology in which God's being is separated from God's effects.' For more examples from the work of Luther, see Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, particularly the bibliography which concludes his great work.

⁵⁴⁷ Peura, 'Christ as Favor and Gift,' 53.

It seems to me that speaking of union with Christ as a one-time event effected in Holy Baptism does not do justice to the ongoing work of Christ in the life of the Christian. Rather, as Jesus himself said, he is present with us always, to the very end of time.⁵⁴⁸ Consequently, if he is present with us always, precisely how is he present? It seems that he would be *in us* always by way of his tangible, sacramental presence. Obviously, therefore, this union with Christ, of which the Finnish Lutherans write, also occurs in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the sacrament of the ongoing life of the Church. But does it also occur in the preaching of the Church?

It is fairly clear that currently only one scholar has attempted to link preaching and divine participation (or *theosis*). Interestingly, this scholar, Richard Jensen, is a Lutheran.⁵⁴⁹ In his article, 'Theosis and Preaching: Implications for Preaching in the Finnish Luther Research,' Jensen describes both the problems with contemporary Lutheran preaching and the creative possibilities for Lutheran preaching in the future, all of which he does through the lens of the Finnish Lutheran research.

In particular, Jensen notes two problems with Lutheran preaching today, using the Finnish Lutherans as his guide. First, he acknowledges that there is the drastic separation between the *on you* and *in you* presence of Christ in contemporary Lutheran theology and, consequently, in Lutheran preaching. Second, there is the all too prevalent neo-Kantian reading of Luther, which has affected Lutheranism's overall theological focus.

⁵⁴⁸ Matt 28:20.

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Jensen, 'Theosis and Preaching: Implications for Preaching in the Finnish Luther Research' in Currents in Theology and Mission 31:6 (December 2004), 432-437.

Therefore, concludes Jensen, since Christ is considered outside of us (first problem) and Christ's being is separated from his effects (second problem), Lutheran preaching forces the hearer to choose whether or not he or she will follow Christ, rather than allowing Christ to make the first move in calling the hearer to faith.

However, while the subjectivism of the Christian which Jensen locates is a troubling one, it seem somewhat unrelated to *theosis*. Granted, it is a tragedy when the onus is put on the Christian to decide to what extent he or she will be a Christian, but that does not seem to address the issue of that Christian's participation in the divine life of Jesus. Instead, Jensen's critique merely indicates that a hyper-forensic understanding of the Christian life on the part of the Lutheran Church may lead to subjectivism in the Christian life on the part of the Lutheran Christian.

Nevertheless, Jensen proceeds to offer some creative possibilities for preaching which he thinks will engender a sense of divine participation among Lutheran preachers, even though that is not precisely the problem he has addressed in his critique. Among them, he notes that Lutherans must have a sacramental view of preaching. Unfortunately, however, he fails to offer a robust description of what he means by sacramental and, moreover, what such sacramental preaching might look like.⁵⁵⁰ He quickly moves to the conclusion of his article where he offers two forms of preaching which he deems most successful in the task at hand: preaching in story and preaching

⁵⁵⁰ Jensen describes sacramentality this basically: 'The finite in preaching is the instrument of the infinite in the lives of those who hear' (436).

in image.⁵⁵¹ While he includes some notable thoughts in his section on preaching in image (such as the use of metaphors in preaching), his section on preaching in story seems to make the same mistake he is so critical of at the start of his article. In particular, he discusses the importance of preaching in story so that the hearer is enabled *to find his or her way into that story*. Yet, as he describes it, the action is still thoroughly anthropological, precisely because he understands divine *fiat* in solely human terms (our action and not the Lord's). Consequently, this seems to further the separation between the Christ *on us* and *in us* which he was trying so mightily to avoid.

In like manner, Linman, who has been cited above, has two very helpful sections in which he explores a Lutheran perspective on divine participation – ‘The Role of Baptism in *Theosis*’ and ‘The Role of the Eucharist in *Theosis*.’ Strangely, however, he has no section entitled, ‘The Role of Preaching in *Theosis*.’ This omission, intentional or not, implies that preaching is not considered among the Church’s liturgical rites which are capable of bringing one into full participation with the divine nature of Jesus.

The examples of Jensen and Linman are meant to demonstrate that there is no clear indication that preaching has been the basis for a discussion of divine participation, or the way in which Christ actually gets inside of the Christian and participates with him or her. Yet, to again cite Peura:

The *unio cum Deo* comes into being when Christ is proclaimed. Luther’s view of the word of God is a sacramental one. The words of Christ or the words preached by Christ do not refer only to their object, which is external to the words, but they also

⁵⁵¹ For Jensen’s formative thoughts on preaching in story, see his earlier work, *Telling the Story* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1980).

include the object. This is why the words are able to give in themselves the Christ proclaimed.⁵⁵²

Conclusion

The proclamation of Christ in the preaching of the Church is just as important to divine participation as Baptism and the Eucharist, for precisely the same reason as the latter two: it delivers a tangible Jesus, who tangibly takes up residence *inside* the Christian hearer by way of his sacramental Word. And that is precisely what occurred in the annunciation to Mary. Proclamation brought her into tangible participation with the divine. For when Christ was proclaimed to the young, fearful virgin, she was simultaneously united to God in the flesh of his Son, who occupied her womb. The sermon preached by the angel delivered the Christ who was promised therein. It is as Gregory the Great has written: 'But the Angel announcing it, and the Spirit coming, at once the Word in the womb, at once within the womb the Word made flesh.'⁵⁵³ This *unio cum Deo*, therefore, came about in the proclamation of the Word – in the sermon – into Mary's ear.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² Peura, 'Christ as Favor and Gift,' 53, fn 21.

⁵⁵³ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, xviii.85, trans. John Henry Parker (Oxford UK: Rivington, 1844), found online at <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoraliaIndex.html>.

⁵⁵⁴ As far as *unio cum Deo* and *unio cum Christo* are concerned, see Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mary for Today*, trans. Robert Nowell (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 1988), 37 for his explication of the Trinitarian shape of the annunciation:

The angel announced to her not just the Incarnation but fundamentally the entire mystery of the Trinity: "The Lord is with you" – that is Yahweh, the Father-God, whom she knows. Then to her wondering what sort of greeting this might be: "You will conceive a son" who at the same time will be the son of David. To her question how she should behave, since this son could not come from a man: "The Holy Spirit". The Trinity is therefore included in what befell her.

While it may appear that the union only occurred with Christ, it did, in actuality, occur with the entire Trinity. See also Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 106.

And in that simple yet gracious act of God, Mary was made the temple, the ark, and the fulfilment of the creative act: each, in their own way, a tangible point of divine contact.

Most definitely, all of this was an act of favour by which the Lord did his work *on* Mary externally and forensically (graciously hovering and overshadowing her), but the annunciation was also an effective act by which the Lord took up residence *inside* of Mary as a participatory gift (*domun*), particularly by way of his living Word spoken through the sermon of the Angel Gabriel.⁵⁵⁵ And the same adaptability and tangibility, which bestows a corporeal presence and a divine life, can be said of preaching today.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Peura, 'Christ as Favor and Gift,' 42-44.

Chapter 6

Adaptability and Tangibility: Sacramental Preaching and Hearing Today

Introduction

In this sixth chapter, I propose that the two-levels of meaning, which we first encountered in the annunciation to Mary in Chapter IV (where the message of the angel displayed a unique adaptability as it was spoken to her and to us on two different levels), is not only a proper model for understanding the Christian's participation in the Word of God (how we come to know and embrace the Scriptures), but, more importantly, that it also allows for a more robust understanding of his or her participation in the divine nature of Jesus Christ by way of that same Word of God as it is proclaimed in preaching. This divine nature, as discussed in Chapter V, comes by way of a concrete connection with the living Word, Jesus Christ, particularly as he is delivered in the liturgical act of preaching. Yet, as I demonstrate in this chapter, the sacred listening which occurs therein is a process. To that end, the more that one comes in contact with the corporeal Christ who comes by way of his own living voice through the voice of the preacher, the more one is drawn into the fullness of divinization.

Two Levels of Meaning

Though proposed as a helpful hermeneutic for the annunciation, how would this same two-level approach be helpful for us today? First, it would seem that understanding Holy Scripture on two-levels would allow for the Word to have free course. In other words, the Word of God would not be constrained or bound, nor would it simply be directed at a specific group of

people, of a specific time, with a specific set of presuppositions and a specific knowledge base. Instead, the Word of God, by virtue of its very nature as 'living and active' (Heb 4:12), would have the ability to speak to all people of all times and places. Therefore, just as the angel's word to Mary may have been intended to calm and relax the fearful, young virgin, and those very same words bear with them today a richer, deeper, more robust meaning, likewise the Word of God can still speak to those fearful and inexperienced like Mary, along with those who are mature in the Christian faith and life. And this inherent adaptability, as noted in Chapter IV, reveals the inherent sacramentality of the Word of God, especially when it is preached. However, lest one think otherwise, there is much more value to this two-level approach than mere adaptability.

A two-level of meaning approach would also allow for a more robust understanding of the Christian's participation with the divine nature of God in Christ, who speaks to us today in his living Word, just like he did in the sermon to Mary. And, in speaking to us in his living Word by way of preaching, he delivers the fullness of his Son corporeally: divine and human natures. Therefore, a connection with the fullness of Christ is a connection with the inner life and being of God himself. It involves, on the one hand, *kenosis*. God, in the person of his Son, empties himself as creator, and actually becomes one of his creatures. Moreover, in becoming one of us, he does as we do: he speaks. Yet, as he empties of himself, what is given over by him can be received by another. To that end, in his complete and utter self-emptying,

Jesus delivers the fullness of his divine life to those who receive him, beginning with Mary. And in delivering the fullness of his divine life to her and to others, he grants them *theosis*, or a share in his own divine nature.⁵⁵⁶ Simply, his *kenosis* can be our *theosis*. For, as P.T. Forsyth has noted, 'a Christ merely kenotic is inadequate. [...] For any real revelation we must have a loving self-determination of God with a view to His self-assertion and self-communication; and this self-determination must take effect in some manner of self-divestment.'⁵⁵⁷ Consequently, this *kenosis* and *theosis* can only be fully appreciated when interpreted in light of the two-levels of meaning approach which, by its very nature, presupposes that the giving and receiving that occurs between Christ and the Christian in preaching is a process.

Admittedly, while there are as many understandings of divine participation, deification, or *theosis* as there are theologians who write about it, what remains fairly certain is that the incarnation, and I would propose, the annunciation, is the starting point for any talk of this participation in the divine life of God, in and through the person of Jesus Christ. This is why, it would seem, St. Athanasius asserts near the end of *De Incarnatione* that 'He [God] was made man that we might be made God' or, literally: *Αυτός γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν*.⁵⁵⁸ His incarnation, his being made man, leads to our deification. Yet, Athanasius goes on to say that 'He [Jesus]

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Boris Jakim, 'Sergius Bulgakov: Russian *Theosis*' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 251.

⁵⁵⁷ Peter Taylor Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (London UK: Independent, 1961), 329.

⁵⁵⁸ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54:3. Cf. Andrew Louth, 'The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34.

endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.⁵⁵⁹ His enduring, his *kenosis* is, at the same time, our *theosis*. His giving up is our taking in. His emptying is our filling.

So we must beg the question: As it was for Athanasius, should it not also be for us, that 'the doctrine of deification is [...] a counterpart of the doctrine of the Incarnation' and, particularly, the annunciation to Mary?⁵⁶⁰ And if the answer to the question is 'Yes', then just what is the character and contour of this divine life, both for Mary and for us, and how is that reflected in the two-level of meaning approach to the Word of God, preaching, and hearing?

The Process of Sacred Listening

Most importantly, it must again be noted that divine participation is a *process*. While it is granted at the moment of the Christian's union with Christ, it progresses with depth and vibrancy throughout the Christian's earthly life.

As Clement of Alexandria (150-215) has said,

Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. "I," says He, "have said that ye are gods, and all sons of the Highest."⁵⁶¹

The Christian, according to Clement, travels from baptism to illumination, then to sonship and perfection, just as Mary progressed from annunciation to

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Louth, 'The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34.

⁵⁶¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator* 1.6. Cf. Michael J. Christensen, 'The Problem, Promise, and Process of *Theosis*' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 25.

visitation, to losing her son in the temple, the wedding at Cana, the foot of the cross, the empty tomb, the upper room, the ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The annunciation was her baptism, of sorts. It joined her intimately to the flesh of her Son. But it was only as she journeyed with that Son that she came to realise more fully the unique place she had in God's eternal plan of redemption. Likewise, the Christian may not realise until he or she is old and frail the unique place he or she held in God's continued plan for this world. It is only in looking back on life that he or she can see it clearly. Therefore, the two-level approach seems to help rather than hinder any discussion involving our personal progression in the divine life, particularly as it relates to preaching and hearing. Allow me to explain.

The Christian struggles everyday against the power of sin. However, like Mary, who progressed in understanding and in divine participation throughout her life, we, too, grow in understanding and in deification as we journey from this life to the next. For, as Michael Christensen has written, 'while remaining entirely human in nature, we become entirely divine by grace, progressively in this life and fully in the life to come.'⁵⁶² The operative word here is: *progressively*. It does not happen all at once, nor does it happen in a way that can be quantified. While the Christian may make strides in holiness and righteous living, one will never know just how 'divine' one actually is. Instead, this progression happens when and where the Lord wills

⁵⁶² Christensen, 'The Problem, Promise, and Process of *Theosis*,' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 27.

it. And while the 'when and where' may sound rather abstract, it is actually quite concrete, precisely because where the Lord wills it is where he has promised to be present with and for his people; the points of contact where he condescends corporeally to deliver the fullness of his Christological touch. One such point of contact is preaching, by the very example of the annunciation.

To that end, the progressive nature of divine participation and our union with Christ seems to fit nicely within the two-level approach to preaching and hearing, precisely because the two-level approach likewise presupposes a *progression*. This is not only a progression in knowledge of the divine plan (as witnessed by the annunciation to Mary), but it also appears to be a progression in the Christian's participation in the divine life. But how does this happen today in preaching and hearing?

The union between Christ and the Christian is made manifest in Holy Baptism, just as it was made manifest for Mary at the point of Christ's conception within the annunciation event, both of which were demonstrated above (by the Finnish Lutherans more generally and by Clement of Alexandria more specifically). Yet, following Baptism we, like Mary, advance in our pilgrimage, in our union with Christ, by way of the Son's preaching, by way of his *viva vox*.⁵⁶³

This deepening in union by way of the *viva vox* occurs precisely because within the living voice of Jesus, the living One is himself present –

⁵⁶³ See *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter VIII, II:57-58 in Flannery, 83-84.

Christ is present. And if he is present, he is present in the totality of who he is and what he does.⁵⁶⁴ He is not sub-divided into small parts: divinity here, humanity there, etc. Rather, he is present as God and man, the fullness of both natures united in his single person, even to this day. And in joining himself, repeatedly, to the Christian (corporeally, tangibly, concretely, and sacramentally), he communicates all of himself to those who hear his living voice. In turn, what St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662) wrote concerning the sacramental realities historically confessed by the Church (according to Elena Vishnevskaya), so I am saying of the living voice of Jesus, present in preaching: 'God penetrates the human order by communicating grace through the sacraments; the believing community reciprocates by partaking of the transforming media of the divine plenitude bequeathed in the church.'⁵⁶⁵ Through his *viva vox*, the Lord penetrates our human order and communicates grace by communicating himself. We, as hearers of his living voice, partake of this divine plenitude, just as Mary partook of the divine plenitude of God who was joined to her flesh in her very womb. It is, as Luther so brilliantly said in his Christmas sermon of 1514:

Just as the word of God became flesh, so it is certainly also necessary that the flesh may become word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless so that weakness may become powerful. The Logos puts on our form and pattern, our image and likeness, so that it may clothe us with its image, its pattern, and its likeness. Thus wisdom becomes foolish so that foolishness may become wisdom, and so it is in all other things that are in

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Col 2:9.

⁵⁶⁵ Elena Vishnevskaya, 'Divinization as Perichoretic Embrace' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 138.

God and in us, to the extent that in all these things he takes what is ours to himself in order to impart what is his to us.⁵⁶⁶

The more that one comes in contact with the living voice of Jesus and the living One behind that voice, the more that one grows into the fullness of the divine life, a life which Jesus alone can give. Yet, when that living voice and living One come to the hearer initially, he comes with first level effects. His voice and his presence comfort, forgive, and strengthen. However, over time (and it does, indeed, take time) second level effects will incur. In turn, the hearer will grow more deeply in union with Christ. He or she will become, as Luther asserted, God.

Conclusion

A story from pastoral experience might help to solidify the point. Stephen Sykes, in his chapter, 'Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word,' records for the reader a brilliant little exchange with a parishioner when he was a young priest. He writes thus:

I once went to visit an old man in mental hospital. I was a young priest, and he an old one, retired after a lifetime of distinguished service to the Church, a man of deep and sincere piety upon whom the terrors of a senile depression, probably of organic origin, had fallen. [...] In desperation I seized a prayer book, and opening it at random read from the Psalms "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy", and immediately he replied with the other half verse "Longsuffering, and of great goodness" (Ps. 103.8 BCP). A moment later he added, sadly, "But that is not for me".

⁵⁶⁶ WA 1:28 and translated in Mannermaa, 'Why is Luther So Fascinating?' in *Union with Christ*, 11. One should note well the occasion for this sermon: Christmas. Again, the incarnation is critical to divine participation for within the incarnation, as Luther says, '*Ideo Deus fit homo, ut homo fiat Deus.*'

The immediacy of the recall of that sentence, however, convinced me that something good had happened. [...]

Now this, I believe, is worth reflecting on, since memory is a function of the brain, and the brain is a physical entity. An incarnational and sacramental religion like Christianity makes much of the fact of this bodiliness, and rightly. It is, according to William Temple, the most materialistic of all religions. Yet evangelical piety, though insistent on the doctrine of the incarnation of the divine Word, and on belief in a bodily resurrection, sometimes distances itself from the physicality of sacramentalism, preferring to speak of obedience to the divine Word in Scripture and proclamation. Christians of that persuasion would not naturally rely on the objectivity of the sacrament under conditions of doubt and distress. Rather they would look for reassurance from the interiorization of an objective promise of faith. *The interesting feature of my experience with the elderly priest is precisely the discovery that what has been committed to memory is physically within us, and has become as much part of us as the physical reception of the host at the eucharist. It is indeed the Word made flesh tabernacling among us.*⁵⁶⁷

What this passage from Sykes is so helpful in demonstrating is that the Word of God, when it is living and active – actually a *viva vox* – does not and, indeed, cannot remain merely external. It is not simply a declarative word which labels us something that we, ontologically, are not. Rather, while it may declare something to the hearer, it also climbs in through the ear, making its way to the brain, but also to the very heart and soul of ourselves, even, with Mary as our guide, to our womb, as it were. It is, as Sykes notes, utterly Eucharistic, insofar as what is done to Eucharistic bread and wine in order for the full transformation into the body and blood of Jesus is, likewise, done to the one who hears the living Word and receives him through the ear. We are, in reality, living sacraments, not unlike the Eucharistic elements, but much

⁵⁶⁷ Stephen Sykes, 'Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word,' in *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, 158-159 (emphasis mine).

more far reaching. For, the living Word brings a living voice and, with it, a living One. And when we hear that living Word and receive that living One in preaching, we are likewise transformed into living ones. We are likewise made divine.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ Unfortunately, there is no suitable word in English to express this reality. Therefore, it should be noted that I understand 'made divine' as entailing participation in the divine nature of God (which he bears by right), but not possession of that divine nature in our own right.

Chapter 7

Contemporary Approaches to Preaching: Sacramental or Not?

Introduction

Now that it has been firmly established that preaching is in desperate need of renewal and, moreover, that the annunciation to Mary may be the clearest path for moving forward in a world where the Word and sacrament have undergone unnecessary narrowing in definitions, in this concluding chapter, it is time to gather things up and examine some of the existing approaches to preaching utilized by the Church today, particularly in light of our previous discoveries. First, I explore two texts that treat preaching as a sacramental activity, one from a Roman Catholic perspective and the other Protestant, searching for their limitations with regard to a robust sacramentality of preaching. Second, I explore briefly two major preaching forms being promoted today, particularly at the seminary level. Like the texts that treat preaching as a sacramental activity, I search for the limitations in these preaching forms, so far as aiding the sacramentality of preaching is concerned. I then supply a lengthy citation from Luther, which states rather succinctly all that I have attempted to demonstrate in the foregoing. I conclude this chapter by offering my own suggestion for preaching, one which seeks to deliver the fullness of the corporeal Christ, thereby bringing hearers into deeper communion with him.

Texts Promoting Sacramentality

The first text that I explore is Janowiak's *The Holy Preaching*, which has been noted above. As mentioned previously, this text does a wonderful job of

proposing a sacramentality of the Word of God in light of the work of the Second Vatican Council. For example, Janowiak begins his book this way:

In one of the more startling lines of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Council Fathers assert Christ's presence not only in the Eucharistic species, but in the ministers, the community, and "in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church" [n. 7]. Though this declaration is well grounded in the teachings of the early church, the teachings about Christ's presence in the proclaimed and preached word is an underdeveloped part of our religious imagination and our sacramental theology.⁵⁶⁹

Through an engagement with some of the more notable figures of Vatican II, particularly, Semmelroth, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx, Janowiak proposes a renewed emphasis on the four-fold presence of Christ in the liturgy: priest, people, Eucharist, and Word. To that end, his final chapter is devoted to the sacramentality of the preaching act or, as he calls it, "The Holy Preaching."⁵⁷⁰

For Rome today, following in the wake of Janowiak's work, preaching is considered sacramental, but only insofar as "what is heard in the word takes flesh in the sacramental activity."⁵⁷¹ According to Janowiak, preaching is considered sacramental, precisely because what is spoken of in the sermon (Christ) is enfleshed in the Eucharistic action. However, for this reason, preaching itself is *not* and, indeed, cannot be sacramental in the way the Eucharist is sacramental. In other words, preaching pushes the hearer toward the Eucharist, but does not contain within itself that which the Eucharist contains: the fullness of the person of Christ. This is implied even in the liturgical rites associated with the Mass. For example, while deacons may

⁵⁶⁹ Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching*, ix.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 161-188.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

preach, they are not permitted to preside at the Eucharist. Why? Precisely because there is a distinction in the level of sacramentality contained within those two actions. The Eucharist is considered more sacramental than preaching and, therefore, only a priest may preside at the former. Likewise, when bishops, cardinals, or the pope himself preside over the Eucharist, they remove their mitres as a sign of deference to Christ who is *present* during the Eucharistic liturgy. They keep their mitres on, however, during preaching, which signifies that Christ is *not present* in the preaching act in the same way in which he is present in the Eucharist.⁵⁷² Moreover, by wearing their mitres while preaching, they are visibly declaring that what is occurring in the sermon falls under authority of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church which is, in fact, the *teaching* authority of the church.⁵⁷³ Through non-verbal, liturgical action, therefore, what the Roman Catholic Church is confessing is that Christ is not corporeally present in preaching in the same manner that he is in the Eucharist, for the former is primarily didactic while the latter is primarily sacramental. To that end, while preaching may be considered sacramental by the Roman Church today, especially thanks to the work of Janowiak, it does not bear with it the full breadth of sacramentality as I have envisioned it above.

The second text that I explore is Ward's *Royal Sacrament*, which was also discussed previously. Ronald A. Ward, this book's author, was a priest

⁵⁷² Peter J. Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 1995), 180-183.

⁵⁷³ See Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Naples FL: Sapientia Press, 2007).

of the Church of England prior to moving to Wycliffe College in Toronto, Canada where he joined the Anglican Church of Canada and served as Professor of New Testament, a move subsequently made by the likes of John Webster and Oliver O'Donovan. Wycliffe College, it should be noted, is an Evangelical Anglican College, whereas Trinity College (of the Toronto School of Theology) is a more traditional Anglican College. To that end, *Royal Sacrament* was written with a thoroughly Protestant thrust, which stands in contrast to the theological perspective of Janowiak in *The Holy Preaching*.⁵⁷⁴

In its simplest form, Ward describes the sacramentality of preaching this way: 'The ultimate aim of preaching is to give Christ. He is offered in words; He may be received in Person. Thus preaching is a sacrament.'⁵⁷⁵

Ward explicates this simple definition in the following way:

Is it not a fact that the faithful actually do receive Christ when with faith they listen to the preaching of His Word? There are representative men in the church who have discerned this. The preacher's words become the Word. Thus Bishop S.C. Neill tells us that "the Word, once incarnate in Jesus Christ, has again to become incarnate in intelligible speech" (*The Triumph of God*, edited by Max Warren, p. 1). [...] Evelyn Underhill has made the same point: "The Word is for Evangelical worship something as objective, holy and given, as the Blessed Sacrament is for Roman Catholic worship. Indeed, it is a sacrament; the sensible

⁵⁷⁴ Of course, many other works appeared around the middle of the 20th century from Protestant theologians advocating a more sacramental understanding of preaching. These works included, but were not limited to, the following: Henry Sloan Coffin, Reginald H. Fuller, Donald Macleod, Thomas H. Keir, and Jean-Jacques von Allmen (for a full treatment of these works, see Todd Townshend, *The Sacramentality of Preaching* [New York NY: Peter Lang, 2009], 9-24). Most of these appeared, however, in reaction to the liturgical movement which, it was perceived, limited the role and importance of the preacher and the sermon at the expense of liturgical rites associated with worship. The sacramentality of preaching, therefore, was often understood by the aforementioned theologians as 'a partner to sacrament [of the altar],' so as to place preaching on a level playing field with the liturgy, and not as mediating Christ sacramentally in and of itself (Ibid., 20).

⁵⁷⁵ Ward, *Royal Sacrament*, 22.

garment in which the supra-sensible Presence is clothed”
(*Worship*, p. 278).⁵⁷⁶

It appears, at first glance, that what Ward has described in *Royal Sacrament* is precisely what I have tried to describe above: that preaching is sacramental (even a *sacrament*), precisely because it delivers Christ. Yet, he proceeded to write the following, which actually furthers the gap between our two perspectives rather than narrows it:

It may be granted that preaching is not a sacrament in precisely the same sense as the Holy Communion; [...] To call preaching sacramental but not a sacrament is analogous to the distinction drawn by some scholars with regard to the Last Supper: it was not a Passover Meal but it had a Pascal (Passover) character or motif [...]. As in the Holy Communion we give bread and wine and the faithful receive Christ, so in preaching we give words and the faithful receive Christ. Thus we might speak of “the Bread and Wine of Words”. [...] The indefinable presence of the living Christ must not be falsely objectified in the elements, as in popular transubstantiation.⁵⁷⁷

The presence that Ward identifies in preaching is not unlike the presence that he, as a Protestant, identifies in the Eucharist. It is an elusive, intangible presence. Christ is certainly *there*, but he is not there with corporeality. Instead, he is present only spiritually. And so long as Christ’s presence is elusive or lacking corporeality, it is really not a strong, reassuring presence at all. Why? Precisely for this reason: while Christ’s presence in preaching may well be a presence that is *for us*, if we do not have a Jesus who is willing (or able) to actually come personally and tangibly in his corporeal humanity to show us that reality himself, we cannot be certain of that fact.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 23; 25-26.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching*, 42.

Therefore, while I commend Ward for reconnecting the language of sacrament with the act of preaching, he does not take his work far enough. Sadly, he comes short of a tangible presence of the Word made flesh in the preaching act, which I so desperately tried to explicate above.

The two aforementioned works, while dealing with preaching, are not preaching textbooks per se. In other words, while discussing the act of preaching, they are not necessarily intended to give or strengthen preaching techniques. Instead, they are intended to establish a theological position, namely, that preaching is a sacramental activity. This, as witnessed, however, has not been fully accomplished by either Janowiak or Ward.

On the other hand, some textbooks are intended, not to establish a theological position, but rather to aid in the preaching task. These latter texts are primarily technical, not theological. Since it has been established, however, that not all books which claim to promote a sacramentality of preaching actually succeed in doing so, we must also spend some time with preaching textbooks, and particularly the preaching forms they promote, to see whether or not they succeed in endorsing a sacramentality of the preaching act.

Sermon Forms

In this section, I will briefly examine two of the most popular sermon forms present and at work in the Church's preaching today: the deductive form and the homiletical plot form. In particular, I will examine if and how these forms promote or discredit a sacramentality of preaching.

Likely the most popular preaching method in the history of the Church, the *deductive form* is also one of the most popular today.⁵⁷⁹ Carl Fickenscher, noted Lutheran preaching scholar, describes the deductive form this way:

The premise of deductive preaching is that the preacher will tell the congregation early in the sermon what he will talk about and what conclusion they will reach, much like informing travellers of their intended destination. [...] After the theme or title has been explicitly stated, a deductive sermon unfolds in major divisions which subdivide the theme into subordinate thoughts. These, too, are usually explicitly stated and propositional.⁵⁸⁰

Given the aforementioned explanation of the deductive form, it goes without saying that this form is most helpful, as Fickenscher notes, in conveying information.⁵⁸¹ And conveying information is done primarily for the purpose of teaching.⁵⁸² With this particular deductive strength, however, comes a very significant weakness.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁹ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 143. The popularity of this form is especially apparent in the Protestant tradition. For example, John Broadus' famous work on preaching, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, sees the preaching task as the 'great appointed means' of delivering the good gifts of God (John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* [New York NY: Armstrong, 1894], 17). Interestingly, however, the 'great work' of preaching is 'teaching and convincing' and, according to Broadus, this is done primarily through the deductive method, as 'every species of argument involves a deduction' (Ibid., 19 and 194, respectively).

⁵⁸⁰ Carl C. Fickenscher, *The Relationship of Sermon Form to the Communication of the Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel in Lutheran Preaching* (Fort Wayne IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1999), 82.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 85-86.

⁵⁸² Greidanus is slightly narrower, as he understands the deductive form as the method for 'feeding the congregation a diet of propositional truths' (*The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 18-19).

⁵⁸³ For a full treatment of all the inherent weaknesses of the deductive form, see the doctoral thesis by Trygve Johnson: 'The Preacher as Artist: Metaphor, Identity, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ' (Ph.D. thesis, The University of St. Andrews, 2010), 63-113.

Since the deductive form of preaching is concerned with teaching, some versions of this form, when used in the pulpit, merely recite for the hearers what Jesus himself taught, rather than engaging the hearers with the person of Christ himself. Therefore, when preaching is understood as conveying the teaching of Jesus, he [Jesus] is viewed as distant and uninvolved with his creation. In turn, this sort of preaching lacks a robust notion of ‘performative potential’ and, consequently, sacramentality.⁵⁸⁴ In other words, while the deductive method might talk *about* Jesus, it does not necessarily succeed in *delivering* Jesus.⁵⁸⁵ And if preaching does not deliver Jesus, corporeally, tangibly, and concretely, in the way of the annunciation to Mary, then it can hardly be considered sacramental. This does not mean, of course, that preaching does not or should not teach. Rather, preaching can indeed teach, but the method for teaching contained therein is analogous to how we teach our children: through example and embodiment and the beauty of the life to which we are drawing them, and not through bullet points and lectures. To that end, while a deductive form might be helpful for academia, where the *primary purpose* is rational instruction, it does not seem best for a sermon within the Church, where the *primary purpose* is delivery and reception of the person of Christ.

The second preaching form to examine is the *homiletical plot form*, which falls under the category of the ‘New Homiletic’ (in contrast to the

⁵⁸⁴ Fickenscher, *The Relationship*, 97.

⁵⁸⁵ Interestingly, Karl Barth gives this simple description of the preaching task: ‘Christian preachers dare to talk *about* God’ (Barth, *The Gottingen Dogmatics*, 265 [emphasis mine]).

deductive form or ‘Old Homiletic’), a method for preaching developed in the 1970s. This particular form has become very common worldwide, but was developed in this kind of language by Methodist pastor and professor emeritus at the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, Eugene Lowry. He [Lowry] describes this form in the following way:

Because a sermon is an *event-in-time* – existing in time, not space – a process and not a collection of parts, it is helpful to think of sequence rather than structure. I propose five basic sequential stages to a typical sermonic process [...]: The stages are: 1) upsetting the equilibrium, 2) analyzing the discrepancy, 3) disclosing the clue to resolution, 4) experiencing the gospel, and 5) anticipating the consequences.⁵⁸⁶

According to Lowry, stage one seeks to engage the listener in the theme and content of the sermon.⁵⁸⁷ Stage two seeks to diagnose the particular problem which is troubling the listener or, in Lowry’s own words, this stage seeks to deliver ‘concrete perceptive insight into the multifaceted ambiguities of the human situation.’⁵⁸⁸ Stage three seeks to provide the answer to the *why* of the human situation.⁵⁸⁹ Stage four seeks to deliver the gospel as the antidote to the human situation.⁵⁹⁰ And, finally, stage five seeks to anticipate the consequences of having experienced the gospel.⁵⁹¹

Helpful in this particular form is the notion of preaching as an *event*, wherein something actually *happens*. In effect, writes Lowry, when reversal has occurred in stages two and three, ‘the experiencing of the word can occur

⁵⁸⁶ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 26.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

as *event*,’ which implies that the Word is actually present.⁵⁹² Lowry cites Craddock to help make this point: ‘As the Word came in the flesh, so the Word comes in the form of human speech.’⁵⁹³ And the human speech of which both Lowry and Craddock speak is found in the particularity of the gospel message as proclaimed within the sermon. In effect, the event of the proclamation of the gospel gives peace to the heart which has been turned upside-down by stages two and three.

This form is distinct from the deductive form, particularly because in this form, the goal of the sermon is not merely to inform the listeners, but also to transform them, as evidenced by the fifth stage: anticipating the consequences. This form is also different from the deductive form in its structure, particularly because the resolution comes, not first (as in the deductive form), but near the end, where one would likely and logically expect it to be.⁵⁹⁴

While the homiletical plot form may appear to be more conducive to the vision for a sacramentality of preaching explicated in the foregoing, particularly because of its rhetorical concern with engaging the listener and its notion of the proclamation of the gospel as an event, it nevertheless retains a hint of artificiality which hinders rather than helps this cause. In effect, following the first stage of the homiletical plot form, stages two and three are

⁵⁹² Ibid., 79.

⁵⁹³ Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Enid OK: Phillips University, 1974), 46.

⁵⁹⁴ Craddock notes that preaching deductively (where the resolution comes first) is not unlike telling a joke by stating the punch line first (Ibid., 62; see also Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 57).

primarily devoted to the preaching of the law by way of diagnosing and explaining the human situation. Stage four seeks to deliver the gospel as an answer to the problem of humanity's condition. Finally, stage five envisions the life of those upon whom the gospel has had an effect. Very simply, this form moves from the rhetorical engagement of the listener, to the law, to the gospel, to the sanctified life. This is, in other words, a rearranged version of Caemmerer's *Preaching for the Church*, specifically his use of a goal (sanctified life) - malady (law) - means (gospel) form for preaching, which I previously explored in Chapter II. Nevertheless, like Caemmerer's, Lowry's form implies that if the form is followed, believers will be made and strengthened, and preachers will be considered faithful. However, whenever a preaching form dominates a Biblical text, as it appears to do in the homiletical plot form, artificiality is the inevitable outcome. And artificiality is never in the way of a robust sacramentality where adaptability and tangibility are critical.

A Possible Preaching Form for Moving Forward

A couple things are worth nothing. First, it would seem that no preaching form which intends to convey Christ is inherently bad. In fact, the overall emphasis on structure contained in many preaching forms helps to avoid chaos, thereby allowing for a clear delivery and joyful reception of the person of Jesus. Second, some preaching forms are inherently better than others, precisely because forms which do not intend to convey Christ can quickly become artificial. And where artificiality is gained sacramentality is quickly lost.

In order to retain a proper sense of sacramentality, however, I would propose that every sermon form worthy of use in the Church must start with the person of Jesus Christ who is, in his flesh, the primordial sacrament. This ‘Jesus form’, as I shall like to refer to it, is the kind of preaching that takes seriously the notion that Holy Scripture is a *viva vox*, a living voice, which has the ability to speak to us even today, especially when it is preached to us. Yet, it is also the kind of preaching that believes that in the words themselves, something of the divine is mediated to us corporeally. And that divine mediation, as witnessed in the annunciation to Mary, affects us. It not only instructs us, but it changes us. Very simply, it is the sort of divine presence that should leave us asking ourselves after we have heard a sermon: ‘Did not our hearts burn within us [...]?’ (Lk 24:32) as the reality of the *viva vox* is opened up to us. And this happens, it would seem, very simply, by saying what Jesus says (ὁμολογέω) in a way that hearers *today* can be certain that he is actually in their midst and speaking to them, adaptably and tangibly.⁵⁹⁵ It is both divine and human speech. It is speaking Jesus’ own *divine* Word to the world with *human* attention to the particularities of varying cultures and contexts.

This is the case because preaching, by Jesus’ own example, is more than a mere recitation of words, a chain of abstract thoughts, or a discussion of the tenets of the Christian faith and life. Interestingly, Russell Moore, dean of the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in

⁵⁹⁵ See, for instance, Matt 10:32 where confessing involves saying the same thing as Jesus.

Louisville, Kentucky and senior editor of *Touchstone* magazine, attributes the foregoing type of preaching to the devil himself. In short, according to Moore, the devil always preaches expository sermons!⁵⁹⁶ Moore notes that the sermons of the devil are nothing more than ‘a sermonic information dump,’ intended to cause doubt and fear and, ultimately, unbelief.⁵⁹⁷

While I agree with Moore that this does, in fact, sometimes happen, I wonder if he is entirely correct. It would seem that the devil, as the deceiver of mankind, would be just as likely (or even more likely) to preach sermons which parallel good forms, not bad ones. Therefore, we must not take our cue for preaching from what the devil does or does not do. Rather, we should find our paradigm for preaching in the person of Jesus and *his preaching*.

With the preaching of Jesus, his own words are spoken in such a way that the speaker, Jesus, is himself mediated to the hearers of his day. Indeed, his ‘preaching was often poorly received – but he never bored. When he preached, demons shrieked, crowds gasped, and services sometimes ended with attempted executions rather than altar calls’ (e.g. Lk 4:14-30).⁵⁹⁸ People were affected by Jesus’ preaching because his words moved their hearts, sometimes for good and other times for ill.

Likewise, today, preaching should involve saying what Jesus says in such a way that people can hear him and believe in him, precisely because he

⁵⁹⁶ Russell D. Moore, ‘Preaching Like the Devil’ in *Touchstone* May/June (2010), 9-12.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

is, himself, the one speaking to them.⁵⁹⁹ As the Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah ('Behold, I have put my words in your mouth' [Jer 1:9]), so he said to the seventy-two whom he sent out ('The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me' [Lk 10:16]), and so he says to his pastors of today, who fall in line with the prophets, apostles, and pastors of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church down through the ages. The prophets spoke for the Lord when they spoke the words he had given them to speak. Similarly, the seventy-two were given an ideal opportunity to convey Jesus, having known him personally throughout his earthly ministry. Today, too, pastors who have been placed in succession of prophets and apostles speak a word that is not their own, but one that belongs to Jesus himself. How do they do this? By saying precisely what Jesus says in Scripture, but in such a way that people today can actually *hear him speaking*. Jesus certainly could have spoken in terms of Land Rovers and keyholes, but he chose camels and eyes of needles. Preachers today need to be sensitive to the same cultural contexts as they deliver the same Jesus through his *viva vox*. Moreover, this means that preaching should not be boring, but living and active and rhetorically pleasing, precisely because what we have been given to speak is 'the most exciting, engaging story imaginable, which is why it is aped all over the place in epic, drama, poetry, and song.'⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ Interestingly, what people are 'hearing' today is much like what they were 'hearing' at the time of Jesus: mystery, community, and symbol (see Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* [Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1999], 34 and Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 68-74).

⁶⁰⁰ Moore, 'Preaching Like the Devil,' 11.

All of the foregoing indicates, therefore, that preaching is utterly sacramental because *in the words themselves*, Jesus is bringing to reality that which his words declare. Moreover, this Jesus is not static or episodic, but he comes to his people where and when they need him most. He adapts himself for us, and there is no one who cannot be comforted by his multi-level presence. And when he meets us where we are (corporeally, concretely, and tangibly), he brings us along the path of progression in the Christian life, the divine life. We, as hearers of his Word, grow and mature and become wise the longer we are in contact with him, because the longer we are in contact with him, the more fully we are drawn into a relationship with him.

Yet, the most impressive aspect of all of this is that we are not alone. The same, in fact, was true for Christ's own mother. Like Mary at the annunciation, the words spoken to us 'produce in us that which they portray.'⁶⁰¹ The words spoken to us mediate Christ, who bears within his body a life that is most divine.

The sad reality, however, is that the Church, in failing to take the sacramentality of the Word seriously, has produced and used various models of preaching incorrectly. In short, preaching has, more often than not, become, on the one hand, a form of instruction or, on the other hand, an incantation of sorts, rather than an integral part of deepening our relationship

⁶⁰¹ From the Luther sermon below.

with Christ by functioning, with the Eucharist and Baptism, to bring about divine participation with Jesus in his *viva vox*.⁶⁰²

Instead, preaching, as I have demonstrated, needs to function, not primarily as a means of giving and receiving information, but rather as the means by which Christians, being given Christ in his fullness corporeally, are able to listen and then live, bearing in their bodies the body of Christ and bearing in their minds the mind of Christ. For, it is not the right information which will move the Church from strength to strength, but only the right Jesus. And the right Jesus is the Jesus of the gospels, the one who has been speaking sacramentally since the beginning of time.

Conclusion

To that end, allow me to offer the following Christmas sermon from Luther which, while lengthy, says from start to finish what I have attempted to say above. As noted previously (Chapter V), scholars are often dismissive of early Luther, particularly because of his perceived residual Catholicism. However, while this sermon is still rather early (1519), what one reads herein is timeless.

In the sermon which follows, Luther insists upon the fact that Jesus adapts himself to our human condition. Indeed, Jesus comes from on high

⁶⁰² This sad reality is seen, most clearly, in the numerous sermons preached in churches today on moral or ethical issues. Just one example might be the sermons preached by Catholics and Protestants alike who support the pro-life cause. However, what is conveyed therein, more often than not, are all of the Bible's particular teachings on matters related to life: i.e. who gives it, why it is given, and whose it is to take. Hearers, therefore, might leave with more information than they came in with, but are they really in a position to make a difference in this world as it relates to life? Anyone who has ever tried to make the slightest amount of difference in this world would agree that they are not.

and, yet, he comes from on high in a form that is adaptable to us, one to which we can relate. So, too, as I have advocated in this thesis, the preacher must be willing and able to adapt his own message to his hearers, precisely by taking into account where people are on the path to spiritual maturity.

Certainly, Jesus is still on high, but he continues to drop down to us to this very day in a form that is adaptable to us. It is the preacher's job to capture that Jesus and deliver him to his hearers as he [Jesus] wishes to be delivered.

Hence, Martin Luther:

“The book of the birth (genealogy) of Jesus Christ.”

I intend to speak about this birth. And I remind you here to begin with that we will deal with the whole life and history of Christ from two points of view, first as a *sacrament* and then as an example. [...]

From Christ, [...] you do not only seek an example of virtue but also the virtue itself. *That is, Christ does not merely present a model of the virtue for you to imitate but also pours out the virtue itself into people.* Christ's humility then becomes our humility in our hearts. And this is so, because I speak *sacramentally*. All the words and stories of the Gospels are *sacraments* of a kind, that is, sacred signs, by which God works in believers *what the histories signify*. [...]

The words of Christ are *sacraments*, through which he works our salvation. Hence the Gospel is to be taken *sacramentally*, that is, the words of Christ need to be meditated on as symbols, through which that righteousness, virtue and salvation is given which these words themselves display. You can now understand the difference between the Gospel and human histories. The histories [...] portray those virtues which they themselves are *unable to reproduce in other people*. The Gospel indeed portrays virtues so that it may become the instrument, by which God changes us, remakes us, etc. [...]

Let us then meditate on the fact that everything which we see happening to our babies really happened to him. Let no one think that Christ already then displayed some signs of his majesty. When he was a boy, he behaved just as our babies do. [...] Christ puts on human nature and the whole range of human feelings except for sins, so that you won't be frightened but

rather begin to be embraced by his grace and love and so be comforted and strengthened. Christ then is set before us in all respects as the one who comes to give salvation and grace.

I say this especially to anxious, disturbed, sad consciences, so that they look deliberately at this child and meditate through faith on him who will make amends for us. [...] Consider Christ placed in the womb and on the lap of his dear mother and that dear girl who remains a virgin! What could be more loveable than this body? What less threatening than this dear girl? What more gracious than this virgin? Consider too that Christ is an ignorant boy. [...] If you embrace him; if you appreciate him; if you laugh with him; that is, if you meditate on this by far most peaceful person, then your mind will also be most tranquil. See how God entices you! *He presents a boy for you to take refuge in.* What's more, no one can be afraid of him, for there could be nothing more loveable to anybody. [...] *It seems to me that no more effective consolation has been given to the whole human race than this Christ who is altogether man, boy, baby, playing in the lap of this girl with the breasts of this most gracious mother. Is there anyone who is not taken in and comforted by this sight?* And so punishment is overcome. [...]

You will discover that the boy Christ has indeed been just as ignorant and silly as we were when we were babies. That comes out quite clearly in Philippians 2:6ff where Paul says: "though he was in the form of God, (he) ... emptied himself, being born in the likeness of men." There he maintains that, even though Christ the man was engaged in sending out the rays of divinity, he nevertheless did not want to put on anything but the form of a slave, i.e. the appearance of a person who served men. [...] Christ the boy behaved just like us.

I do not agree with those who teach that Christ then had a sure and absolute knowledge of everything. No, he really was an ignorant boy and afterwards grew up in stages, years, and wisdom, as Luke says in 2:52. [...]

Up to now I have spoken about *sacramental meditation* on the gospel. We meditate properly on the gospel, when we do so *sacramentally, for through faith the words produce in us what they portray.* Christ was born; believe that he was born for you, and you will be born again. Christ conquered death and sin; believe that he conquered them for you, and you will conquer them. With that you have the distinctive characteristic of the gospel. The histories of men cannot produce that effect in you. [...]

As you see the example of God's majesty put down into despised flesh, so put down your pride etc. As you see the

example of his peacefulness, so you will be a conciliator and peacemaker. As you see how Christ becomes all things for all men, so you will be a servant to others. But in order to do this, meditate on Christ *sacramentally*; *believe that he himself will give you all this.*⁶⁰³

⁶⁰³ Luther, 'Christmas Sermon on Matthew 1:1-17,' 25 December 1519 in WA 9:439-442, trans. John W. Kleinig (1985) [emphasis mine].

Conclusion

It is clear that, from the beginning of time, God intended this creation to be the sacramental landscape by which the world might experience him fully and repeatedly. This experience of the divine involved both knowledge and mystery, but, with the fall into sin, the former appears to be what we have striven after mightily, often at the expense of the latter. On this search for knowledge since the fall into sin, the Church has collectively tried to put definitions to specific theological terms, not least of which are Word and sacrament. Unfortunately, however, in offering definitions over time, both of these terms were narrowed somewhat extraordinarily and destructively, particularly during and following the Protestant Reformation. This does not mean, of course, that the Reformers and their theological children had no understanding of mystery. However, it does mean that the framework for their sacramental thinking may not have been as broad as God initially intended it to be. What was especially lost in all of this was the idea that words and, particularly the words of preaching, might function sacramentally by mediating the corporeal presence of the divine. Consequently, the full and repeated experience of the tangible presence of God as intended in Eden was, to some extent, lost as well.

Certainly, when examined closely, it would seem nearly impossible for one to deny that words and places and things can, indeed, mediate something

of another reality.⁶⁰⁴ Sadly, however, when it comes to preaching, the same theological realisation has not been and is not now as readily acknowledged. In terms of my own tradition, the LCMS, this has had a detrimental effect on the preaching task. Preaching, in turn, has become either didactic (talk about God) or inattentive to the hearers it is intended to address (no sense of humanity's involvement in the preaching task). Yet, this seems rather strange, particularly because the central event in all of human history was the condescension of God to man in the man, Jesus Christ. His incarnation, once-and-for-all, determined that humanity and matter actually do matter, and they matter because they are vehicles for divine mediation and not simply divine information.

Understandably, some will disagree, particularly because they bear within themselves a different understanding of Christ's role in the world today, often begging the question: If Christ is not present in the world corporeally today, how can he thus be present in preaching? To them, I would respond: I am writing as a Lutheran, as one who confesses that Christ is indeed present and active, corporeally, in this world today and, so, he can likewise be present and active, corporeally, in preaching. Yet, I am also writing as a Christian who believes the stories of Holy Scripture to be true and accurate examples of how the Lord intends to engage us, not least of which is the story of the annunciation. Therefore, even if one cannot confess what I confess as a Lutheran (the ubiquitous presence of a corporeal Christ),

⁶⁰⁴ On this point, N.T. Wright's concept of 'echoes of a voice' is most helpful (*Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* [New York NY: Harper One, 2006], 3-51)

might one be able to concede the point that if God acted this way with Mary, there is still the possibility that he might act this way with us? If so, then we have common ground from which to work. And the work at hand is improving the preaching of the Church.

To that end, as I have advocated, preaching needs to focus more specifically on saying what Jesus says in a way that people today can hear him speaking. The adaptability of this good news will lead to a tangibility of the person of Christ, in the *viva vox* of the incarnate Jesus who is both human and divine, as heard from the mouth of the preacher. This, in turn, will bring a message that is not only from God, but also one that is addressed to humans, from within the particularity of a Christological humanity that continues in our presence to this very day as one of us. And when we are joined, corporeally, to Jesus, either in preached word or Holy Sacraments, we will receive the fullness of who he is and what he does for us and our salvation. And that, alone, will bring to fruition the promise of the Lamb: 'Behold, I make all things new' (Rev 21:5).

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