

## SACRAMENTALISM

The sacraments are at the heart of Roman Catholic religious practices. It is not possible to understand the essence of Catholicism without them, especially the sacrament of the mass. According to Catholic dogma there are seven sacraments, all of which are causes of God's grace on his church.

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### THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF THE SACRAMENTS

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The Council of Trent proclaimed infallibly of the sacraments that “If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord . . . let him be anathema.”<sup>1</sup> This excommunication includes almost all Protestants,<sup>2</sup> since most affirm that there are less than seven sacraments. This condemnation has never and can never be revoked since it is an infallible *ex cathedra* pronouncement of the Roman Catholic Church.

### THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS

A sacrament is a cause of grace. According to Roman Catholic authority Ludwig Ott, by “its etymology the word ‘sacramentum’ means a sacred or holy thing.”<sup>3</sup> Early scholastic theologians, such as Hugo of St. Victor and Peter Lombard, defined it “not merely as a sign but as a cause of grace,”<sup>4</sup> which is the meaning it retains today in Catholic theology. Ott informs us that “The Roman Catechism (II, I, 8) defines a Sacrament as ‘a thing perceptible to the senses, which on the grounds of Divine institution possesses the

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1 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 844, p. 262.

2 High church Anglicans are an exception since they believe in the same seven sacraments that Roman Catholics do.

3 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 325.

4 Ibid.

power both of effecting and signifying sanctity and righteousness' (= sanctifying grace).”<sup>5</sup>

By decree of the Roman Catholic Church, “If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place any obstacle in the way, as though they were only outward signs of grace or justice, received through faith . . . let him be anathema.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it is wrong to deny “that grace, as far as concerns God’s part, is not given through the sacraments always and to all men. . . .”<sup>7</sup> According to Catholic dogma it is anathema to claim that “grace is not conferred from the work which has been worked [*ex opere operato*] but that faith alone . . . suffices to obtain grace.”<sup>8</sup>

A sacrament has two aspects: the outward sign and the inner grace conveyed by it. An outward sacramental sign has two dimensions: matter and form. “The outward sign of the sacrament is composed of two essential parts, namely, thing and word.”<sup>9</sup> The “thing” (matter) is either a physical substance (such as water or oil) or an action that is perceptible to the senses (such as absolution or marriage). The “word” (form) is usually a spoken word at the time the sacrament is administered. The second aspect, that of conveying inner grace, concerns the function of the sacraments.

## THE FUNCTION OF THE SACRAMENTS

It is through the outward sacramental sign that the inner workings of God’s grace occur. It is essential to Catholic faith to affirm that “the Sacraments of the New Covenant contain the grace which they signify, and bestow it on those who do not hinder it.”<sup>10</sup> Sacraments are effective objectively, whether or not their efficacy is felt subjectively. “Sacraments confer grace immediately, without the mediation of fiducial faith.” However, “it is true that in the adult recipient, faith is an indispensable pre-condition or a disposing cause, but it is not an efficient cause of grace.”<sup>11</sup> In order to designate the objective efficacy of a sacrament, Catholic theology coined (and Trent adopted) the phrase *ex opere operato* (by the work that has been worked); that is, “the Sacraments operate by the power of the completed sacramental rite.”<sup>12</sup> The Reformers vigorously opposed this phrase since they believed it demeaned the grace of God. Nonetheless,

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5 Ibid., p. 326.

6 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 849, p. 262.

7 Ibid., no. 850, p. 263.

8 Ibid., no. 851, p. 263.

9 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 327.

10 Ibid., p. 328.

11 Ibid., p. 329.

12 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 851, p. 263.

Catholics hold that “The sacraments . . . not only point externally to salvation; they contain and bestow the salvation they signify.”<sup>13</sup>

Catholic scholars differ as to precisely how the sacraments work. According to the “moral mode of operation” view (following after Scotus), the sacraments

move God to bestow the grace by their objective value. As soon as the sacramental sign is vividly accomplished God bestows the grace, [either] because He has bound Himself by a treaty to do so by the institution of the Sacraments (thus the older Scotists), or because the sacramental signs possess an imprecatory power similar to the intercession of Christ, since in a certain sense, they are the actions of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

According to this explanation, “God gives grace *immediately* on account of the moral pressure exercised on Him by the Sacrament.”<sup>15</sup> Another view, favored by many Catholic scholars (following after Aquinas), is the “physical mode of operation” which states:

The sacraments operate physically if, through the power received from God indwelling in them, they cause the grace which they signify. God, as *causa principalis* [principal cause] of grace, makes use of the sacramental sign as a physical instrument in order to produce through it the sacramental grace in the soul of the recipient. God conveys the grace *mediately* [not immediately] through the Sacrament.<sup>16</sup>

Each particular sacrament confers a specific grace on the recipient, corresponding to its special purpose. Most Catholic theologians believe that God conveys the same measure of grace on each of the sacrament’s recipients. This grace continues until the death of its receiver.<sup>17</sup>

With respect to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy order, “there is imprinted on the soul a sign, that is, a certain spiritual and indelible mark, on account of which they cannot be repeated.”<sup>18</sup> Of course, this grace is not conferred unless the priest administers it with good intentions and in accord with the intentions of the church.<sup>19</sup> And no priest may, without sinning, disdain or omit the administration of any sacrament.<sup>20</sup>

## THE NECESSITY OF THE SACRAMENTS

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13 Stephen W. Arndt and Mark Jordan, *A Catholic Catechism for Adults: The Church’s Confession of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 265.

14 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 331.

15 Ibid., emphasis added.

16 Ibid., p. 330, emphasis added.

17 Ibid., p. 335.

18 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 852, p. 263.

19 Ibid., no. 854, p. 263 (cf. canon 12).

20 Ibid., no. 856, p. 263.

The purpose of a sacrament is to bestow the grace of God through the Roman Catholic Church<sup>21</sup> to its recipient in seven stages from birth (baptism) to death (extreme unction). Thus, the sacraments are necessary for salvation. The Council of Trent reminded Catholics that “If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but are superfluous, and that, although all are not necessary individually, without them or without the desire of them through faith alone men obtain from God the grace of justification: let him be anathema.”<sup>22</sup> Protestants, of course, take exception with this.

## THE NUMBER AND DEFENSE OF THE SACRAMENTS

The Council of Trent proclaimed that “If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, or that there are more or less than seven, namely baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, [holy] order, and matrimony, or even that any one of these seven is not truly and strictly a sacrament: let him be anathema.”<sup>23</sup> In brief, there are seven and only these seven sacraments.

According to Catholic theology, “Holy Scripture attests that Christ immediately instituted the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Penance and Consecration. The other Sacraments . . . were [already] in existence in apostolic times.”<sup>24</sup> The apostles simply became the dispensers of these sacraments.

Acknowledging that neither the Bible nor the Fathers enumerate these seven sacraments as such, Roman Catholic scholars seek other—theological, historical, speculative—grounds. Theologically, they argue that “the existence of seven Sacraments has been regarded as a truth of Faith since the middle of the 12th century.” Later, it was confirmed by the official teaching of the Church from the 13th century on.<sup>25</sup> Historically, they point to the fact that “The Greek-Orthodox Church . . . agrees that there are seven Sacraments.”<sup>26</sup> According to Ott, even the Nestorian and Monophysite sects of the fifth century “held firmly to the sevenfold number of the Sacraments.”<sup>27</sup> Speculatively, grounds for the seven sacraments is sought in “The appropriateness of the number seven of the Sacraments [which] flows from the analogy to the supernatural life of the soul with the natural life of the body.” For example, “The supernatural life [by analogy with the natural life] is *generated* by Baptism; *brought to growth* by Confirmation; *nourished* by the Eucharist; *cured from the diseases of sins* and [*cured*] *from the weakness* arising from these by Penance and Extreme Unction.” And “By the

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21 Protestant baptism and the Orthodox church’s eucharistic celebration may be exceptions, since it is a debatable point whether the grace given through these comes by way of the Roman Catholic Church.

22 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 847, p. 262.

23 Ibid., no. 844, p. 262.

24 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 337.

25 Ibid., p. 338.

26 Ibid., p. 339.

27 Ibid.

two social Sacraments of Holy Order and Matrimony the congregation of the Church is *guided*, and spiritually and corporeally *preserved* and increased.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, Roman Catholics insist that for these reasons there are seven and only seven sacraments—the ones their church has infallibly proclaimed and enumerated.

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

Ott notes that, “Except for Baptism and Matrimony, a special priestly or Episcopal power conferred by Holy Orders, is necessary for the valid ministration of the Sacraments.”<sup>29</sup> Both Catholic lay persons (e.g., nurses or doctors) and even Protestants may administer baptism in the name of the Trinity. The Council of Trent, however, soundly condemned the view that “all Christians have the power to administer all the sacraments.”<sup>30</sup> Further, “The validity and efficacy of the Sacraments is independent of the minister’s orthodoxy and state of grace.”<sup>31</sup> That is, the priest does not have to be holy or heresy-free in order for the sacraments to convey grace.

Only human beings are valid recipients of sacraments. And, “excepting the Sacrament of Penance, neither orthodox belief nor moral worthiness is necessary for the validity of the Sacrament, on the part of the recipient.”<sup>32</sup> Heretics and immoral people can be valid recipients. In adults, however, “the intention of receiving the Sacrament is necessary.”<sup>33</sup> Also, in adults, moral worthiness in the sense of removing any obstacle to grace “is necessary for the worthy or fruitful reception of the Sacraments.”<sup>34</sup>

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## A DISCUSSION OF SOME CRUCIAL SACRAMENTS

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From a Catholic point of view, all the sacraments are crucial, but from an evangelical Protestant perspective, baptism, communion, and holy orders are especially important to our differences with Catholics. (Since holy orders is the subject of the next chapter, we will concentrate on the first two here.) Although Catholics and Protestants disagree about the number of the sacraments, the latter generally affirming only baptism and communion, the difference on the nature of the sacraments is more crucial.

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

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28 Ibid., emphasis added.

29 Ibid., p. 341.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p. 345.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., p. 346.

The Council of Trent declared that the sacrament of baptism must be administered with literal water and not merely symbolically. “If anyone shall say that natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ ( John 3:5 ), are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema.”<sup>35</sup> And, “If anyone shall say that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation: let him be anathema.”<sup>36</sup> Baptism properly administered is a once-for-all act, not to be repeated.<sup>37</sup> However, baptism is not a guarantee of salvation, for even the regenerate can lose their salvation.<sup>38</sup>

Even baptism done by Protestants and other non-Catholics (including heretics) in the name of the Trinity is valid.<sup>39</sup> But the denial of infant baptism (such as Baptists and many other Christian groups do deny) is a heresy.<sup>40</sup> For Trent declared that “If anyone shall say that infants, because they have not actual faith,<sup>41</sup> after having received baptism are not to be numbered among the faithful, and therefore, when they have reached the years of discretion, are to be rebaptized . . . let them be anathema.”<sup>42</sup> This, of course, anathematizes all Baptists and like groups, including the authors of this book!

Crucial to the debate between Catholics and evangelicals is the Catholic belief that “baptism confers the grace of justification.”<sup>43</sup> Since this is an *ex cathedra* pronouncement of the Catholic church it is not negotiable. The Council of Trent declared: “If anyone denies that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in Baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even assert that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away . . . let him be anathema.”<sup>44</sup> This does not mean that the tendency to sin (concupiscence) is removed but that the actual (ontological) stain of the guilt of our sins is taken away by baptism.

Elaborating on the Catholic dogma of justification by baptism Ott comments:

As justification consists, negatively, in the remission of sin, positively, in the sanctification and renewal of the inner man (D 799), so Baptism, provided that the proper

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35 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 858, p. 263.

36 Ibid., no. 861, p. 264.

37 Ibid., no. 867, p. 264.

38 Ibid., no. 862, p. 264.

39 Ibid., no. 860, p. 263.

40 Roman Catholics distinguish between material and formal heresy, the latter being only those who obstinately doubt or deny an article of faith and are thus morally culpable.

41 Some Catholic scholars speak of infants having “implicit faith,” but it is difficult to determine precisely what this means. How can they have faith when the faculties for believing (e.g., rationality and volitionality) are not yet developed? Some Catholic apologists suggest this cannot operate the way original sin operates, since everyone inherits original sin and we have no choice, but not everyone has faith and we do have a choice about that.

42 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 869, p. 264.

43 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 354.

44 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 792, p. 247.

dispositions (Faith and sorrow for sin) are present, effects: a) the eradication of sins, both original sin and, in the case of adults, also all personal moral or venial sins; b) inner sanctification by the infusion of sanctifying grace, with which the infused theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are always joined.<sup>45</sup>

A host of proof tests are offered in support of the belief in infant salvation by baptism. For a complete discussion of them, and a response to them, see Appendix E.

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST (COMMUNION)

Few issues better illustrate the difference between Catholics and Protestants than the doctrine of communion. This is especially true with regard to the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation, which holds that, during communion, the wine and bread are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ.

*Different Understandings Concerning the Lord's Supper.* Christians have historically taken different approaches toward the “eucharistic feast.” The Eastern Orthodox view dates back to the earliest times in Christendom, and interprets communion in much the same way as do Roman Catholics—with one important difference. Orthodox believers agree that when the priest consecrates the elements (the bread and wine), they become the very body and blood of Christ. However, “while Orthodoxy has always insisted on the *reality* of the change, it has never attempted to explain the *manner* of the change.”<sup>46</sup> Eastern Orthodoxy has always held that Western Christianity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant)—under the influence of thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas—has preempted the faith of mystery (see Appendix A).

The Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper, sometimes called “consubstantiation,” is that Christ's body and blood are in, with, and under the elements. Luther believed that the actual body of Christ, being in and under the elements, penetrates the elements in the same way that fire penetrates metal.<sup>47</sup> He rejected Catholic “transubstantiation,” stating:

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45 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 354.

46 Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, rev. (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 290.

47 Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1943), p. 140. Some Lutheran theologians are uneasy with the term “consubstantiation.” Luther himself never used the term *consubstantiatio*, which is of scholastic origin. Given his intense dislike of philosophy in general (he once called it a “whore”) and metaphysical formulations applied to theology in particular, he probably would be content to say that “the actual body and blood of Christ exist ‘in, with, or under’ the elements of bread and wine.” A. Skevington Wood, “Consubstantiation,” in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), p. 138. Also see Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (London and New York: Longman, 1981), p. 78. One of the forerunners of the Reformation, John Wycliffe (c. 1328–84), seems to have held to a view which would be later characterized as substantiation. See Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 3d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), pp. 269–70.

“It is not that the bread and wine have become Christ’s body and blood, but that we now have the body and blood in addition to the bread and wine.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, as we will discuss later, Lutheran theology rejects the concept of the mass as a sacrifice.<sup>49</sup>

The Reformed view of the Lord’s Supper is that the bread and the wine contain the body and blood of Christ *spiritually*. Christ is found in the sacrament in a spiritual or dynamic sense, rather than a physical or bodily way. John Calvin used the sun as an illustration, stating that “The sun remains in the heavens, yet its warmth and light are present on earth. So the radiance of the Spirit conveys to us the communion of Christ’s flesh and blood.”<sup>50</sup>

Finally, we have the “memorial” view of the Lord’s Supper. This position states that communion is primarily a commemoration of Christ’s death on the cross, following Jesus’ words “Do this in remembrance of me.” Adherents of this view included the Anabaptists and modern Baptist (and “baptistic”) churches. These groups often prefer to use the term “ordinance” rather than “sacrament” when referring to the eucharistic event (i.e., communion).

The crucial difference in the various views is whether the communion bread and the wine are the body and blood of Christ physically, spiritually, or only symbolically. We now move to the Roman Catholic “transubstantiation” view, which holds that the communion elements are transformed into the literal physical body and blood of Christ.

*The Holy Eucharist Defined.* Catholic theology (transubstantiation) defines this sacrament as follows: “The Eucharist is that Sacrament, in which Christ, under the forms of bread and wine, is truly present, with His Body and Blood, in order to offer Himself in an unbloody manner to the Heavenly Father, and to give Himself to the faithful as nourishment for their souls.”<sup>51</sup> In the words of the irrevocable pronouncement of the Council of Trent, “First of all the holy Synod teaches and openly and simply professes that in the nourishing sacrament of the Holy Eucharist after the consecration of the bread and the wine our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially (can. 1) contained under the species of those sensible things.”<sup>52</sup>

Because of its nature in presenting the very body and blood of Christ, the Eucharist is the most important of all sacraments to Catholics. Trent commented, “this, indeed, the most Holy Eucharist has in common with the other sacraments, that it is a ‘symbol of a sacred thing and a visible form of an invisible grace’; but this excellent and peculiar thing is found in it, that the other sacraments first have the power of sanctifying, when one uses them, but in the Eucharist there is the Author of sanctity Himself before it is used (can.

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48 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 1117.

49 Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, p. 140; quoted in *ibid.*

50 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.12 ; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 1119.

51 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 370.

52 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 874, p. 265.



4).”<sup>53</sup> The reason the Eucharist is the greatest sacrament for Catholics is found in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Trent made it an official part of Catholic faith that “by the consecration of the bread and wine a conversion takes place of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. This conversion is appropriately called transubstantiation by the Catholic Church.”<sup>54</sup>

Since in transubstantiation the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ, Catholics believe that it is appropriate to worship the consecrated elements as God. Trent pronounced emphatically that “There is, therefore, no room left for doubt that all the faithful of Christ . . . offer in veneration (can. 6) the worship of *latría* [the act of adoration] which is due to the true God, to this most Holy Sacrament.”<sup>55</sup> Catholic reasoning for this is that since Christ in his human form is God and, therefore, appropriately worshiped (e.g., John 20:28), and since in the mass the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ, there is no reason that the elements should not be worshiped as God. Thus, Trent declared that “If anyone says that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist the only-begotten Son of God is not to be adored even outwardly with the worship of *latría* (the act of adoration) . . . and is not to be set before the people publicly to be adored, and that the adorers are idolaters: let him be anathema.”<sup>56</sup>

*Transubstantiation Defended.* The Catholic defense of the doctrine of transubstantiation is based primarily on the words of Christ when he instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper: “This is my body” (Matt. 26:26; cf. 1 Cor. 11:24). Other passages are sometimes used, especially John 6:53, where Jesus said, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” Of course, the key to the Roman Catholic view is interpreting Jesus’ words literally rather than symbolically. Ott summarizes the argument as follows:

The necessity of accepting a literal interpretation in this case is however evident:

a) From the nature of the words used. One specially notes the realistic expressions *alathas brosis* = true, real food (v. 55); *alathas posis* = true, real drink (v. 55); *trogein* = to gnaw, to chew, to eat (v. 54 et seq.).

b) From the difficulties created by a figurative interpretation. In the language of the Bible to eat a person’s flesh and drink his blood in the metaphorical sense means to persecute him in a bloody fashion, to destroy him. Cf. Ps. 26, 2; Is. 9, 20; 49, 26; Mich. 3:3.

c) From the reactions of the listeners, which Jesus does not correct, as He had done previously in the case of misunderstandings (cf. John 3:3 et seq.; 4, 32 et seq.; Mt. 16:6

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53 Ibid., no. 876, p. 267.

54 Ibid., no. 877, pp. 267–68.

55 Ibid., no. 878, p. 268.

56 Ibid., no. 888, p. 271.

et seq.). In this case, on the contrary He confirms their literal acceptance of His words at the risk that His Disciples and His Apostles might desert Him (v. 60 et seq.).

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## THE EVANGELICAL RESPONSE TO THE CATHOLIC VIEW OF THE SACRAMENTS

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### THE NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS

Ott frankly admits that “Holy Writ . . . does not summarize them in the figure seven. Again no formal enumeration of the seven Sacraments is found in the Fathers.” In fact, “This [enumeration of seven] emerged only around the middle of the 12th century.”<sup>57</sup> Further, Catholic scholars openly acknowledge that “it cannot be shown that any one of the seven Sacraments was at any particular time instituted by a Council, a Pope, a Bishop or a Community.” How, then, did belief in them arise? According to Ott, “the doctrinal decisions of the Church, the Fathers and the theologians *presuppose* the existence of the individual Sacraments as something handed down from antiquity. From this one may *infer* that the seven Sacraments existed in the Church from the very beginning.”<sup>58</sup>

The argument for seven sacraments scarcely needs critique; the lack of scriptural and historical support speaks for itself. There is no real basis in the Bible, the Fathers, or church councils for the enumeration of seven. The decision to recognize seven and only seven was late (13th century). The other argument is the weak one from analogy. Catholic scholars claim that seven sacraments exist in Scripture implicitly like the Trinity does. This is a false analogy since all the premises from which the Trinity is derived are taught explicitly in Scripture, namely: (1) there is one God, and (2) there are three persons who are God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hence, (3) there must be three persons in the one God. But nowhere does the Bible explicitly teach that marriage, penance, and confirmation, for example, are sacraments. These activities are no more sacraments than Bible reading, which is also a means of receiving grace ( Ps. 119 ; Rom. 10:17 ; Rev. 1:3 ). At best, Catholic scholars can point to the acts or events corresponding to these seven sacraments in

Scripture, but proving they were sacraments as Catholicism understands them (namely, as a cause of grace) is another matter.

### THE NATURE AND NECESSITY FOR SACRAMENTS

Catholic theology claims that sacraments are an actual cause of grace to the recipient. Baptism, for example, causes the grace of justification and sanctification to occur in the

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<sup>57</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 338.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 338–39, emphasis added.

infant recipient's life, even though the child has not exercised any actual faith in God.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, the Eucharist actually conveys the literal physical body and blood of Christ to the recipient. Evangelical Protestants reject this view in favor of a view we believe is grounded in Scripture.

The Catholic concept of a sacrament causing grace *ex opere operato* (by the work that has been worked) is a mystical, if not magical, view of sacraments. It is as though they are inherently endowed with powers to produce grace in the recipient. As Ronald Nash noted of pagan rites, "The phrase *ex opere operato* describes the pagan belief that their sacraments had the power to give the individual the benefits of immortality in a mechanical way without his undergoing any moral or spiritual transformation. This certainly was not Paul's view, either of salvation or of the operation of the Christian sacraments." By contrast, sacraments "were considered to be primarily *dona data*, namely blessings conveyed to those who by nature were unfit to participate in the new order inaugurated by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Pagan sacraments, on the contrary, conveyed their benefits *ex opere operato*." <sup>60</sup>

## BAPTISMAL JUSTIFICATION/SANCTIFICATION

Since our response to Roman Catholic use of Scripture to support baptismal regeneration is found in Appendix E, here we will concentrate on other problems with viewing baptism as a saving sacrament. The following critiques are offered from a Reformed/Baptist view. The Lutheran/Anglican belief in baptismal regeneration admittedly causes tension with the Protestant principle of justification by faith alone (see Appendix E). Thus from a Reformed/Baptistic perspective:

*Baptismal regeneration appears to be contrary to grace.* The belief that baptism brings regeneration seems inconsistent with the biblical teaching on God's grace, namely, that salvation comes by grace through faith and not by any works of righteousness, including baptism. Baptism is called a work of "righteousness" in Matthew 3:15, but Paul declared that it was "not because of any righteous deeds we have done but because of his mercy, he saved us" ( Titus 3:5 ). He also said that it is "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast" ( Eph. 2:8-9 ). So, baptism appears to be no more necessary for being

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<sup>59</sup> The Catholic view of the "implicit faith" of infants is significantly different from the belief of many Protestants who hold that God elects infants apart from actual faith, knowing that they will exercise faith in God when their faculties are quickened by God (presumably before death) so that they are able to believe. Further, it differs from Protestants who hold that God actually saves infants who *can't* believe (because their faculties are not yet developed), knowing that they *would have* believed if they could have. God sees the potential as well as the actual, and he can act accordingly, even in advance of the actual events (see Appendix E).

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 153.

saved than is any other “work of righteousness.” Indeed, any work of righteousness to obtain salvation is contrary to grace.

*Baptismal regeneration is in conflict with the need for faith.* Throughout the Bible it is faith and faith alone<sup>61</sup> that is commanded as a condition for receiving God’s gift of salvation. When the Philippian jailor asked, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved” ( Acts 16:30–31 ). In the entire Gospel of John belief is the only thing required to receive eternal life. Jesus said, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” ( John 3:16 ). He added, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” ( John 3:36 ), and “whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life” ( John 5:24 ). If baptism—or anything in addition to belief—is necessary for salvation, then it seems difficult to exonerate Jesus from misleading his audience.

*Baptismal regeneration is contrary to the teaching of Paul.* The great apostle called of God to take the gospel to the Gentiles said emphatically, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel” ( 1 Cor. 1:17 ), thus putting the “gospel” and “baptism” in opposition. Clearly, baptism is not part of the gospel. But the gospel “is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” ( Rom. 1:16 ). Since, then, the gospel saves us and baptism is not part of the gospel, it follows that baptism cannot be part of what saves us. Baptism, rather, is an outward sign of what saves us, namely, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who believe the gospel.

*“Baptism of desire” proves baptism is not essential to salvation.* According to Roman Catholic theology someone can be saved who has never been baptized, providing the desire was present. Ott claims that “Baptism of desire, it is true, replace[s] Sacramental Baptism in so far as the communication of grace is concerned.”<sup>62</sup> Even the great Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, conceded that “a person may be saved extrasacramentally by baptism of desire and therefore [there is ] the possibility of salvation without actual membership . . . in the Church.”<sup>63</sup>

The same applies to those who suffered and were not baptized—the so-called baptism of blood. As Augustine acknowledged, “I find not only suffering for the sake of Christ can replace that which is lacking in Baptism, but also faith and conversion of the heart, if perhaps the shortness of time does not permit the celebration of the mystery of Baptism.”<sup>64</sup> So even within Catholic theology there can be salvation without baptism, proving that

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61 Repentance is sometimes mentioned (cf. Luke 13:3 ; Acts 17:30 ) but the two are one: there is no true faith without repentance (a change of mind) and there is no true repentance without faith ( 1 Thess. 1:8–9 ).

62 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 311.

63 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III 68, 2; cited in *ibid.*, p. 313.

64 Augustine, *On Baptism* IV 22, 29; cited in *ibid.*, p. 357.

baptism is not essential to salvation. Indeed, the thief on the cross was saved by faith alone apart from baptism or other good works ( Luke 23:43 ).

Of course, as already noted, this is also an intramural Protestant debate, since many Protestants also believe in baptismal regeneration. Further, the outcome of this debate is not crucial to the argument against the Catholic sacramental system. For to them, all sacraments cause grace and are not merely a sign or means of grace. With this Protestants disagree.

## TRANSUBSTANTIATION

More important than the differences over baptism is the disagreement about communion. Roman Catholic scholars argue that Jesus' words should be taken in a physical sense when he said of the bread and wine "This is my body" and when he said "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." But evangelicals believe there are several good reasons for rejecting this interpretation.

*It is not necessary to take these phrases literally.* Jesus' words need not be taken in the literal sense of ingesting his actual physical body and blood. Jesus often spoke in metaphors and figures of speech.<sup>65</sup> He said, "I am the gate" ( John 10:9 ) and "I am the true vine" ( John 15:1 ), and Roman Catholic scholars do not take these statements literally, even though they come from the same book that records "This is my body"! It is, therefore, not necessary to take Jesus literally when he said "this is my body" or "eat my flesh." Jesus often spoke in graphic parables and figures, as he himself said ( Matt. 13:10–11 ). As we shall see, these can be understood from the context.

*It is not plausible to take Jesus' words literally.* In response to the Catholic argument, first of all, the vividness of the phrases are no proof of their literal intent. The Psalms are filled with vivid figures of speech. God is depicted as a rock ( Ps. 18:3 ), a bird ( Ps. 63:7 ), a tower ( Prov. 18:10 ), and many other ways in Holy Writ. Yet Catholic scholars do not take these to have a literal, physical referent. Further, the Bible often uses the language of ingesting in a figurative sense. "O taste and see that the Lord is good" is a case in point ( Ps. 34:9 NKJV ). The apostle John himself was told to eat a scroll (God's word) in the Apocalypse: "Take and swallow it." John did and said, "when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour" ( Rev. 10:9–10 ). What could be more vivid? This, however, was all part of a vision John had referring to his receiving God's word (the scroll). Even Peter tells young believers, "like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk" ( 1 Pet. 2:2 ). And the writer of Hebrews speaks of mature Christians eating "solid food" ( 5:14 ) and of others who "tasted the heavenly gift" ( 6:4 ).

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<sup>65</sup> The intensity with which Jesus spoke when challenged does not prove that his words are to be taken literally. Jesus called the Pharisees "blind guides" ( Matt. 23:24 ) and labeled Herod a "fox" ( Luke 13:32 ), both strong metaphors not meant to be taken literally.

Neither is it necessary, as Catholic scholars suggest, to take flesh and blood literally because this phrase was used that way in many places in other contexts. The same words have different meanings in different contexts. The word “flesh” (Gk: *sarx*) is used in the New Testament in a spiritual, non-physical sense of the fallen nature of human beings, such as when Paul said, “I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh” ( Rom. 7:18 ; cf. Gal. 5:17 ). Meaning is discovered by context, not simply by whether the same or similar words are used. The same words are used in very different ways in different contexts. Even the word “body” (Gk: *soma* ), which means a physical body when used of an individual human being sometimes means the mystical body of Christ, the church, in other contexts (cf. Eph. 1:22–23 ), as both Catholics and Protestants acknowledge.

The fact that some of Jesus’ listeners apparently took his words literally ( John 6:52 ) without his explicit and immediate rebuke is not a good argument. Jesus rebuked their understanding, at least implicitly, when he said later in the same discourse, “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” ( John 6:63 ).<sup>66</sup> To borrow a phrase from Paul, Jesus’ words are to be “judged spiritually” ( 1 Cor. 2:14 ; cf. Matt. 16:17 ), not in a gross physical sense. Also, Jesus did not have to rebuke them explicitly in order for their interpretation to be wrong, since a literalistic understanding in this context would have been so unreasonable that no disciple would have expected the Lord to be making such an absurd statement. After all, if the disciples had taken these words literally they could have thought he was suggesting cannibalism.

Neither is the appeal to an alleged miraculous transformation of the elements called for in this context. The only miracle in this connection is the feeding of the five thousand ( John 6:11 ), which was the occasion for this discourse on the bread of life ( John 6:35 ). An appeal to miracles of transubstantiation here is *deus ex machina*; that is, it is a vain attempt to evoke God to keep an implausible interpretation from collapsing.

Finally, appeal to the church fathers to support the Trentian dogma of transubstantiation is poorly grounded for many reasons. First, as even Catholic scholars admit, the Fathers were by no means unanimous in their interpretation, and yet Trent speaks of the “unanimous consent of the Fathers” as the means of determining true apostolic tradition. But some Fathers clearly opposed the idea of taking literally the phrase “this is my body.” Second, many of the Fathers simply supported the idea of Jesus’ real presence in the communion, not that the elements were literally transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. So the later dogma of transubstantiation cannot be based on any early or unanimous consent of the Fathers which Catholics claim for it.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, whose roots are at least as old as the Roman church, has always held a mystical view of Christ’s presence in the communion but never the

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66 Ott’s argument that “In V, 63 (‘It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing’) Christ does not reject the literal, but only the grossly sensual (Capharnaitic) interpretation” is implausible for reasons given above.

Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation (see Appendix A).<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the Lutheran understanding, which rejects transubstantiation, appeals to the same Fathers in support of their view over against Catholicism. Finally, as noted before, the Fathers had only a fallible interpretation of the infallible Word. They could be—and often were—wrong. So there is no reason why they could not be wrong on this issue as well.

The Catholic church's use of the Fathers to proclaim a doctrine as infallibly true is not always consistent with the evidence. For sometimes their proclamation of a view as apostolic truth is not as well supported in the early fathers. In the final analysis, the decision of the teaching magisterium to proclaim a view on an article of faith is not based on the evidence, and its appeal to the Fathers and councils is uneven and after the fact. For example, when the Catholic church pronounces infallible a view that earlier Fathers and councils condemned, it ignores their statements against it, but when only a few early fathers and councils support a view they desire to pronounce *de fide*, then they point triumphantly to this minority voice. The truth is that the Catholic church's use of the Fathers is not only inconsistent but also circular. For the Fathers are used as a basis for the infallible teaching of the church, but the infallible teaching of the church is the basis for the use of the Fathers.

*It is not possible to take a literal view.* In at least one important respect it is logically impossible (inconsistent) for an orthodox Christian to hold to a literal interpretation of Jesus' words at the Last Supper. For, *when Jesus said of the bread in his hand "this is my body," no disciple present could possibly have understood him to mean that the bread was actually his physical body since he was still with them in his physical body, the hands of which were holding that very bread.* Otherwise, we must believe that Christ was holding his own body in his own hands. This reminds one of the medieval myth of the saint whose head was cut off yet he put it in his mouth and swam across the river!

Jesus could not have been speaking literally when he said, "this is my body" because ever since his incarnation he had always been a human being and also had always dwelt continuously in a human body (except for three days in a grave). *If the bread and the wine he held in his hands at the Last Supper were actually his body and blood, then he would have been incarnated in two different places at the same time!* One physical body cannot, however, be in two different locations at the same time; it takes two different bodies to do that. Hence, despite Catholic protest to the contrary,<sup>68</sup> transubstantiation logically would involve two bodies and two incarnations of Christ, which is contrary to the orthodox doctrine of *the* Incarnation.

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67 The Orthodox church permits but does not require that real presence be understood in terms of transubstantiation which Roman Catholicism proclaims infallibly as the only way to properly understand it.

68 Catholic scholars speak of Christ being in only one body but two locations, holding to bilocation but not bicorporation. But this is a distinction without a difference, since one of the essential properties of a physical earthly body, such as Jesus had, is that it has one particular location in space and time and cannot have another at the same time.

*It is idolatrous to worship the host.* As we have seen, it is an official dogma of Roman Catholicism that the consecrated Eucharist can and should be worshiped. But many Protestants believe this is a form of idolatry.<sup>69</sup> For it is the worship of something which the God-given senses of every normal human being inform them is a finite creation of God, namely, bread and wine. It is to worship God under a physical image which is clearly forbidden in the Ten Commandments ( Exod. 20:4 ).

Furthermore, the appeal to some kind of ubiquitous presence of the body of Christ or omnipresence of Christ as God in the host does not resolve the problem. That is, to consider the eucharistic elements to be only the “accidental clothing” under which Christ is somehow localized does not avoid the difficulty, for, using the same argument, one could justify pagans worshipping stones or statues, since God is everywhere present, even in their objects of worship. So by the same kind of argument that Roman Catholics would use to justify their worship of the host, pagan and other non-Christian idolatry also can be justified. After all, no animistic pagan really worships the stone. What he worships is the spirit that animates it.

Finally, to claim that the consecrated host is anything but a finite creature undermines the very epistemological basis by which we know anything in the empirical world and, indirectly, the very historical basis of support for the truth about the incarnate Christ, his death, and resurrection. For if the senses cannot be trusted when they experience the communion elements then the disciples could not have even verified Christ’s claims to be resurrected. Jesus said, “ *Look* at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. *Touch* me and *see*, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have” ( Luke 24:39 , emphasis added; cf. John 20:27 ). John said of Christ that he was “What was from the beginning, what we have *heard*, what we have *seen* with our eyes, what we *looked upon* and *touched* with our hands” ( 1 John 1:1 , emphasis added).

*The mass shows no evidence of the miraculous.* The Roman Catholic response to the foregoing arguments is that the mass is a miracle and, therefore, appealing to the normal, natural way of observing things is irrelevant. Miracles are not normal occurrences. This strategy, however, will not work, since the mass shows absolutely no evidence of being a miracle.

First, using the same kind of reasoning to try to justify an invisible material substance miraculously replacing the empirically obvious signs of bread and wine, one could justify the belief in Santa Claus at Christmas or a little invisible gremlin moving the hands on one’s watch. Transubstantiation is literally not sensible, even though its object is a

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69 Catholics are quick to point out that some Protestants (e.g., Anglicans) and Eastern Orthodox also venerate the host and genuflect before it. This does not prove it is correct; at best it may only show that these views are also wrong. However, there is a difference that makes the criticism more severe for Roman Catholics, since they alone believe that the host is actually the body of Christ and can and should be worshiped as God. Others may believe that Christ is really present *in* the host, but this is very different from saying he *is* the host and should be worshiped as such.



sensible (i.e., physical) body. Philosophically, it is an empirically unknowable event in the empirical world, and theologically, it is a matter of pure faith. Catholics must simply believe what the teaching magisterium tells them, namely, that the host is really Jesus' body, even though their senses tell them otherwise.

Second, if the mass is a miracle, then virtually any natural empirical event could also be a miracle, since miracles could be happening without any empirical evidence they were. This is like a physical resurrection without an empty tomb. If this is true, then nothing is a miracle. Hence, claiming that the mass is a miracle undermines the very nature of miracles themselves, at least as special events with apologetic value.

Third, it is futile for Catholic apologists to appeal to special divine appearances (theophanies) in an attempt to avoid these criticisms, for in so doing they overlook a very important difference. When God himself appears in a finite form it is an obvious miraculous appearance that one knows clearly is not a normal event. That is, there are supernatural manifestations, voices, prophecies, or unusual events of nature connected with it (cf. Exod. 3:1–6). The mass has no such events associated with it. Indeed, nowhere in the New Testament are the normal words for miracle (sign, wonder, power) used of the communion. There is absolutely no evidence that it is anything but a natural event with natural elements on which Christ places special spiritual blessings (and/or presence) as we “remember” his death ( 1 Cor. 11:25 ).

## THE MASS AS A SACRIFICE

Roman Catholics (and Anglicans)<sup>70</sup> view the eucharistic feast as a sacrifice (albeit an unbloody one).<sup>71</sup> This term is found as early as Gregory the Great (c. A.D. 540– 604), who was elected pope in A.D. 590.<sup>72</sup> Gregory held that at every mass Christ was sacrificed afresh and consequently “This notion of the mass as sacrifice eventually became standard doctrine of the Western church—until it was rejected by Protestants in the sixteenth century.”<sup>73</sup>

In A.D. 831, a Frankish monk, Paschasius Radbertus (d. ca. 860), in a work titled *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*, addressed this issue. Radbertus taught that Christ is “corporeally” present during communion. The early church had considered the Eucharist a fellowship meal. Hence, “The new emphasis on the corporeal presence of Christ permitted the Church to begin to treat Christ as a victim, rather than as the host [of the feast], to think of itself as offering him to the Father, rather than as coming to be

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70 Roman Catholics and Anglicans have issued a 600-word, five-point statement on common eucharistic beliefs, including viewing the Eucharist as a sacrifice. See “Catholics, Anglicans Agree,” *The Southern Cross* (27 January 1994): 10.

71 It should be noted that Eastern Orthodoxy agrees with Roman Catholicism on this point: “At the Eucharist, the sacrifice offered is Christ himself, and it is Christ himself, who in the Church performs the act of offering” (Ware, pp. 292–93).

72 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, pp. 594–95.

73 González, *Story of Christianity*, 1:247.

nourished at his table.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, the Lord’s Supper—which the early church viewed as a *fellowship* meal—became a *sacrifice*. The *remembrance* of a sacrifice becomes a new *enactment* of that sacrifice.<sup>75</sup> While, as Roman Catholics point out, the New Testament term “remembrance” (Gk: *anamnesis*) is often used in a sacrificial context, it does not justify their contention that communion is a sacrifice. What Jesus said was that, in participating in communion, we are *remembering* his sacrifice on the cross, not *reenacting* it.

Lutheran theology also rejects the concept of the mass as a sacrifice: “Since Christ died and atoned for sin once and for all, and since the believer is justified by faith on the basis of that one-time sacrifice, there is no need for repeated sacrifices.”<sup>76</sup> Sacerdotalism is also rejected: “The presence of Christ’s body and blood is not a result of the priest’s actions. It is instead a consequence of the power of Jesus Christ.”<sup>77</sup> But even granting that God is the primary cause of the transformation, Protestants still object to the Roman Catholic sacerdotal belief that the priest is a secondary cause or instrument through which God accomplishes such a transformation. It is contrary to the known ways of God revealed in Scripture to grant any creature the power to transform a creation (the bread and wine) into the actual body of the Creator (Christ).<sup>78</sup> The whole concept of re-enacting and re-presenting Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is contrary to the clear teaching of Hebrews that this sacrifice occurred once for all time ( Heb. 10:12–14 ). Thus, when the Council of Trent speaks of Christ being “immolated” (sacrificed)<sup>79</sup> again and again in the mass, it violates the clear teaching of Scripture.

## THE CORPOREAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST

As mentioned earlier, the doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ during the eucharistic feast poses another problem for most evangelicals.<sup>80</sup> Brown summarizes the difficulty that Roman Catholics (and Lutherans) face: “In order to be bodily present at thousands of altars, the body of Christ must possess one of the so-called attributes of the

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74 Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ*, p. 233.

75 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

76 Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, p. 140.

77 *Ibid.*

78 While God granted human instruments (e.g., Moses, Elijah, and the apostles) the power to do miracles, some of which transformed water into wine, there is no evidence that he ever gave them the power to transform wine into the actual blood of the Son of God!

79 The Catholic observation that “immolate” does not necessarily mean “kill” (cf. Num. 8:11–21) but merely to “sacrifice” does nothing to counter the Scripture that affirms there is only one “sacrifice” forever ( Heb. 10:10–14 ).

80 We use the word “most” because this difficulty is also inherent in Lutheran theology with their understanding that, in communion, the physical body and blood of Christ are “contained in” or are “under” the communion elements. In spite of “denials of various facets of the Catholic position, Luther insisted upon the concept of *manducation*. There is a real eating of Jesus’ body” (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 1118).

majesty of God, namely, omnipresence or ubiquity.”<sup>81</sup> Simply put, “To believe that Jesus was in two places at once is something of a denial of the incarnation, which limited his physical human nature to one location.”<sup>82</sup> This eucharistic understanding is fraught with difficulties. In an effort to preserve the “actual presence,” one comes perilously close to “monophysitism,” which held that, following the incarnation, Christ possessed only one incarnate divine nature—combining and co-mingling his two natures. Monophysitism was condemned by the Council of Ephesus ( A.D. 431), and this official condemnation was reaffirmed at Chalcedon ( A.D. 451).<sup>83</sup> Thus, by the same logic, should not the co-mingling of the divine and human in the substance of the communion elements also be condemned as unorthodox?

## THE SACRAMENTALS

Lastly, we briefly mention something that the Roman Catholic Church calls the “Sacramentals”—not to be confused with the sacraments. Sacramentals include blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday, holy water, the sign of the cross, candles, the rosary, fasts, and the like. They are defined as “things or actions which the church uses in a certain imitation of the Sacraments, in order, in virtue of her prayers, to achieve effects, above all of the spiritual nature.”<sup>84</sup> Sacramentals differ from sacraments in that Roman Catholics believe that the latter were instituted by Christ and the former by the church. Sacramentals also differ from sacraments “in the effects they produce. Unlike the sacraments, they do not confer sanctifying grace directly but merely dispose a person to its reception.”<sup>85</sup>

Because sacramentals are not thought to be grace-producing in themselves, they are less problematic for evangelicals than the sacraments. The difference between Catholics and evangelicals here is more ceremonial than substantial.

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are at the heart of Roman Catholic belief and practice. Indeed, they have institutionalized them and, hence, are deserving of the title “an institution of salvation.” Salvation is dispensed by the Catholic church to each recipient piece by piece from birth to death. Luther’s heartbeat was to liberate the Christian soul from the heavy burden of institutionalized salvation. Even Catholic scholar Louis Bouyer asserted that Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity* had “the sole, fundamental aim” of separating the individual soul, in its living relation with God, from all the

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81 Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ*, p. 229.

82 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 1121.

83 Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ*, pp. 168–72, 181–85.

84 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 348.

85 Hardon, *Catholic Catechism*, p. 549.

complexities of an ecclesiastical organism which would stifle it, once the means of grace were either misdirected or made an end in themselves.<sup>86</sup> What Bouyer seems to forget, however, is that this is precisely what happened in Roman Catholicism.

Few things involve greater differences between Catholics and Protestants than the sacraments. Catholics believe that a sacrament is a cause of grace. For example, they hold that the grace of justification and sanctification are conveyed through baptism. Most Protestants do not.<sup>87</sup> Further, Catholics believe in transubstantiation; all historic orthodox Protestants do not.<sup>88</sup> We have examined both the arguments from the Bible and tradition in support of the Roman Catholic view and found them wanting. In fact, some dimensions of Roman Catholic teaching on the sacraments clearly contradict Scripture, other orthodox Christian teaching, and even fact and logic. Even Luther—who was the least radical of the Reformers with regard to church practices—retained many of the external ceremonies “so as not to disturb people.”<sup>89</sup>

In view of these significant differences between Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant doctrine, realism demands one take a less optimistic view than the ecumenical call, “Rome is home.” As long as Roman Catholics maintain that these are unnegotiable dogmas, we will have to find ecclesiastical lodging elsewhere, in spite of all the other doctrines on which we agree (see Part One) and the practical areas in which we can cooperate (see Part Three).

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86 Bouyer, *Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, p. 100.

87 Lutherans are an exception, retaining the Catholic view at this point but manifesting a great deal of tension between it and the doctrine of justification by faith alone (see chap. 12 and Appendix E).

88 One can always find some exception somewhere, such as Howard Erwin, a charismatic Protestant who claims to believe in transubstantiation. But then again there are unorthodox Protestant charismatics who believe God the Father has a physical body and that Jesus was born again in hell! (see Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* [Eugene, Oreg.: Harvest House, 1993]).

89 Toon, *Born Again*, p. 91.