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# MYSTERY:
# A NEGLECTED ASPECT OF FIRST-MILLENNIUM WESTERN LITURGY

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**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**The University of Durham**

**by**

**BENJAMIN NICHOLAS GORDON-TAYLOR**

**Department of Theology and Religion**

DURHAM

**2007**

- 2 APR 2008

**Mystery: A Neglected Aspect of First-Millennium Western Liturgy**
**Benjamin Nicholas Gordon-Taylor 2007**

The thesis aims to show that the Western tradition has its own vibrant, rich, profoundly significant and enduringly relevant concept of mystery which can best be seen to be present in the evolution of its liturgy and in associated intellectual culture in the first millennium CE. The significance of *mysterium* in western liturgical texts and theological writing of the second half of this period has been particularly neglected in liturgical and wider scholarship, and in the tendency to assume that the Christian East has the stronger theology of mystery, but it needs to be noticed and acknowledged for its intrinsic value and if modern issues in liturgical change and reconstruction are to be properly understood. In this recovery and its interpretation lies the overall originality of the thesis.

**Part I** discusses modern approaches to mystery in the context of liturgy, highlighting and challenging some assumptions and misunderstandings that have arisen in, for example, the translation of liturgical texts. The value of the classic approaches of Baumstark and Casel is acknowledged; that of Casel is argued to be an insufficient response in itself to the importance of liturgical mystery. Three modern writers are deployed to show that mystery has a significance across disciplinary boundaries. There follow discussions of mystery as religious language, in relation to knowledge, revelation and visual art, drawing critically on and originally juxtaposing a diverse range of theological scholarship and literary genre in order to point to a common theme of what is here termed the 'moreness' of God, and the ultimate inability of language to fully describe or make known the initiative and activity of God, and to propose that, paradoxically, mystery is a *necessary* form of language used to indicate these very limitations. Liturgy is the supreme *locus* of mystery in these terms.

**Part II** embeds this argument first in a critical re-evaluation of the origins and background of mystery in its Greek (*mysterion)* and Latin (*mysterium*) forms and of scholarly opinion on these in late antique religious and early Christian contexts, including a fresh assessment of the notion that mystery language tended to be avoided in a sacramental context until about the fourth century CE because of its perceived associations with pagan mystery cults. The relationship between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* is then discussed and evaluated in the light of existing scholarship and new research which concentrates especially on those instances where the terms appear in the same sentence, in order to dispel the common and hitherto insufficiently challenged assumption that they are synonymous. Their interplay shows *mysterium* itself to be a critically important and polyvalent term in emerging sacramental and liturgical discourse. The relatively few instances of mystery as a term in surviving early liturgical forms of eastern and western provenance are evaluated, and the original argument made that the wider use of mystery language in the Latin tradition from the fourth century needs to be seen alongside the transition of liturgical formulae from the largely improvised to the fixed written text: *mysterium* is the link, since it represents in textual terms the divine initiative assumed by the practice of improvisation. The continuing importance, richness and theological significance of the term is shown by a detailed analysis of its use in selected examples of the texts which emerged from this process. It is further shown to be a significant notion in an example of an intellectual context in which texts of this type were used, the Carolingian era and in its theological writers including the liturgist Alcuin and the allegorist Amalarius, in the *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, in the debate surrounding Adoptionism, and in the so-called, but here argued to be misinterpreted, eucharistic 'controversy' between Ratramnus and Paschasius Radbertus. Carolingian responses to visual art lead to the original proposal that in this period text effectively functions much as art does in expressing 'moreness'. This has implications for liturgical text in the modern era and suggests a more creative approach to issues surrounding liturgical change. Mystery is the necessary language which lies at the centre of this approach.

…tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,
His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many individuals, institutions and organisations deserving of profound thanks for their assistance in the researching and writing of this thesis. The opportunity to begin was provided by those who elected me to the Solway Fellowship and Chaplaincy of University College, Durham: for this I am deeply grateful to the Master, Professor Maurice Tucker, and his colleagues with whom it was a pleasure to work for five and a half years. I owe a great deal also to fellow members of the Senior Common Room for their support, humour, hospitality and above all wisdom. Among those who patiently and generously answered specific queries on all manner of aspects of the thesis, I must thank Professor Peter Rhodes, Dr George Boys-Stones, Mr Alan Piper, Mr John Lumsden and Dr Ian Doyle; in the Department of Theology and Religion Professors Andrew Louth and Robert Hayward, the Revd Canon Dr David Kennedy, Dr Alastair MacGregor and members of the Durham University Liturgy Seminar; further afield the Revd Professor Lizette Larson-Miller, the Revd Dr Simon Jones, Dr Juliette Day, Dr Bridget Nichols, Dr Carol Wilkinson, the Revd Canon Dr Donald Gray CBE, the Revd Professor Louis Weil, Bishop Colin Buchanan; colleagues and friends in Societas Liturgica, the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, the Society for Liturgical Study and the Alcuin Club; my colleagues at the College and Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, among them Canon Christopher Irvine, Fr Peter Allan CR, Fr Thomas Seville CR, Fr Benedict Green CR, Dr Ken Farrimond and the Revd Hilary Ison; Dom James Leachman OSB and Claudia Casalini of the Library of Sant' Anselmo, Rome; Santa Clara University Library, California; the Libraries of St John's College and Ushaw College, Durham; Durham Cathedral Library; and Durham University Library and most particularly the staff of the Palace Green section, that most congenial place of study among the books of Bishop John Cosin, and in which the immense learning of Dr Ian Doyle, Honorary Reader in Bibliography, is so constantly present and generously shared.

Ms Ingrid Lawrie patiently answered my many referencing queries and other points of style and heroically proof-read the final draft, as did Mrs Sarah Farrimond.

Among my teachers of theology, the late Fr David Lane and the late Professor Adrian Hastings were great influences. Fr George Guiver CR has for many years been my teacher, mentor, and friend: without his inspiration, imagination and constant encouragement in professional and personal spheres nothing I have attempted to say here would have seen the light of day. He has done more than he could ever know or would ever admit.

Indeed at Mirfield, where there is such a deep sense of place, one cannot help but be inspired by the tangible memory of the Founder, Charles Gore, and most particularly of Walter Howard Frere, religious, bishop and scholar, some of whose own copies of books have been consulted for this thesis, his precise, minuscule hand in the margin becoming a familiar companion. If reverence is due, it is to his legacy. It is an honour for the present author to have been asked to follow, however inadequately, in his footsteps as liturgy lecturer at the College of the Resurrection. In that so very liturgical place, I owe so very much to my students and colleagues, and not least to the brethren of the Community of the Resurrection, whose support and example has for long been a gift to me.

Professor Ann Loades CBE has at every stage encouraged and assisted me in my work and has been a staunch friend and support. My supervisor, the Revd Canon Professor David Brown, has given generously of his vast learning, time and expertise, and in his writing has encouraged wide reading and the pursuit of the not so obvious.

My family of course have lived with 'mystery' too, and to my wife Lynne and daughters Mary and Bethany, and to my parents, I offer this product of my efforts.

Benjamin Gordon-Taylor
Mirfield, Yorks,
August 2007

# INTRODUCTION

> It would be mistaken to see Christian thought about God as static, fixed once for all in the fourth century, apart from the periodic upsurge of heresy, usually of a unitarian kind. It is wiser to see it as a continuous dialogue about mysteries which, because of their ultimacy, no one can understand, no formula encapsulate, but in which a diversity of evidences, experiences, and authorities have all to be included, and in which different writers approaching the doctrine of God from a variety of backgrounds - scriptural, philosophical, historical, or mystical - will offer different, even seemingly incompatible, emphases.[1]

The concept of mystery has been misunderstood. It has been viewed negatively and has even provoked outright hostility, and yet it is a significant factor in the emergence and development of sacramental theology in general and liturgy in particular. A rich seam of such usage can be traced in patristic and other early sources.[2] Although care must be exercised in interpretation, the overall impression is that, while mystery language was largely, though not wholly, avoided in the first four centuries of the Christian era because of its associations with the mystery cults of late antique Greek and Roman religion, from the fourth century it became more acceptable, more expedient and indeed more necessary to speak of the Christian 'mystery'. Much has been written about the 'history of religions' debate, and about mystery in that debate, but the perspective has been significantly narrow. The language that evolved from the debate came to play a vital role and as argued here a *necessary* role in the formation of the liturgy and of liturgical praxis in the first millennium in the west, a role the significance of which has been neglected, but which can be seen in an analysis and contextual evaluation of selected texts from the period. The nature of that role and its possible consequences for liturgical theology and construction in the present day forms the central argument of the essay. In order to achieve this, we begin in Part I with a critical discussion of contemporary understandings and *mis*understandings of mystery, in which different methodologies and authors whose approaches might have been assumed to be unsympathetic to and incompatible with one another can be shown under interpretation to make

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[1] Adrian Hastings, 'God', in Hastings *et al.* eds., *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 271.

[2] See for example C. Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 4th edition (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976).

possible a remarkable degree of fruitful dialogue, revealing that mystery as a *positive* concept is not confined to one school of theology or denominational confession, and must therefore be rooted far deeper in the common spiritual and intellectual inheritance of western Christianity, where its presence and implications must be noted. The themes around which the discussion can take place have their own diversity: they include those to do with language and how it 'works' in a religious context, the interpretation of art, the significance and interpretation of text, the nature of knowledge and the importance of surrounding intellectual and political cultures, theological and ecclesial. All these will form part of the methodology employed in Part II, which will examine the origins and use of the terms *mysterion* and *mysterium* in Greek and Roman religious and intellectual contexts and in Judaeo-Christian scripture; the inheritance and subsequent use of these terms in the Christian era in patristic writing, with especial attention to the relatively neglected and by no means straightforward relationship between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. Then will be examined the use of mystery language in early liturgical forms and its relevance to the evolution of the written as opposed to improvised liturgical text in the west. All of this and conclusions drawn from it establishes the proper context for the examination of selected eucharistic texts from the period of the sacramentaries. Specific attention will be paid to a reassessment of issues surrounding the institution narrative in what become known as the Roman Canon, in terms of its title and the inclusion of the phrase *mysterium fidei*. This will be accompanied by a discussion of relevant theological and intellectual concerns of the Carolingian world as an example of a contemporary context for texts of the sacramentary type, in respect of adoptionism, eucharistic theology and attitudes towards visual images in order to advance an argument about the function of text which, paradoxically, draws on the interpretation of visual art in this period.

While such scholars as Dom Odo Casel and his school made a distinguished and enduringly influential contribution to the recovery of a theology of mystery, a concentration on particular notions of presence obscured components of such a theology that had for long been part of western liturgical forms as assumptions or implied in linguistic survivals. The dynamic understanding of mystery that Casel formulated, while of immense importance

and merit though subject to later critique, nevertheless on account of its defensible concentration on the patristic period failed to take notice of subsequent developments in the period up to 1000 CE. Identification and analysis of the existence and nature of some of these neglected elements form the greater part of this thesis in Part II, as outlined above.

The overall argument of the thesis is that mystery language primarily indicates the initiative of God and gives it primacy in Christian worship. It does so particularly obviously, it will be argued, in the texts of the latter half of the first millennium, but in showing this we aim to suggest some implications and possibilities for modern engagement with the momentum of liturgical evolution that go beyond the superficial assumptions and character of debates and controversies in that area. What is offered here is a canvas on which we have attempted to suggest the main features of an approach to a theology of mystery which takes liturgy as its starting point, with the additional aim of drawing some conclusions for the last fifty years of liturgical discourse and reform arising from their lack of recognition, and placing them alongside Casel's insights as important additional resources for understanding the past, assessing the present and grasping a vision of the future of liturgical theology in the academy and the assembly. This means beginning to evaluate the period in question between the Fathers and the end of the first millennium in terms of the advances in methodology that are at our disposal as a result of more recent thinking about liturgy, language and theology, while maintaining a clear sense of the historical context then and now and the incomplete nature of the textual evidence. In gathering patristic data for the earlier period we have made extensive use of information technology that was not available to the great philologists of liturgy such as Mohlberg and Hanssens; this has made possible the gathering and analysis of specific citations from a wide range of sources, and informed comment on their specific and generic characteristics. Nevertheless the work of such scholars has been indispensible in supplying authoritative editions of the texts here studied, although we have occasionally been able to identify their limitations and omissions. In the selection of liturgical texts for detailed comment we quite deliberately restrict ourselves to texts that are readily available in scholarly editions and of which the provenance and textual history

are as well established as the inherent uncertainties of early medieval studies allow, in order that we may be free to concentrate on what they tell us about their theology. In doing so, however, we offer the invitation for future work on these and on texts not here examined, work which itself may confirm or indeed challenge what we here conclude. An appendix contains a previously published suggestion as to how this might be done in respect of the sacrament of ordination, revealing fault lines in the very period in question which heralded further and later obscuring of what we believe ultimately to be a distinct, hitherto neglected non-Caselian mystery theology in the liturgical and sacramental system of the west in the first millennium, but which also indicates the possibilities of the kind of approach we adopt and its potential for application to other areas and periods of liturgical and sacramental expression.

# PART I

# MYSTERY AS A CONCEPT IN HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

## CHAPTER 1

## LITURGY, CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Problems with liturgical change are often, it can be argued, rooted in a failure to appreciate the nature and dynamics of such change. They are taken out of their proper context by both proponents and detractors, and thereby starved of any of the creative possibilities that arise from an acceptance of the tension. Thus they take on the characteristics, if not the caricatures, of unhelpful reaction and resistance *versus* vulgar modernity. There is a way of using the history and theology of the liturgy to broker at least an intellectual truce between the apparent opposites of conservatism and revision in liturgy, to hold in tension the dangers of each extreme, and to suggest that what appear to be opposite aims are in fact both facets of the same thing, namely the 'deep structures' of what liturgical worship is and does, how it 'behaves'. These are aspects which cannot be divorced either from the historical data and its analysis nor from the fluid character of the *Sitz im Leben* of liturgy in all times and places. This requires a confidence in the vicissitudes of liturgical development and with the diverse source material, as well as a sense of the imperfection of all liturgy in the face of an unseen God whose nature and activity the Christian tradition consistently believes to be ultimately unpredictable and unknowable. One suspects that the desire to preserve unchanged particular forms of liturgy stems partly from personal preference, a dangerous because self-focused emotion in worship, but it may also be an entirely valid indication that liturgical revision has not succeeded in paying enough attention to the significance of how and why liturgy changes either, because it has not understood the *healthy* conservatism that is part of the nature of liturgy. By this is not meant the conservatism that seeks to preserve a specific language and ritual form, but that which gives the liturgy its unchanging quality as a vehicle of sacramental encounter and dialogue with the divine. *Mystery* in this sense is that quality of God-ness which acts in partnership with

revelation to animate the sacramental life of the Church and draw it towards its consummation, and it is this concept, lying at the heart of Christian doctrine, Christian experience and Christian practice that also lies at the heart of the liturgy and which throughout forms the basis for the present discussion.

**'Loss of Mystery' and the Problem of Liturgical Change**

It has become a common cry of those who feel that liturgical revision has gone too far that contemporary liturgy 'lacks mystery', both in its euchology (the texts) and in its performance (the way the texts are used). This is to some extent an aspect of what Robert Taft has called 'the modern western Catholic [and Anglican] romance with the Christian east and its liturgies', such that 'the west has tended to define eastern liturgy in terms of what it perceives itself as lacking.'[1] The danger is that this is an inaccurate reading of history, since 'present day Orthodoxy in no way represents "the past" of western Christianity,' and that to take such an approach is 'part of humanity's ongoing attempt to recreate for itself a better present out of an imagined ideal past, perhaps out of the fear that, having lost yesterday, we have no today.'[2] This idealized view of the Christian east specifically is not the whole story, however, and Taft's comments may be applied equally to the view of some that the glory of western liturgies has departed. Mystery has often been held up as the glory the east has but the west has lost from its liturgies, but in the west mystery is often understood by those who claim to miss it to be something to do with language - Latin or Tudor English seen as good, modern English as bad - or with particular forms of celebration the character of which reflects a relatively limited period of liturgical history - High Mass with plainsong seen as good, Parish Communion with guitars as bad. This is to an extent caricature, but in both Roman Catholic and Anglican contexts there are those who are sharply critical of liturgical revision which has eclipsed, if not totally supplanted, other forms of liturgy. In the Roman Catholic Church the lost treasure is the Latin mass, and in the Anglican, and particularly in the Church of England, it is the Book of Common

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[1] R.F. Taft, '"Eastern Presuppositions" and Western Liturgical Renewal', at http://praiseofglory.com/taftliturgy.htm [23.6.2005].
[2] Ibid.

Prayer, although the latter is still the official doctrinal and liturgical standard of that church, all else being 'alternative' to it. Both are held up by critics of revision as liturgical paragons whose supplanters are banal and impoverished by comparison. It is not the intention of this study to dismiss these concerns, but to examine the background from which they have arisen, that of the dynamics of liturgical change in relation to intellectual and cultural concerns. One danger of such concerns is that the worship of the church is placed in suspended animation, and that what should be directed towards God is by its anxiety over what might be lost effectively laid on the altar of a previous cultural milieu. This, however, may be to regard culture as something fixed rather than fluid, in much the same way as it is mistaken to regard childhood as something which 'ends'. The opposite danger, which attends the liturgical revision of recent years, is that what should be directed towards God is offered at the altar of consumerism, by which liturgy becomes disproportionately dependent on the skills of the presider and their capacity to use the texts and their performance to maintain the congregation's interest: in other words, liturgy may become entertainment and not worship. This is not, of course, to dismiss the importance of careful preparation and of appropriate participation.

The issue of liturgical change and its perceived effects in the past forty or so years has not gone unnoticed by both popular and scholarly commentators. The Prayer Book Society, for example, publishes two journals which explore the value of the Book of Common Prayer in the context of more recent arrivals in the Church of England, the latest target of opprobrium being *Common Worship*. An example may be found in a review of a companion to Common Worship, which after comprehensive disparagement ends: 'Would it not save time, headaches and tension if a decision were made at parish level to return to the BCP?'[3] Interestingly Common Worship appears to have taken on board some of the criticisms by incorporating some of the most familiar aspects of 'Prayer Book' worship. The scholarly response to liturgical change, however, has mainly been in the Roman Catholic context, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent implementation of the liturgical reforms it initiated, not without

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[3] E. Bishop, review of *A Companion to Common Worship,* vol. 1, ed. P.F. Bradshaw, Alcuin Club Collections 78 (London: SPCK, 2001), in *Faith and Heritage*, 50 (2001), 26-7.

pain and difficulty.[4] Indeed a debate has arisen as to whether there is in fact a middle course to be steered between extreme reaction and the reality of contemporary Catholic worship, the latter often depicted in terms of banal music and poor translation of Latin texts into the vernacular. A symposium of the Centre for Faith and Culture in Oxford on this and related themes produced, with accompanying papers, the 'Oxford Statement',[5] which attempts to steer such a course. Within the same context there have been exponents of specific disciplines who have entered the debate, for example in ritual studies,[6] sociology,[7] as well as penetrating articles in the religious press.[8] There have also been more general studies of liturgical reform and its effects,[9] all of which discuss in part the place and understanding of mystery in the liturgy.

**Mystery, Liturgy and Cultural Bereavement**

Drawing on the work of a diverse group of theologians and philosophers, Andrew Louth has argued for the recovery of a dynamic understanding and living sense of mystery in all areas of Christian discourse and practice. Particularly important in the context of the present study is the matter of tradition: if we wish to support a notion of continuity in liturgical evolution in relation to doctrine that is understood in terms of mystery, what in this regard might we mean by tradition in its literal sense of the process of handing on that which is believed and practised?

Founded on the much earlier work of Hort, Louth's distinction between the truth of revelation and the truth of discovery can be re-formulated in terms of

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[4] See for example R. Kevin Seasoltz, *New Liturgy, New Laws* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980), p. 3 and *passim.*

[5] *Beyond the Prosaic: Renewing the Liturgical Movement*, ed. S. Caldecott (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

[6] Ronald Grimes, *Reading, Writing, Ritualizing* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1993).

[7] Kieran Flanagan, *Sociology and Liturgy: Re-presentations of the Holy* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

[8] Eamon Duffy, 'The Stripping of the Liturgy', *The Tablet*, 6 July 1996, pp. 882-83, later published in full as 'Rewriting the Liturgy: The Theological Implications of Translation,' in Caldecott (ed.), *Beyond the Prosaic*, pp. 97-126.

[9] For example Barry Spurr, *The Word in the Desert: Anglican and Roman Catholic Reactions to Liturgical Reform* (London: Lutterworth, 1996), on which see also review by Paul Inwood, *The Tablet*, 20 July 1996, pp. 960-61; David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).

mystery: the difference between the mystery of God and a mystery capable of being solved. More will be said on this in the context of science, belief and theology, but at this point it is useful to understand these categories as respectively to do with potentially transformative encounter and the acquisition of knowledge. Hort emphasizes that there is not an *absolute* distinction. Louth thus believes that 'the contrast...merely brings out a polarity in the human grasping of truth that is necessarily implicit in it,' in that revealed truth is related to what is already known, and discovery is never pure since it does not start from an absolute beginning; there is always a prior foundation of knowledge that provokes the question and stimulates the enquiry. Therefore, he concludes, we 'trust' the tradition to some extent; we may add that we to an extent also assimilate the *assumptions* of those who have gone before us, scientists or theologians.[10] Similarly, a concept of mystery in theology and liturgy does not entirely exclude the need to acquire knowledge. This might be put in terms of the necessary tools to enable the truth of revelation, the deeper truth, to be encountered without being explained, but to the effects and implications of which we may nevertheless respond. In terms of a theological essay, this is to talk of a methodology which assumes a certain way of handling the matter of tradition in relation to texts and ideas, such that there can be seen a common reliance on mystery as the place of encounter with truth and a sense of what is necessarily unseen that does not wholly rely on the circumstances of their production and the specific theological or polemical aims they betray.

Louth's further thoughts on the role of the 'tacit' dimension of tradition clarify this. Basing his remarks on the thought of Polanyi and Berdyaev, in what Louth understands as 'the mysteriousness of our engagement with the outside world' an over-attention to detail can lead us to fail properly to appreciate 'the more elusive total impression that we discern but cannot explain.'[11] It is this 'total impression' that we must not allow the detail of liturgical history and

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[10] A. Louth, *Discerning the Mystery* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 55-57, drawing on F.J.A. Hort, *The Way, the Truth, the Life*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1897).

[11] Louth, *Discerning*, pp. 59-65; M. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being: Essays,* ed. M. Greene (London: Routledge, 1969), pp. 123, 133-34. Louth's use of the phrase 'outside world' could imply a division he presumably does not intend (what then is the 'inside world'?), but for the purposes of our present argument the sentence may be allowed to stand if we understand it to mean 'the world around us'.

evolution to obscure. In this respect we may recall Hexter's albeit oft-repeated classification of historians as either 'lumpers' or 'splitters', but as commented upon and refined by Burke:

> The implication...is that the two approaches, particularizing and generalizing (or historical and theoretical), complement each other, and that both of them depend on comparison, whether explicit or implicit. The American historian Jack Hexter once divided intellectuals into 'lumpers' and 'splitters', arguing that the discriminating splitters are superior to those who regard diverse phenomena as a single lump. Of course no one wants to be a coarse lumper, incapable of making fine distinctions. However, to see what apparently diverse phenomena have in common is surely as valuable an intellectual quality as to see how apparently similar phenomena differ. In any case, splitting too depends on a prior act of comparison.[12]

In liturgical studies the same distinction has been made,[13] and yet it is in the interaction between gathered fragment and broader canvas that much is to be learned. Proper engagement with the liturgical tradition in ecclesial and academic contexts is dependent on what is known of the process of its development - and there is much that is not known - and on what may be 'tacit' in that tradition, for, to return to Polanyi, it is 'tacit knowing [which] now appears as an act of indwelling by which we gain access to a new meaning.'[14] Here there is a significant resonance with what Soskice has to say about metaphor in religious language, to which we later refer.[15] The consequences are, for Louth, momentous in that:

> As the church reflected on the notion of tradition, it developed a notion of what we might call, following Polanyi, a *tacit dimension* in which our knowledge of God is rooted...all knowledge of God in Christ is either the tacit knowledge of tradition or rooted in such tacit knowledge.[16]

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[12] P. Burke, 'Models and Methods', in *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 22-43 (p. 23); J.H. Hexter, *On Historians* (London: Collins, 1979), p. 242.
[13] P.F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 2nd edition (London: SPCK, 2002), p. ix. Bradshaw's use of the distinction refers to those who argue for a single strand of origin and development of the eucharist and those, including himself, who believe the picture to have been more diverse.
[14] Polanyi, *Knowing and Being.*, p. 148; Louth, *Discerning*, p. 63.
[15] See Chapter 2.
[16] Louth, *Discerning*, p. 65.

Louth later argues for the importance of the community in Christian being and learning - an important pairing which might otherwise be called 'formation', whereby belonging to the Church is itself encountering the mystery and also the place of cultural formation.[17] The implication we may draw from this is that the worshipping action of the community is itself a *locus* of this formative and transformative process. As Louth points out, there is nothing new here. Augustine saw the significance of community in that his

> whole discussion of language and signs...emphasizes the way in which the whole enterprise of human understanding...cannot be understood in a purely individualistic manner, but on the contrary depends on and grows out of a shared tradition, a common sense...a shared *human* tradition, a common *human* sense.

Moreover this common sense was an aspect of human society itself (as Augustine experienced and understood it), prior to any concentration on specifically ecclesial tradition.[18] This is akin to the assertion of Christopher Dawson that in the liturgy of the early period 'the whole Christian world, Roman, Byzantine and barbarian, found an inner principle of unity',[19] and that this shared culture, or rather what M. Francis Mannion, commenting on Dawson, calls a 'dynamic relationship between liturgy and culture' provided the foundation for the confident and rich liturgical development of the period of concern to us.[20] In a later version of his paper Mannion suggests that while Dawson may have been over-romantic in his assessment of the function of the liturgy in early church, such a 'principle of unity' that critics of liturgical reform identified in pre-conciliar liturgy could not be so because it had already been rendered impossible by social and cultural change.[21]

In terms of what is understood as mystery in contemporary liturgy, it may be precisely because so much of the community dimension of Christian being

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[17] Louth, *Discerning*, pp. 74, 77.
[18] Louth, *Discerning*, pp. 80-1, commenting on Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, books II and III.
[19] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1950), p. 40.
[20] M. Francis Mannion, 'Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture', in *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1-26 (pp. 1-2).
[21] M. Francis Mannion, 'Liturgy and Culture: A Failed Connection', *Antiphon* 5.3 (2000), at www.liturgysociety.org/JOURNAL [20/05/03].

and learning as an integral part of everyday life has been lost: the sort of being and learning in precarious circumstances evoked in Eamon Duffy's *The Voices of Morebath*.[22] The shared sense of mystery which ought to allow for doctrinal and liturgical evolution without a distorted emphasis on the visual and linguistic characteristics has been misinterpreted by modern critics of liturgical reform, and perhaps by reformers and revisers themselves. Thus the emphasis on non-vernacular language and ritual fixed at a certain point of its development is an attempt to grasp the remains of a culture not so much for the merits of that culture in terms of historical time but because there is a desire for what that culture meant for those who were formed by it intellectually, spiritually and socially. It is the formational context that is the real loss, whatever the nature of the linguistic or performative straws clutched at that were once but are no longer integral to the cultural haystack. Misdirected false nostalgia is symptomatic of a deeper problem. If this is the case, we may need to interpret accusations of liturgical vandalism as in reality something of a profound longing for the dynamics of an eroded context not primarily concerned with ceremonial or language, and the task for the Churches may in fact be to begin their re-assessment of liturgical worship with this reality. John Baldovin has recently offered a critique of Klaus Gamber's attacks on Roman Catholic liturgical reform, and usefully reflects on the relationship between liturgy and culture. While acknowledging the need for 'comfort and security' that the liturgy is sometimes and not always wrongly expected to meet, he nonetheless concludes that 'the liturgy is not some shrine that must be left untouched to provide security for people troubled by a dangerous and ever-changing world. It is rather a living organism which sustains the faith of men and women who worship God as best they can.'[23] While like any human being he has personal views on various forms of cultural expression, and rightly believes that 'pandering to people's tastes does

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[22] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[23] J.F. Baldovin, 'Klaus Gamber and the Post-Vatican II Reform of the Roman Liturgy', *Studia Liturgica* 33 (2003), 223-39 (pp. 238-39). See for example K. Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Una Voce Press, 1993), in which the title of Chapter 1 immediately sets the negative tone: 'The Root Causes of the Debacle'. The French edition has an approving preface by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, himself a contributor to the topic though theologically weightier and in more authentic relationship with the overall aims of the Council, for example in his *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000).

not make for good liturgy', Baldovin is reluctant 'to exclude any cultural expression *in principle*.'[24] In this he is responding to Gamber's dislike for the 'rock mass', and yet while Baldovin's unhappiness with exclusion may be shared and Gamber's desire for liturgical 'deep-freeze' found unacceptable, this does not take account of liturgical conservatism as a form of cultural bereavement in the contextual rather than the specific sense. Rowan Williams has examined the phenomenon of cultural bereavement in relation to a number of themes, and although he does not deal with liturgy, since his canvas is society as a whole and not merely ecclesiastical life, his complex picture is nearer the mark. On contemporary discomfort with convention, he identifies

> Impatience with what seemed arbitrary conventions, and the characteristic modern conviction that each of us has a hidden self whose authentic expression must be cultivated, have left us with a fair amount of public barbarity and chaos.

At first this might seem to be support for false nostalgia, but, Williams continues,

> Particularly in the realm of sexuality, the rapid disappearance of 'codes' has produced not a paradisal erotic liberty but a society more obsessively anxious about sex than most 'pre-modern' ones...what we thoughtlessly call 'body language' is actually failing as a structure of communication because we have no *common* sense (and often no common sense) about sex.[25]

In terms of worship, what are perceived to have been the relatively static 'codes' of liturgical practice have disappeared, and the result is surely not a paradisal liturgical liberty, but a church more obsessively anxious about liturgy than before. This is the point that both Gamber and Baldovin, representatives of the 'conservative' and the 'progressive', fail to express. It is precisely because all the emphasis tends to be on language and the visual that the contemporary church seemingly has no *common* sense (and perhaps no common sense either) about liturgy, and the result can indeed be chaos, for some barbaric. A case in point is the ongoing debate about translation from the Latin in the Roman Catholic Church, where the barbarism seems to be on the part of the 'conservatives' rather

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[24] Baldovin, 'Klaus Gamber', p. 225.
[25] R.D. Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 204.

than the 'progressives' precisely because the intricacies of translating from a Latin norm with completely different stylistic principles into an English which attempts artificially and therefore uncomfortably to mirror these are the focus, as if *everything* about liturgy is superficially conveyed by its language.[26] This comes uncomfortably close to Baldovin's warning advice that 'now and again we need to ask ourselves whether we are worshipping the liturgy or the God whom the liturgy addresses.'[27]

There is, therefore, another kind of liturgical 'conservatism' altogether, one that is an authentic aspect of the organic characteristics of liturgy rather than an imposition from without in accordance with particular tastes. The anchor that is missing or at least insufficiently appreciated in current liturgical debate is the common perception of an authentic dimension of mystery: the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ, embodied in the liturgy not merely in the language or the manner of performance, but in the much more vital sense of the 'moreness' of God to which the language, the performance and the experience all point but do not and cannot encapsulate or confine. This, as opposed to the implied tendency of the church and of prevailing cultures to take the initiative *from* God. The sense of *moreness* is to be found in, for example, silence as well as in words, in the relationship of worshipper with neighbour, and also, more controversially, in the very imperfections of language and finitudes of ritual which have led some to accuse liturgy of being lacking in mystery. Catherine Pickstock speaks of

> Criticisms that the medieval liturgy is haphazardly structured and contains many uneconomic repetitions and recommencements…However, rather than bearing witness to a debasement of 'pure liturgy', these features could be seen as signs of the oral provenance of the rite. In this context they appear as definitive elements of a fluid structure typical of speech rather than a compartmentalized and formalized structure characteristic of writing. In similar fashion, one could account for the repeated requests for purification as signs of an *underlying apophaticism* which betokens our constitutive

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[26] See for example A. Ivereigh, 'A War of Words', *The Tablet*, 17 January 2004, 6-8. Much of the current debate centres on the production of the English translation of the third typical edition of the *Missale Romanum*, and the controversial principles expressed in *Liturgiam Authenticam: On the Use of the Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy*, Fifth Instruction 'For the Right Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council' (Rome: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2001), which claims to seek 'the authentic Liturgy' (article 1).

[27] Baldovin, 'Klaus Gamber', p. 229.

> distance from God, rather than our sinfulness or humiliation. According to such a perspective, the haphazard structure of the rite can be seen as predicated upon the need for a constant re-beginning of liturgy, because the true eschatological liturgy is in time endlessly postponed; the liturgy is a never-ending work.[28]

Pickstock suggests that contemporary liturgical revision should be informed by the same argument.

How, though, is the 'moreness' or 'thatness' to be spoken of, and still less easily, known? What is the language of mystery, and how is it recognized? Elsewhere John Baldovin has written of Newman's concept of the 'illative sense',[29] first appearing explicitly in his *Grammar of Assent,* and described by John Coulson:

> The *phronema*, that instinct deep within the mystical body of Christ, is obviously a counterpart to the *phronesis* or illative sense which, in the individual, is that power to make a real, as opposed to a notional, assent in judgements of faith and conscience.[30]

In this we come closer to a description of where and how mystery might ultimately be located. For Newman the affirmation of faith involves both ideas capable of rational appropriation and, in Baldovin's words,

> a sense of 'thatness', an intuition of the inexplicable but nonetheless real truth of the object of belief, which demands commitment as well as intellectual agreement.

Baldovin believes a 'liturgical illative sense' is missing, and to make his point uses an image from popular American culture:

> The lack of [a liturgical illative sense] is what I think people are referring to when they claim that Catholic liturgy has lost its sense of mystery – a common enough

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[28] Catherine Pickstock, 'Medieval Liturgy and Modern Reform', *Antiphon* 6.1 (2001), at www.liturgysociety.org/JOURNAL [accessed 20.5.2003], emphasis mine.
[29] John F. Baldovin, 'Pastoral Liturgical Reflections on the Study', in *The Awakening Church: 25 Years of Liturgical Reform*, ed. L.J. Madden (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 98-114 (p. 112).
[30] John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition: A Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 115. See also Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), pp. 645-46 and references therein.

> complaint…I fear, however, that what people mean by 'mystery' has more to do with a 'Wizard of Oz' image of liturgy and with a God whose transcendence is characterized by remoteness and wrath.[31]

For Baldovin the solution lies largely in the manner of contemporary liturgical celebration, but though important this is not, as we have suggested above, enough. Methodology is the key, and there are in the tradition of liturgical scholarship approaches which assist in moving the discussion beyond the effective stalemate, and we shall now pay attention to two classical and three more modern examples in order to facilitate this.

**Two Classical Approaches**

One of the great achievements of liturgiological methodology, Anton Baumstark's book *Comparative Liturgy*[32] deploys a comparative approach to liturgical history which as method was not unique to liturgy, nor wholly of Baumstark's devising in that context, but which nevertheless in his hands took on the status of a benchmark in liturgical scholarship. Most notably, Baumstark advanced the notion of 'laws of liturgical evolution' which greatly help in our understanding of the question of how and why liturgy changes. Baumstark's work has inevitably been subject to criticism, revision and rehabilitation. Taft has drawn attention to some of the most recent criticisms, and mounted a strong defence of the principles of liturgical historiography on which Baumstark's method is based.[33] Sharply dismissing some of the criticism as 'rarely if ever from major contributors to the discipline,'[34] he asserts that Baumstark's 'laws of liturgical evolution' are not intended to supplant the facts of liturgical history, but are a way of explaining them in the sense of 'norms that serve to explain the

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[31] Baldovin, 'Pastoral Liturgical Reflections', p. 115.
[32] A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, revised B. Botte, E.T. by F.L. Cross (London: Mowbray, 1958). John Mason Neale may have been first to use the term 'comparative liturgy' and the methodology it implies, in his *Essays in Liturgiology and Church History* (London: Saunders, Otley, 1863), pp. 123-24. See Martin Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship* (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 1999), pp. 29-30.
[33] R.F. Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy Fifty Years After Anton Baumstark (d. 1948)', *Worship* 73 (1999), pp. 521-40. See also Taft, 'Anton Baumstark's Comparative Liturgy Revisited', in *Comparative Liturgy Fifty Years After Anton Baumstark (1872-1948),* ed. R.F. Taft & G. Winkler, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 265 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2001), 191-232.
[34] Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy', p. 528.

facts which the sources disclose.'[35] The sources alone do not answer the questions that arise from the data: interpretation alone will do this, and interpretation demands a methodology. Taft usefully summarizes the nature of the issue:

> The problems of liturgical history...arise from the appearance of changes in the sources themselves, be they additions, omissions, or aberrations, which constitute a departure from previously established patterns. The only way these problems can be solved, if only hypothetically, is by sifting and analyzing, classifying and comparing, liturgical texts and units within and across the traditions. Only thus can one divine the direction in which things seem to be moving, chart their trajectory, and hypothesise how the gaps in the evidence might be filled in.[36]

To this should be added the need to be aware of the intellectual and cultural context in which composition and change takes place, factors which aid the discussion and reveal further questions which take one into a more usefully interdisciplinary territory. It is territory on which historian and theologian must meet. Challenging the specific criticism of Martin Stringer,[37] Taft comments that 'to dismiss comparative liturgy because it does not teach us how liturgy works is like dismissing comparative linguistics because it does not help improve one's French accent.'[38] Whilst Taft's rebuttal is appropriate, it does not address the possibility that comparative liturgy taken to further bounds by the addition of contemporary intellectual concerns may actually and ironically do what Stringer accuses it of not doing: in charting the characteristics of change, there may be seen the raw material for relating those changes to the purpose and function of liturgy in the life of the church.

Baumstark's work, originally published just before the Second World War, does not cover the period of radical revision of Catholic liturgy that in effect began with the moderate reforms of Pius XII in the 1950s - the restoration of the Easter Vigil, for instance - but gained further-reaching impetus with

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[35] Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy', p. 522.
[36] Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy', p. 523.
[37] M. Stringer, 'Liturgy and Anthropology: the History of a Relationship', *Worship* 63 (1989), 503-21 (pp. 507-8). See also, however, Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship*, pp. 29-30, where he does not level this specific charge against the comparative method.
[38] Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy', pp. 529-30.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1962) and the eventual production of a new *editio typica*, the Missal of Paul VI (1970), subsequently widely translated into the vernacular - the English edition appeared in 1973. Before the Second Vatican Council the Liturgical Movement could claim the laurels for the modest changes of the 1950s and the limited introduction of popular participation, but it is more difficult to attribute the post-Conciliar reforms so directly to that movement and its aims, since the Missal of 1970 and its associated rites were products as much of the Conciliar desire for *aggiornamento* as of any coherent liturgical conviction. Thus Zealley, in his introduction to the collection of papers given at a conference of the Liturgy Forum of the (Catholic) Centre for Faith and Culture in Oxford, may be right in implying that the new missal of 1970 was un-organic in its gestation in a way that could not be laid at the door of the 1950s reforms but had more to do with the radical change of self-understanding the Catholic Church underwent in this period, drinking deeply of contemporary culture with consequences seen by the authors of *Beyond the Prosaic* as dire: 'monolithic use of the vernacular, folk music settings, altar girls and expanding roles for lay people.'[39] This is inconsistent with the assertion of their Oxford Declaration that 'liturgy cannot be separated from culture.'[40] However, also underlined is the importance of the organic development of the liturgy: this is significant, because it is surely on the assumption of organic development that Baumstark's methodology rests, and to which Taft's support of it points.[41] Zealley claims that 'the need for organic development might well be judged the central demand of the Oxford conference, and so the chief guiding principle determining the Liturgy Forum's outlook.'[42] An organic development (as revision) of the liturgy is defined by this group as 'one which develops from living forms of Catholic worship [and] which will require not only access to a pool of academic liturgical expertise, but also the identification of one or more starting-points in contemporary liturgical forms with a track record of successfully focusing and harnessing popular devotion.' However, because the missal of 1970 and its aftermath are not held to be organic developments, 'the revived liturgical movement, as represented by the Liturgy Forum, operates in a wholly different

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[39] C. Zealley, 'Introduction', in *Beyond the Prosaic*, ed. Caldecott, 1-9 (p. 5).
[40] 'The Oxford Declaration on Liturgy', in *Beyond the Prosaic*, 163-65 (p. 163).
[41] Taft, 'Comparative Liturgy', p. 523.
[42] Zealley, 'Introduction', p. 5.

context from the old, in that its starting-point cannot straightforwardly be identified with the current universal liturgy.'[43] Even a harsh critic like Gamber, though, acknowledges that it was precisely because the Missal of Pius V ossified that organic evolution was prevented,[44] so it is difficult to see how that stage of liturgical development could provide the starting-point for the original liturgical movement, and yet it indisputably was.[45] This is because the pioneers of liturgical renewal began with the deep structures and meanings of liturgy that rely on the whole sweep of liturgical evolution, and applied those to the texts they had, for example by simply explaining what the significance of a particular rite might be in theological and spiritual terms, or by encouraging the use of the same texts in a 'new' way, notably through the medium of greater popular participation. This suggests the presence of a layer of divine action behind and beyond the text and its rubrics *in themselves*, for instance in the people praying together, which the Second Vatican Council acknowledges to be a *locus* of the presence of Christ in the eucharist.[46]

The argument of the neo-conservative school of thought is then that the reforms of the 1960s essentially constitute a break of the chain, and that the liturgy was forced to evolve in a way alien to its character. This is certainly Gamber's opinion, but it is difficult to see this period in anything other than terms of degree. The liturgical reform of the 1960s was instigated by the bishops and confirmed by the Pope, just as the Pope had authorized the more modest changes of the 1950s and the arguably equally radical (because local rites were largely abolished) universal imposition of the Missal of 1570 several centuries before. Furthermore, as one of the authors of the Liturgical Forum collection admits, the collects 'were taken into the Latin of the Paul VI missal direct or with light revision from the ancient sacramentaries [and] include some of the greatest prayers of the Latin Church,' and even, he admits, 'have the added advantage of

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Baldovin, 'Klaus Gamber', p. 228.
[45] J.D. Crichton identified precursors of the Liturgical Movement and its principles in his *Lights in the Darkness: Fore-runners of the Liturgical Movement* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1996).
[46] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* section 7, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, revised edition, ed. A. Flannery (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), 1-36 (pp. 4-5).

having inspired Cranmer to some of his most marvellous feats of translation.'[47] This sounds as close to organic development as anything could be. However, Duffy gives a clue to one of the real, and more defensible, vexations surrounding the 1970 missal: the *quality* of its translation. Duffy's examples purport to show that the English of the 1973 translation is very poor in style when compared with the original Latin and Cranmer's equivalents, as well as introducing some inadequate theology.[48] If this is the case, then a more convincing enemy of organic development is indeed, and ironically, quality of translation rather than the revised original text on which it is based.

The question, however, is what exactly constitutes 'organic' development, if it is the deep structures and assumptions and their preservation that matter, not the precise selection of texts and their translation. The concept of mystery in the liturgy helps us understand the less obvious dimensions of liturgical evolution, that it can survive even inadequate translation and poor performance, and that the very inadequacies indicate the frailty of human response to the activity of God in the world, to recall Pickstock's argument. This is not necessarily to dismiss the desires of the Oxford Forum for a 'new' liturgical movement, but to use some of the problems as a means of considering how liturgy evolves and operates in the Church, even when the Church is perceived to have got it wrong.

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[47] Duffy, 'Stripping', p. 882; 'Rewriting', pp. 105-6, 110.

[48] Duffy, 'Stripping', pp. 882-83; 'Rewriting', pp. 110-11. The 1973 translation was made on the principle of 'dynamic equivalence', effectively rejected by *Liturgiam Authenticam*. See also K. Pecklers, *Dynamic Equivalence: the Living Language of Christian Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003). An earlier and valuable contribution to the debate, in response to official invitation, is John McHugh, *On Englishing the Liturgy: An Open Letter to the Bishop of Shrewsbury* (Durham: Ushaw College, 1983). McHugh concludes with what he sees as a 'flawless example' of translation: the collect 'Be present, O merciful God' from the *Order for Compline* in the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* (Latin original: *Adesto, Domine*) (p. 42). I am indebted to Dr. A.I. Doyle for drawing my attention to this letter. Interestingly the style of the Book of Common Prayer where it translates earlier Latin originals has not been allowed, with these exceptions, to much inform the debate within the Roman Catholic Church, perhaps because neither does it represent contemporary English in the sense that this is meant in the current context, and could itself be described as the 'Latin missal' of the Church of England which has itself been subject to 'translation' in the successive revisions of the liturgy of the Church of England since the 1960s.

## The Influence of Odo Casel

What might, with some irony, now be called the more orthodox approach to liturgical mystery theology was rather different and must be noted here. Where a systematic theology of mystery has played a part in liturgical study and reform since 1950, the work of Dom Odo Casel has tended to dominate, and so some explanation must be made of its relative absence in this essay. Like Baumstark a figure whose ideas have been much evaluated, criticized and revived, his central theory of *mysteriengegenwart* or 'mystery-presence' of the saving events of Christ in the liturgy, based on an interpretation of the patristic evidence for an emerging sacramental theology,[49] has been strongly influential to the extent of forming a key building-block in the ecclesiological revolution triggered by the Second Vatican Council. Casel's methodology predates the interdisciplinary motivation of the writers examined above, and yet brought a freshness to several

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[49] The Casel bibliography is extensive: see for example A. Gozier, 'Mysterienlehre', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité,* vol. 10 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), 1886-89, and Osvaldo D. Santagada, 'Dom Odo Casel: Contributo monografico per una bibliografia generale delle sue opere, degli studi sulla dottrina, e della sua influenza nella teologia contemporanea', *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 10 (1967), 7-77. The key text in English is O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (London: DLT, 1962), being, as it states, 'a translation of the fourth German edition of *Das Christliche Kultmysterium* and of the other writings of Dom Odo Casel which appeared with it in 1960' (p. iv). Much else is available only in the German, but this has not prevented either the spread of Casel's influence or continuing study of his work in other countries. Summaries of his work appear in many books on sacramental and liturgical theology. An early Roman Catholic account, though with some reservations, of Caselian mystery theology published soon after Casel's death but before the Second Vatican Council is J. Gaillard, 'La théologie des mystères', *Revue Thomiste* 57 (1957), 510-51, with further references to contemporary discussion. The author to the foreword to *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, Charles Davis, gave a useful, significantly pre-Conciliar and therefore prescient summary in his 'Odo Casel and the Theology of the Mysteries', *Worship* 34 (1960), 428-38. An earlier account in English, however, is L. Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956), pp. 86-98. J.H. Crehan, 'Mystery', *A Catholic Dictionary of Theology,* vol. 3 (London: Nelson, 1971), pp. 316-19, *passim*, is not convinced. Casel's editor Burkhard Neunheuser drew together many of the strands in his 'Odo Casel in Retrospect and Prospect', *Worship* 50 (1976), 489-504. A more recent assessment and placing in context of his work from a (conservative) Roman Catholic perspective is to be found in Johann Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and The Mystery of the Eucharist* [=*Allgemeine Sakramentenlehre und Das Mysterium der Eucharistie*, 3rd revised edition (Regensburg: Pustet, 1980)], E.T. by E. Leiva-Merikakis (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), pp. 51-59. For a concise summary of Anglican exposure to the thought of Casel and his circle, C. Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society: An Exposition of the Work of Arthur Gabriel Hebert* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1993), pp. 103-106. For a fuller interpretation from an Anglican perspective, George Guiver, *Pursuing the Mystery: Worship and Daily Life as Presences of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), esp. pp. 55-74, and the select bibliography, pp. 233-36.

debates that proved a lasting legacy. One such was that concerning the relationship of pagan religion, including the mystery religions of antiquity, and early Christianity. Casel's contribution was somewhat controversially to present the evidence for the phenomenological continuity already favoured by the 'history of religions' school as the *Vorschule Christi*, in other words a more explicit link that allowed for the notion that Christ was somehow prefigured in such religions insofar as they mirrored in their theological assumptions and the structures of their rites the dynamics of later Christian belief and liturgy. Although commentators have tended to focus on the directly liturgical implications of Casel's work, the controversial aspects of his view of pre-Christian religion, and the perceived flaws in his methodology,[50] it can plausibly be argued that in a general sense it opens the way for proposals of the kind contained in the Vatican II Declaration *Nostrae Aetate* of 1965 on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, a document which could say, for example, that in Hinduism 'men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy', and that Buddhism 'proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help'.[51] The document goes on to assert that 'the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions', and draws out the positive associations of the other Abrahamic faiths with Christianity.[52] Casel's analysis of the religion of late antiquity as *Vorschule Christi* can surely be said to have foreshadowed such a conciliatory approach, one which looked for connections rather than denying their very possibility, and acknowledged the presence of truths compatible with Christianity in non-Christian religions. But while as we shall see the debate is an important one in the discussion of mystery and its place in Christian theology and liturgy, in terms of the emergence of a Christian language of mystery, Casel's most important

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[50] See for example T. Filthaut, *La Théologie des Mystères: Exposé de la Controverse* (Paris: Desclée, 1954 [ = *Der Kontroverse über die Mysterienlehre* (Wahrendorf: Schnellsche, 1948)], pp. 87-101, where Casel's theory is compared with the work of Prümm (on whose contribution to the debate see Chapter 2 below). Thus Neunheuser: 'the parallel he drew between the Christian mysteries and the mysteries of the Hellenistic world has played an important role in the reaction to him', 'Retrospect and Prospect', p. 490.

[51] Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostrae Aetate* (1965), 1, in *Vatican Council II*, ed. Flannery, 738-42 (p. 739).

[52] *Nostrae Aetate*, 1, pp. 739, 740.

contribution was to bring the *Mysterienlehre* of the Maria Laach school to a wider public at a time when its discussion could form a part of a new period of liturgical reform. While Casel's work encapsulates the liturgy as a whole, including for example the calendar, it was in the matter of Eucharistic theology and the nature of the presence of Christ in the celebration that was to be prominent, finding its flowering in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), especially in section 7 of that document in terms of a wider notion of presence than in the consecrated elements[53] although never wholly and specifically embracing Casel's ideas about the *objective* presence of the saving mysteries themselves, except perhaps tacitly. Nevertheless the Caselian influence on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was placed in sharper relief at the centre of official Roman Catholic teaching on the liturgy by the encyclical of Paul VI on the Eucharist, *Mysterium fidei*,[54] as suggested by the use of this title and the fact that it draws heavily on the earlier Vatican II document.

Casel does not anywhere treat of mystery as indicative of an apophatic theology of divine action in the liturgy – if anything the opposite may be suggested in the sense that Casel seems to want to say very definitely that Christ is present objectively in his saving mysteries in the Eucharist. On these grounds Casel could conceivably be accused of the very tying down of the notion of presence from which he and the Maria Laach school sought to rescue the liturgy. There are other approaches compatible with the detail of liturgical history which can be placed alongside that of Casel and which take more account of the essential apophatic dimension that must be acknowledged when speaking of divine activity.

While the work of Baumstark might be regarded as the orthodox approach to liturgiological methodology (with the suggested consequences for some current concerns in terms of mystery), and that of Casel an enduringly

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[53] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in *Vatican Council II*, ed. Flannery, 1-36. On the presence of Christ in the Eucharist the now classic statement is that of section 7 (pp. 4-5). On Casel's influence see Neunheuser, 'Retrospect and Prospect', pp. 491, 493-94: 'the Second Vatican Council emphasized ideas which Casel was the first modern to urge in a powerful way' (p. 490).

[54] Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini), *Mysterium fidei* (1965). Many editions, and readily accessible at www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals; Neunheuser, 'Retrospect and Prospect', p. 494.

attractive and frequently cited direct approach to mystery in the context of liturgy, the arguments of more recent writers are indicative of possibilities for the study of mystery which have only really become apparent in the last thirty years or so as confidence in interdisciplinary approaches has grown.

**Three Modern Approaches**

Recent studies have brought an interdisciplinary approach to bear on the specific concept of mystery in relation to liturgy which indicate wider terms of reference and methodology than either those offered by the classical approaches of Baumstark and Casel or relatively narrowly focused contemporary responses to liturgical reform. The work of Kieran Flanagan seeks to bring a sociological perspective to bear on liturgical form and practice.[55] He claims that 'mystery' when used in connection with a liturgical rite is something objective, 'unaffected by subjective intention, disposition or sense of reception', although among the dangers presented by such a concept in this context must be noted that of mystery acting as an index of whether or not a liturgy 'works'. There is an element of 'success', or otherwise, implicit in its use.[56] This is a danger inherent in the concerns and approach of the Liturgy Forum, whose arguments imply that in their view the post-conciliar liturgy does not 'work' in the way they feel it ought to, and that lack of 'mystery' is part of this deficiency. How, though, is the 'success' of a liturgy to be measured, and should such indexicality in any case be sought? What criteria are to be employed? Is not the danger the very subjectivity from which Flanagan seeks to dissociate mystery? If mystery is one of the criteria, how is it recognized and measured, indeed should it be measured? The very notion rightly understood is inimical to such a quest, as the initiative comes from God, thus bringing concepts of God's immeasurability and ultimate unknowability into play. A further peril, according to Flanagan, is that an emphasis on 'mystery' may serve to make the rite less *accessible*, as opposed to less *intelligible*. The liturgical musician Paul Inwood has elsewhere made an important distinction in that 'liturgists are concerned with accessibility, rather

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[55] Another recent example of a sociological approach is M.D. Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).
[56] Flanagan, *Sociology*, pp. 36-37.

than intelligibility for all. This does not mean that the mysteries of faith are not still precisely that, but it is worth remembering that "mystery" does not necessarily mean "mysteriousness".' [57]

Ambiguity is part of the context, however. Although Flanagan appears to accept the notion of liturgy 'working', and mystery as a measure of this, he nevertheless acknowledges that such a process would mean 'advancing into implicit meanings and hidden understandings';[58] giving the mysterious a mode of expression through liturgical rite 'lends an opaque indeterminate cast to the rite that has some distinct theological functions.'[59] In terms of sociology, Flanagan's focus, this presents difficulties in that it lends 'rite' a polyvalence that signals a danger that a stress on the mysterious 'might make too many of its parts unavailable for sociological understanding.'[60] For the liturgical theologian, Flanagan's anxieties can be viewed not as difficulties but possibilities, part of a rich context of sacramental understanding of divine initiative in and through creation. In this sense, whatever the awkwardness for sociologists, 'mystery' may be thought of as a way of talking about the flexible interface between God and humanity that is typified, expressed and encountered in the liturgy and its outworking in daily life. In other words liturgy *must* be polyvalent, or it will not be of God.

Flanagan makes the essential point that premature judgement is to be avoided, lest 'what needs to be disclosed' is impeded, thus preventing a grasp of the fullest possible understanding.[61] This would seem to militate against any sense of liturgy 'working', at least according to human criteria, as these may in fact constitute the very premature judgement that poses the danger. Such judgements may often be coterminous, if not identical, with an irresistible tendency to define and explain in liturgy. Succumbing to this tendency in part accounts for the obscuring of mystery in western liturgy (and very possibly in

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[57] Inwood, review of Spurr, *Word in the Desert*, p. 960.
[58] Flanagan, *Sociology,* p. 237.
[59] Ibid.; see also I.H. Dalmais, 'The Liturgy as Celebration of the Mystery of Salvation', in *The Church at Prayer*, vol. 1, *Principles of the Liturgy*, ed. I.H. Dalmais, P.M. Gy, P. Jounel, A.G. Martimort (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 253-72, esp. p. 259.
[60] Flanagan, *Sociology,* pp. 237, 238.
[61] Ibid., p. 238.

western notions of the divine economy as well), and in turn suggest a diminishing of a confident sense of relationship with an 'unknowable' God.

For Flanagan the concept of liminality has direct bearing on speaking of mystery in the liturgy. Rites are liminal because they take participants to the 'limits of limitless mystery.' Liturgical rites are 'well geared to handle the marginal.' An example of this is the classical four-fold 'shape' of the Eucharist, in which 'profane elements are placed apart, are separated and broken to admit access to a new order of existence.'[62] Liminality speaks of boundaries that herald a union beyond them, the bridging of the gap between separation and incorporation, what van Gennep calls 'transition rites'. It is 'a property that hovers between the form and the content of liturgy', giving 'eschatological witness.'[63] Moreover, as Victor Turner has pointed out, it bears a quality of ambiguity, an indeterminate aspect expressed in symbol and ritual. Deeper meanings emerge in the enactment such that 'cultural forms can effect the realization of sacred or holy qualities that transgress or dissolve the social norms governing their reproduction.'[64]

Liminality understood in this ultimately eschatological context is thus very close to biblical and later theological interpretations of mystery. Mystery is the theological context of liminality. Since it incorporates the dissolving, transgressing characteristics of liminality as encountered in enactment of rite, mystery is therefore unpredictable, perhaps even dangerous. This may further explain a tendency to define and circumscribe that may be detected in western liturgy over many centuries, and which unconsciously informs liturgical construction, revision and praxis today.

The unpredictable encounter with the divine is to be identified, according to Pattison, 'not with any particular appearance or form but it is to be found in the spiritual freedom which can only be recognized and grasped in the

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[62] Flanagan, *Sociology,* p. 240; the Dixian four-fold 'shape' has been challenged by other interpretations, but this does not affect Flanagan's essential argument.
[63] Flanagan, *Sociology*, p. 241; A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 20-21.
[64] Flanagan, *Sociology,* p. 242.

inwardness of faith.'[65] Flanagan connects this with both a warning against the risk of 'idolatrous literalism' in liturgy and the biblical insight, typified by Matt. 13.11-13, that enlightenment 'comes from spiritual resources rather than those of reason.'[66] This seems to support the argument for more fluidity of form and for polyvalence, including the retaining of tension and contradiction in the liturgy, which the Liturgy Forum authors detect and deplore in post-Conciliar Roman liturgy.

With reference to Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, Flanagan agrees with Otto's view that silence as an attribute of the numinous has a sacramental quality, and is ambiguous.[67] This suggests that silence in the liturgy is a facet of mystery not only in the liturgy but in Christian living generally, part of the sensual encounter with God that, matching the intellectual and spiritual, involves the whole self. Thus could Gerard Manley Hopkins write, in an early poem of 1866:

> Elected Silence, sing to me
> And beat upon my whorlèd ear,
> Pipe me to pastures still and be
> The music that I care to hear.
>
> Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
> It is the shut, the curfew sent
> From there where all surrenders come
> Which only makes you eloquent.[68]

The second stanza resonates directly with the etymology of the Greek *mysterion*, since *muein* can mean 'to close the mouth' as well as 'to close the eyes'.[69] The implication is that it is only in the paradoxically communicative silence of the hidden God that what Rahner calls 'knowledge in the primary sense' is to be

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[65] G. Pattison, 'Idol or Icon? Some Principles of an Aesthetic Christology,' *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), 1-15 (p. 5); Flanagan, *Sociology*, p. 244.
[66] Flanagan, *Sociology,* p. 244.
[67] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (Oxford: OUP, 1923), pp. 70-71, 216-220; Flanagan, *Sociology,* p. 248.
[68] G.M. Hopkins, 'The Habit of Perfection', *Poems and Prose*, ed. W.H. Gardiner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), stanzas 1 and 2, pp. 5-6.
[69] See Chapter 4.

found. For Rahner, it is a matter of what constitutes authentic knowledge in face of the one mystery of God, ultimately in terms very similar to those of Hopkins:

> Transcendence grasped in its unlimited breadth is the a priori condition of objective and reflective knowledge and evaluation. It is the very condition of its possibility, even though it is ordered to the inexpressible. It is also the precondition for the freedom which is historically expressed and objectified. Thus the experience of the nameless mystery as both origin and goal is the a priori condition of all categorial [sic] knowledge and of all historical activity; it is not merely a marginal phenomenon at the end of the road. Otherwise it would merely be a matter of a journey into the bright light of categorial and ultimately scientific understanding, a journey on which a man grows weary in the pursuit of knowledge, leaves what is still unknown to itself and gives the name of mystery to this unmastered realm of the intelligible. In contrast knowledge in the primary sense is the presence of the mystery itself. It is being addressed by what no longer has a name, and it is relying on a reality which is not mastered but is itself the master. It is the speech of the being without a name, about which clear statements are impossible; it is the last moment before the dumbness which is needed if the silence is to be heard, and God to be worshipped in love.[70]

Tillich tackles this in terms of the ultimate and inherent inability of ordinary language to express 'the experience of mystery', since 'this language has grown out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme. If mystery is expressed in ordinary language, it necessarily is misunderstood, reduced to another dimension, desecrated.' Mystery, for Tillich, 'characterises a dimension which "precedes" the subject-object relationship.'[71]

Silence, then, is one of the ways in which the objectivity of divine mystery is encountered, and relates to the theme of divine unknowability. It may also be said to include what is *not said* in and about the liturgy - a lack of definition or rubric points to the possibilities of liminal encounter in the 'moreness' of God.

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[70] Rahner, 'The Hiddenness of God', p. 237. The relationship between knowledge and mystery is further considered in Chapter 2 of the present study.

[71] P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Welwyn: Nisbet, 1953), p. 121. In respect of the 'closing of the eyes' meaning of *muein*, 'a genuine mystery is experienced in an attitude which contradicts the attitude of ordinary cognition. The eyes are "closed" because the genuine mystery transcends the act of seeing, of confronting objects whose structures and relations present themselves to a subject for his knowledge' (p. 121).

David Torevell, the second modern example, has made a study of the dynamics and effects of liturgical reform in terms of what he calls *The Loss of the Sacred*.[72] In a section entitled 'Ritual and Mystery', Torevell interacts with the work of Flanagan and others to examine further the place of mystery in religious ritual, emphasizing the importance of ambiguity, silence, repetition (form) and above all the experience of the rite as the primary locus of divine presence, or rather the encounter of the participant with this presence.[73]

Torevell moves from an assertion of the inexhaustible nature of rites, in spite of their prescriptive nature (rubric and custom), from which ambiguity and mystery are distilled as dominant characteristics, to a conviction that experience of the rite in these conditions is a positive opening of encounter, 'one that facilitates the coming of a presence from outside the limits of rite', here quoting Flanagan.[74] Torevell feels that while experience of the rite rather than theological discourse is more important for the presence and shape of the divine, there is nevertheless no identical experience of the rite. To this we may respond: is a desire for 'experience' implied by contemporary liturgy? Perhaps there is an unwitting tendency to want to 'create mood' - an artificial 'sense of mystery' - which is doomed to fail, since the artificial in this context is worthless. The experience of the holy is beyond human manufacture; nonetheless, the liturgy has to have some 'predictable social form' if the 'unpredictable' is to be encountered in it. Torevell therefore concludes that 'it is through the maintenance of the form that mystery is able to emerge and envelop the participant.'[75] Lewis describes this process: 'contrived and peculiar, asking for attention, the mind may attend to the thing as a sign or symbol which may yield up information about a mystery that seems to come within grasp when invested with perceptible form.'[76] The danger here is that the mystery *does* become the kind that must be solved, or perhaps *re*solved. As Louth has written, liturgy is not a concept but an action by which the mystery is entered, because 'the liturgy unfolds the varied significance of the mystery of Christ'. Like the mystery of Christ, it is not capable of or susceptible

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[72] Torevell, *Losing,* passim.
[73] Ibid., pp. 28-9.
[74] Flanagan, *Sociology*, p. 237; Torevell, *Losing*, p. 28.
[75] Torevell, *Losing,* p. 28.
[76] G. Lewis, *Day of Shining Red: An Essay on Understanding Ritual* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), pp. 30-31; Torevell, *Losing,* p. 28.

to ultimate explanation,[77] for instance in terms of what Tillich calls the subject-object relationship.[78] It is more than it is, and in this way mirrors the mystery of God in Christ.[79] The point about *the* mystery is that it is not merely *a* mystery, and not an invitation to *resolution* but to *revelation*, the goal of which is not an increase in available information (as knowledge) but a further re-making in the image of God. Bernard of Clairvaux warned of the folly of those who are content to be mere theological 'investigators':

> we shall find him as severe as the Cappadocians or John Chrysostom on the rashness which makes a man an 'investigator' or 'raider on Majesty'; like the Book of Proverbs, he predicts that such a man will be 'crushed by the Glory'; no doubt, he explains, it is possible to approach it, but 'as one marvelling, not as one investigating', and this presupposes that the initiative comes from God.[80]

Louth contends that the liturgy is not a matter of simple conceptual understanding. It is this which has often characterized western liturgiology, and 'is a marked feature of much modern liturgical reform.' Contentious as this may be from one whose sympathies and principal interests lie with the theology of the Christian east - we may compare the more sceptical Robert Taft on these matters - he is surely right to conclude that 'what can be articulated...is only a part,' and to ask us to heed Hooker's admonition, not so very far from that of Bernard of Clairvaux: 'let not us presume to condemn as follies and toys, because we sometimes know not the cause and reason.'[81]

Therefore more convincing is Torevell's conclusion that 'ritual also embodies the unique ability to combine both a sense of mystery with propensity to enable the participant to come some way to being absorbed by that mystery,'[82] which is surely close to the *tremendum et fascinans* of Otto in terms of liturgical

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[77] Louth, *Discerning*, p. 89.
[78] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 121.
[79] Louth, *Discerning*, p. 89.
[80] H. de Lubac, *Christian Faith: The Structure of the Apostles' Creed* ( London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), p. 52, quoting St. Bernard, *De consideratione,* 5, 6. The reference is to the Vulgate text of Proverbs 25.27: *sic qui scrutator est majestatis opprimetur a gloria.*
[81] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, pp. 90-91; quoting Richard Hooker, *On the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, IV.i.3, in *The Works of Richard Hooker,* 2v. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), vol. I, p. 350.
[82] Torevell, *Losing*, p. 29.

rites. Silence, again, has a place in this scheme. Following Pope John Paul II's document on the Eastern Churches, *Ex Orientale Lumen*, for Torevell 'lest an idol be created in place of God, the use of silence establishes a crucial apophatism in which mystery is veiled and a sense of the sacred experienced.'[83] In all this it is important to note the incorporation of tension: there is a form, and yet it is also non-rational and alien to definition because God is.[84] Silence, though, has its own limitations which are reduced by language, but how can language convey what silence is on the face of it better at conveying? Is there a 'language of silence'? Mystery language is surely a contender for this role.

Ronald Grimes, a third modern practitioner, is primarily a student of ritual, and sets out his position thus:

> In my view ritualizing is not incompatible with criticism, nor a sense of mystery with iconoclasm, provided self-critical actions are embedded in rites themselves, and provided the timing criticism is carefully chosen.[85]

For Grimes, criticism can be an action as equally valid as ritual performance rather than as a separate intellectual operation. However, he continues, 'we worry that criticism may destroy mystery, or mystery befog criticism.'[86] This is a very important point, relating exactly to the warning of Bernard of Clairvaux to avoid 'raiding majesty' in order to achieve intellectual goals as opposed to spiritual ones. But the effect of the anxiety to which Grimes refers (and which he does not himself share) is only damaging to mystery if the eclipsing of mystery is the aim. In passing we are reminded, perhaps, of Weber's familiar truism that:

> The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime

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[83] John Paul II, *Ex Orientale Lumen* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995), p. 32; Torevell, *Losing,* p. 29; see also Flanagan, *Sociology*, pp. 247-57 for further discussion of silence as an attribute of the numinous, including Otto's observation that silence has a 'sacramental' quality (p. 247), and the fact that silence is ambiguous in that it may be benign or evil (p. 248).
[84] See Torevell, *Losing,* pp. 29-31.
[85] R.L. Grimes, *Reading, Writing, Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical and Public Places* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1993), p. 16.
[86] Grimes, *Ritualizing*, p. 16.

> values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental world of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.[87]

Weber seems to be warning not only of an excessive individualizing of values that ought to be part of shared culture and 'common' sense, of a desire to 'escape' into mystery, perhaps. If, however, we are seeking to understand the importance of mystery in ritual as a communal activity, no harm is done. This may not necessarily be the same as seeking 'meaning'. If we assume that ritual comprises symbols which carry meaning in the sense of that to which the symbol refers, then 'one quickly finds that there is little connection between how much people can articulate about a symbol's referents and how meaningful it is to them.' Social science resorts to function to address what amounts to a conceptual dilemma: ritual is meaningful in what it does socially, not merely in that to which it refers.[88] The problem with this approach, argues Grimes, is that it involves either the need to look outside a ritual for its meaning, or implies that meaning is the same as referentiality. Attempting to resolve the problem, Grimes calls on the work of Sperber, for whom the search for symbolic meanings in ritual is wrong because it suggests that ritual is no more than a series of coded messages that, once de-coded, seem banal. Contemporary culture moreover expects rites to have meaning in a semiotic and referential sense.[89] Ritualists often give equally opaque interpretations which are in effect further symbolizing.[90] Meaning and theology are not the same thing. Sperber compares symbols to smells, in that they evoke, not refer, because the sense of smell is the least rationalized of the senses and provokes gut reactions, not considered intellectual responses.[91] The mistake is therefore to use 'meaning' as a synonym for 'evocation'.[92] A smell is not easily recalled, but if smelled again it is able to provoke memories.[93] Therefore, says Grimes, 'symbols in this view are part of a system of implicit

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[87] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' (1919), in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1957), 129-156 (p. 155).
[88] Grimes, *Ritualizing,* p. 19, here employing Turner's categories of the 'operational', i.e. functional meaning, and 'exegetical', i.e. referential meaning of symbols: V.W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967), p. 51.
[89] D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975), p. 83; for this and the references to Sperber, Grimes, *Ritualizing*, pp. 20-22.
[90] Sperber, *Rethinking*, p. 50.
[91] Ibid., p. 118.
[92] Ibid., p. 148.
[93] Ibid., p. 117.

knowledge, and ritual is an improvisation, reconstruction, or anticipation based on that knowledge.'[94] For Sperber,

> each new evocation brings about a different reconstruction of old representations, weaves new links among them, integrates into the field of symbolism new information brought to it by daily life: the same rituals are enacted, but with new actors.[95]

Knowledge, therefore, may be tacit, but still embodied, and that criticism of ritual is action as well as articulation.[96]

On Christian liturgy specifically, Grimes asserts that

> the fact [it] has a history at all means that it is variable, changing, fluid. Even if it is a stream that flows more slowly than all others, it nevertheless changes, and its changes are often consonant with other cultural and historical changes. Though a liturgy may criticize and judge social structures, it also reflects them. In short, the liturgy is a cultural process, itself in need of constant reformation and revision.[97]

While agreeing with the importance of the cultural process in relation to liturgy, it is the way in which the symbolic function of mystery as concept and language relates to that process of 'reformation and revision', and more broadly *evolution*, that most concerns us. We want to know what it can tell us about the process, and where it is situated in the architecture of liturgy as written text as well as performed ritual that points beyond itself to and enables participation in hidden divine reality. For Grimes, 'even though liturgy sometimes earns the right to be the "model for" a culture, it is also a "model of" culture, and participates in the foibles, injustices, and contradictions of culture.'[98] In this Grimes wishes to argue against a dualistic understanding of liturgy in relation to culture, and we must note this insofar as anything we are able to say about mystery in the liturgy is irrefutably bound up with and in the culture from which it springs and within

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[94] Grimes, *Ritualizing* p. 21; see also Sperber, *Rethinking*, pp. x-xi.
[95] Sperber, *Rethinking,* p. 145.
[96] Grimes, *Ritualizing,* p. 22.
[97] Ibid., p. 47.
[98] Ibid., p. 48.

which it functions, thereby creating a new level of reality alongside that which lies hidden in its symbolic, metaphorical capacity, because

> liturgy is as essentially cultural as it is religious. Consequently, it ought to be subjected not just to theological criticism but to ritual, ethical, and other sorts of criticism that proceed on anthropological, ecological, and psychological grounds...mutual critique and collaborative reimagining of ritual processes should be our aim.[99]

These three interpreted modern examples, in dialogue with others, of discussion of mystery in relation to liturgy represent different methodologies and starting-points, and yet also show a remarkable degree of agreement in general principles. Mystery is not a simply defined concept, but fluid, and yet also rich and indicative of what is 'beyond' text and performance. It is capable of approach by a number of different disciplines, and yet, whatever language or method is used, it remains a dynamic aspect of liturgical celebration. Common themes which have emerged focus on the matter of language, the nature of knowledge, and how mystery and revelation are linked. These will be discussed in more detail in the next two chapters. The apophatic dimension to which Casel pays little attention is key to the reading of liturgical texts in the period under examination in this thesis, and, although language has sometimes been misleadingly held to express mystery in the ways described above, it is nevertheless, rightly interpreted, in the medium of language that the apophatic dimension is in part apparent, most particularly in the specific use of mystery language, and most immediately in the use of the word itself. The next chapter will therefore examine the properties of mystery as religious language.

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[99] Ibid., pp. 52, 53.

# CHAPTER 2

## MYSTERY, KNOWLEDGE AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

In this chapter we will examine some of the properties and implications of mystery as religious language, as background to the study of it as such in specifically liturgical contexts in Part II. It is evident that in a religious context 'mystery' has variously acquired senses of both potency and inadequacy, depending on the circumstances of its use. To take the second of these, it could be said that it has been used so much that it has ceased to have any clearly identifiable, distinctive meaning, and where it is used, it is only as a noun to lend more force to something else, be it the Trinity, the Incarnation or any other element of Christian doctrine commonly accorded the title mystery. The meaning of mystery in this sense is relational, and although superficially a synonym for 'wonder', it acts as a springboard on the approach to the greater concept to which it is attached. However, mystery also has an independent function in religious language which lends it a greater potency of meaning and serves as a relational axis on which turn the doctrines to which, at first, it seems merely secondary. Ian Ramsey indicates the distinct religious meaning of 'mystery' as the starting-point for other meanings:

> we are directed to continue the story to build up a pattern of terms and relations until a characteristically different situation is evoked...when the light dawns, the penny drops, the ice breaks. At that point there is a 'sense of the unseen', what is sometimes called 'a sense of mystery'. Here is something 'mysterious' which eludes the grasp of causal language. This is not 'mystery' that a further development of the causal story could eradicate; not 'mystery' which a continuation of the story will overcome as it had done before; not 'mystery' if this is taken to be a synonym for ignorance. For the causal story could always go on further to eradicate 'mystery' in this sense. It could always be developed to meet any further query: any request for further information. But if we are to do justice to theology there must be 'mystery' in another sense whereby a situation is 'mysterious' when it is what's seen, what's talked about in causal language, *and more*. So the causal game is played out until at some point or other a characteristically

> different situation is evoked. When that happens, it is in relation to such a situation that the word 'God' would be posited.[1]

'Mystery' as religious language is related to the nature and work of the divine. Moreover it implies something dynamic that has the capacity to change the perception of creatures with regard to their creator, and to suggest still greater depths yet to be encountered. Properly understood it is not, in other words, a convenient linguistic barrier. An impoverished use of mystery is to some extent encouraged by modern interest in the *unknown* in all its forms. The Christian tradition is more concerned with what is *not fully known*, and with how the tradition, the Church, the world and the individual relate to this. This is an interest with positive worth. Thus:

> it is characteristic of the analytical philosopher to treat all mysteries as puzzles. For him there are problems, which the scientist solves, and puzzles, which the philosopher resolves. But for the Christian theologian there must be a third thing also, namely, mysteries, which remain mysterious even when understood, because, though understood, they exceed our comprehension.[2]

Louth asserts that mysteries draw in and envelop: they are not barriers but permanent *foci* of attention. While problems may contain mysteries, 'it is not a matter of solving a mystery, but of participating in it.'[3] This conclusion is fundamental to the understanding of mystery in the liturgical context, and is sometimes explicitly stated in liturgical texts by the use of *participatio* and other terms.[4] Interestingly Heidegger seems to support the attractive quality of mystery as a concept, though for him not a theological one, in speaking of technology in these terms:

> *The meaning pervading technology hides itself.* But if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of

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[1] I.T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (London: SCM, 1957), p. 62.
[2] M.B. Foster, *Mystery and Philosophy* (London: SCM, 1957), p. 19, after E.L. Mascall.
[3] A. Louth, *Discerning the Mystery* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 68-9. A classic distinction between mystery and problem is that of G. Marcel, *Being and Having* (London: SCM, 1957), p. 19.
[4] See Chapter 7.

> technology, we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*.[5]

If the word 'technology' is replaced by 'theology' everywhere it appears, we are left with something very close to a Christian theological understanding of mystery. Although Heidegger did not intend his philosophical system to be directly applied to Christianity, it has subsequently been fruitfully so applied, for example by Macquarrie, and it is important to realize that among Heidegger's dialogue-partners at the University of Marburg were Paul Tillich and Rudolf Otto.[6] To Tillich we shall return in Chapter 3; Otto must be noticed here as the author of the influential book *The Idea of the Holy*, and particularly for his notion of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*,[7] which accords with the 'caught up by' of Louth and the 'openness to' of Heidegger in respect of mystery. Otto's influence has been significant on account of this single monograph, although perhaps curiously not especially in the field of liturgical studies nor even of sacramental theology.[8]

Several writers have tackled directly the question of the relationship between the task of the scientist (in the broadest sense of one whose ideas are predicated on knowledge) and the theologian in the matter of what constitutes knowledge, what is meant by truth, and how these are acquired and experienced. For many of them, a concept of mystery is vital to their understanding of the task

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[5] Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of* Gelassenheit, trans. J.M. Anderson & E.H. Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) [original German edition: *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1959)], 43-57 (p. 55), author's emphasis. My attention was initially drawn to Heidegger's contribution to the discussion by Douglas Chismar's paper 'Recovering Mystery', www.chowan.edu/acadp/Religion/pubs/mystery.htm [15.05.2003]

[6] John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity* (London: SCM, 1994). Heidegger's 'attitude toward theology became increasingly ambiguous as the years passed…though he claimed that he never left the Catholic Church' and at Marburg 'engaged in active dialogue with Protestant theologians there, including Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Rudolf Otto.' In Macquarrie's opinion 'no philosopher had more influence than Heidegger on the theology of the twentieth century' (p. 6).

[7] Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, passim.

[8] An exception is the lecture series published as *Holiness Past and Present*, ed. S.C. Barton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2003).

of the theologian. Matthias Scheeben, in his classic work *The Mysteries of Christianity*, written from a firmly Roman Catholic point of view, railed against those who, rather like the Deists of the seventeenth century,

> to buttress belief in Christian truth and to defend it...desired to resolve it into a rational science, to demonstrate articles of faith by arguments drawn from reason, and so to reshape them that nothing would remain of the obscure, the incomprehensible, the impenetrable.[9]

For Scheeben, indeed,

> An essential characteristic of the knowledge we have of a thing is an awareness of the imperfection, deficiency, and obscurity of that knowledge.[10]

Scheeben seems to be moving towards a position in which mystery has a dynamic role in Christian discourse, but rather shatters that implication by wanting his mysteries to be

> an independent, well-ordered system in which they will appear to be a great, mystic cosmos erected, out of the depths of the divinity, upon the world of nature which is visible to the bodily eye, and upon the world of spirit which is visible only to the mind.[11]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Scheeben provides just such a 'well-ordered system' in the structuring of his work, with little more on the tensions inherent in the initial discussion.

Alongside Scheeben's essentially mid-nineteenth-century Roman Catholic view, although long-lived in published form, it is instructive to place the early-twentieth-century, and relatively but unjustly neglected, work of the Anglican John Neville Figgis, which also brings into view the modernist, and so

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[9] Matthias Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. C. Vollert (St Louis, MO: Herder Book Co., 1946), p. 4. Scheeben's work was originally published in the German in 1865 (*Mysterien des Christentums*), but went through many subsequent revisions and editions, such that Vollert regarded all previous to that of 1941 'obsolete' (p. iii).
[10] Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, p. 8.
[11] Ibid., p. 18.

controversial, strand of Roman Catholicism in that period. Among his Hulsean lectures of 1908-9, published as *The Gospel and Human Needs*, is included 'Mystery',[12] the second lecture which follows 'Revelation'. Figgis's 'Mystery', however, succeeds alone as both argument for the importance of mystery as a concept and counterblast to those who would excise it from Christian discourse, and picks up some of the themes around knowledge present in Scheeben. In this way Figgis is a precursor of the more recent writers whose approaches we discuss in this and the previous chapter. But there is more than propaganda or uncritical preference in Figgis's work. He begins with the seventeenth-century Deist John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*, to which we shall return in a later chapter in the context of the relationship between pagan and Christian mysteries.[13] In the latter respect Figgis encapsulates Toland's argument as: 'Christ's doctrine was corrupted from its primitive simplicity by the infusion of Greek metaphysics and pagan culture, and in this way produced the historic Church and Creeds.' Figgis accuses Toland and his school of 'hard, unimaginative philistinism', but there is more to his response than mere contemptuous dismissal:

> Are we not to-day in face of a movement in all essentials the same as that of the sentimental rationalism of the eighteenth century? There is the same effort to strip the Catholic faith of everything that is perplexing to the understanding, to interpret the life of the historic Church with reference to categories fashionable at the moment.[14]

According to this tendency,

> We are to learn the permanent value of Christian faith by stripping it of every wonder and every mystery. We are to reject the strange birth as materialistic, the physical resurrection as unscientific, sacramental grace as magical – above all, the deity of our Lord disappears in a cloud of phrases; and all the Churches are invited to join in a *caput mortuum* of pious sentiment and pantheistic emotion. In brief, we are to capitulate to the enemy on every controverted point except the general need of religion and prayer, and

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[12] J.N. Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs* (London: Longmans, 1910), pp. 27-55; on the significance of the lectures as a group see M.G. Tucker, *John Neville Figgis: A Study* (London: SPCK, 1950), pp. 32-39, and on 'Mystery' pp. 35-6.
[13] J. Toland, *Christianity not mysterious: or, A Treatise shewing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason, nor above it: and that no Christian doctrine can be properly called a mystery,* 2nd edition, enlarged (London: for S. Buckley, 1696). See also chapter 4.
[14] Figgis, 'Mystery', pp. 28-9.

> then to trust the God of philosophy to come down 'from the machine' and save from the wrecks of ecclesiasticism just enough to suit men of parts and polish, while throwing to the wolves the poor man's God, who wrought wonders and rose from the tomb.[15]

There may be problems with Figgis's rather angry relating of the matter to socio-economics, though hardly surprising given his own social and political conscience,[16] but his point is that the mysteries of Christianity as he understands them are under threat. In his view this is not only, or even chiefly, a liturgical matter, rather a wider one of modes of thought then current, of which he gives examples, but which are in his view founded upon the over-emphasis on reason of which the eighteenth century was the cradle.[17] In these

> there is the same hostility to the notion of revelation...In words they accept mystery and the suprarational, and rise into lyrical raptures over the universe. But this is only words. The moment mystery becomes concrete in Christ or His Cross or the Eucharist their intelligence revolts and they loudly protest in the name of rationality and common sense.[18]

Figgis rails against the impossibility of intellectualism: 'You cannot search for religion merely from the side of intellectual enquiry and arrive at a Christian result'. This is essentially Scheeben's argument, noted above, that Christian truth cannot be resolved into a rational science. 'For a long time', says Figgis,

> men attempted to establish the being of God by irresistible arguments, the only deity thus attainable being a creation of the reason. God, if He exists, is not the conclusion of an argument but the most stupendous of facts.[19]

The heart of Figgis' argument is that an 'idealism in various forms' is the product and manifested inadequacy of 'mere rationalism', and involves the futile search for 'unanswerable arguments for the spiritual nature of reality':

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[15] Ibid., p. 30.
[16] See M.G. Tucker, *John Neville Figgis: A Study* (London: SPCK, 1950) and more specifically D. Nicholls, *The Pluralist State: the Political Ideas of J.N. Figgis and his Contemporaries* (London: Macmillan, 1994).
[17] Ibid., pp. 31-2 and notes.
[18] Ibid., p. 32.
[19] Ibid., pp. 35-6.

This temper often brings with it a refusal to consider as vital any belief not in this way acceptable to the philosopher, and develops the tendency to transmute religion into philosophy. It is often hostile or apathetic to all the historical elements in Christianity, and though quite compatible with orthodox belief, tends to treat religion mainly as a system of ideas, a luxury for the study rather than the lord of life and death. All these methods spring from the same error – the desire to do away with the element of risk in faith, and a dislike of what is unfathomable to the intelligence.[20]

Moreover:

> This faith is not only improbable but is contradicted daily by the facts of life. If we *were* able by thinking to plumb the secrets of things, it is clear that no revelation is needed, nor could there be any place in religion for mystery, which in its very notion is something unfathomable. On this view it would be true, as Browning said in irony that there is now a higher tribunal than God, the educated man, and the Christian religion must be made subject entirely to our intelligence, and shorn of all elements which transcend it.[21]

Science is not a solution to Christian mystery, as Figgis argues from Höffding's *Philosophy of Religion*, since 'science has not yet explained one single fact, and in the simplest things in outward life we find a mystery unfathomable',[22] but significantly it is to the poet rather than the philosopher that he returns to express his view most adequately:

> Slight as thou art, thou art enough to hide,
> Like all created things, secrets from me,
> And stand a barrier to eternity.
> And I, how can I praise thee well and wide
>
> From where I dwell upon the hither side,
> Thou little veil for so great mystery
> When shall I penetrate all things and thee
> And then look back? For this I must abide,
>
> Till thou shalt grow and fold and be unfurled

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[20]Ibid., pp. 36-7.
[21] Ibid., p. 37. Figgis is referring (note 10) to Browning's lines in *The Ring and the Book*: 'The Pope: "There a new tribunal now / Higher than God's, the educated man's."
[22] P. 38 and note 11, where Höffding is quoted *in extenso*.

> Literally between me and the world.
> Then I shall drink within beneath a spring
>
> And from a poet's side shall read his book.
> Oh! Daisy mine, what will it be to look
> From God's side even of such a simple thing?[23]

The image of the flower and a writer's response to it alerts us to the importance of visual, non-verbal as well as written language and its place in revelation. Figgis is urging on us a sense of limitlessness even in what can be seen and to some extent 'known', which sense applies also to our own inner selves:

> But even if this were not the case, and the outer world were quite within our intelligence, it is the inward life that is the real, and that is always a mystery, and speaks of something beyond.[24]

'Something beyond' is a neat alternative to the recurring idea that we have called 'moreness' or 'thatness' (see chapter 1). It is the 'something beyond' that 'mystery' indicates and invites towards. Though hidden it is ultimate reality, and ironically, it is when 'life crashes in', to use Figgis' phrase, that reason is most evidently shown to fail as a means of acknowledging its depths:

> What a futile mockery in the face of fact are all men's speculative projections of reality. We may dwell at other times in an abstract world and make ourselves happy with conceptions. But life crashes in with 'its wonder, its beauty, and its terror' – our house of cards trembles; and we are kicked as it were from the rational to the real, from the surface to the depths.[25]

Purely intellectual attempts to conceive of God are therefore doomed: according to Figgis reality is to be found in mystery because this is ultimately where experience leads. It is our argument that it is in the liturgy that we are placed most in touch with ultimate reality, because the liturgy is the place of encounter with mystery. This is hinted at by Figgis in a general way:

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[23] Alice Meynell, *To a Daisy*, quoted by Figgis p. 38. In *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*, ed. D.H.S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), no. 261.
[24] Figgis, 'Mystery', p. 38.
[25] Ibid., p. 39.

> Religion has been described as *living with the deepest depths of being*; its *raison d'être* is the sense of mystery. All its rites do but give form and body to the instinct that things are greater than we know; that we cannot grasp in our minds the real things of life; that there is an everlasting beyond in ourselves, as in God. Mystery is, in fact, no less needful than miracle in our world of thought to-day.[26]

The 'rites' of the Christian religion, its liturgy, lead not to knowledge but to mystery, we may infer. It is 'the everlasting beyond' that we encounter sacramentally: a beyond that nevertheless nourishes and beckons, awakening in the person who 'knows in part'[27] the 'instinct that things are greater than we know.' But mystery is not simply a description of a liturgical experience: it is at the heart of life itself and its contradictions and dilemmas:

> Love and pain and death, but above all things chance and choice are present for us all; they are the most real things in life; 'divine anarchists,' they baffle all efforts to sum the series of being, and defy prediction. It is in the 'abysmal depths of personality' that we find the final and fatal foe of mere intellectualism.[28]

So mystery is at once ecclesial and personal, and also social: while we may take issue with Figgis's notion of the poor and uneducated person who 'resents your efforts to "pluck the heart out of his mystery"'[29], we might at least agree that mystery as experienced in the reality of life and is an encounter in community as well as in individuality.[30] As we have indicated and as we shall further suggest, it incorporates a way of 'seeing' that must encompass creation in its fullness as well as particular moments of disclosure (Meynell's daisy), a quality of seeing to which we need to rely as much on the novelist, the poet and the visual artist as the theologian to alert us. As we shall suggest, liturgy is a place of 'seeing', and its language - and its mystery language in particular – a matrix for that sight which leads the soul to what cannot be seen corporeally but spiritually. Arnold's concept of 'seeing life whole', borrowed from Sophocles and as emphasized by Perran Gay, is of use here, not in the sense of increasing

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[26] Ibid., p. 39.
[27] Cf. I Cor 13.12.
[28] Figgis, 'Mystery', p. 45.
[29] Ibid., p. 41.
[30] Ibid., pp. 45-6.

knowledge in order to see, but in opening the eyes to what cannot be 'seen' empirically or by intellect alone.[31] 'Mystery' is a language that indicates this sweep of 'sight' which in the last day will be the vision of God.

Figgis's placing of love as at the heart of the community's experience of mystery (and of being human), as indeed I Cor. 13 expounds, brings him to George Tyrrell – the Anglican political thinker in approving dialogue with the radical Roman Catholic, whose *Lex Orandi*,[32] with which Figgis interacts, is described by Marvin O'Connell as 'intentionally pugnacious',[33] a comment that could equally have been made of Figgis in respect of some of his lectures and sermons. Figgis was probably less suited to the label 'progressive' than Tyrrell within his own ecclesial communion, but here it is love in relation to mystery as well as a shared conviction of the limits of reason and intellect that bring them together. For Figgis,

> Love is the mystery of man's nature no less than of God's; nothing else inspires the whole being, just because we cannot reach its end. The man who loves will never weep that he has no more worlds to conquer, for love knows neither end to its sacrifice nor bounds to its desire.[34]

It is the notion of the boundlessness of mystery so conceived, the sense of the distance covered revealing still more to be travelled, that prompts Figgis's approving quotation of Tyrrell:

> Mysteries, which have no direct ethical value bear most directly on love, which ever seeks a certain infinity and hiddenness in the object of its life. A thoroughly comprehensible personality would have no attraction for us; it would afford no scope for the unitive effort in which Love consists. There must always be a beyond, a new territory to conquer, a new difference to overcome...It is neither what we seem to understand about God that feeds our Love; nor the fact that He is infinitely beyond our

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[31] See Perran Gay, 'Seeing Life Whole: An Integrative Approach to the Christian Tradition', in *New Soundings: Essays on Developing Tradition*, ed. S. Platten, G. James & A. Chandler (London: DLT, 1997), 58-75 (esp. pp. 58-9 and notes).
[32] George Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi or Prayer and Creed* (London: Longmans, 1904).
[33] M.R. O'Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 330. For a biographical study and assessment of Tyrrell, N. Sagovsky, *'On God's Side': A Life of George Tyrrell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), and on *Lex Orandi* in context esp. pp. 171-73.
[34] Figgis, 'Mystery', p. 46.

understanding; but the fact that man can ever progress in knowledge and love, and always with a sense of an infinite 'beyond.' It is at the margin where the conquering light meets the receding darkness that love finds its inspirations. [If we are forced to conceive Him human-wise, we know that the conception is but an idol or picture: that if He is all that, He is also infinitely more.] To the savage He is but the biggest and strongest of men; to the rationalist He is but the most intelligent and moral; to Faith He is the hidden Infinite, of which these are but the finite symbols.[35]

There is a clear sense of the 'moreness' of which we speak in Tyrrell's 'beyond', and a definite similarity to and emphasizing of the priority of mystery and the limits of knowledge as set out by Figgis. In the section omitted by Figgis (see note below), Tyrrell also suggests the limits of physical 'seeing': if God must be conceived in human terms, the resulting picture must be little better than an idol, because it does not and cannot represent that towards which human corporeal sight strains. This 'infinitely beyond' is mystery, whether one is, in Tyrrell's terms, 'savage' or 'the most intelligent and moral', and it is so because it remains so. Therefore in terms of 'seeing' this is a further indication of the discussion to which we turn in the next chapter. Implicit, however, is the limitation of language – not even the intelligent can do any better than the savage.

In his own context, it has been said that 'the main burden of [Tyrrell's criticism of scholastic theodicy] was that scholastic rationalism with its rigidities and clarities stifled the sense of search for God.'[36] This is remarkably similar to Figgis. Daly quotes a letter in which Tyrrell, in this genre 'more unbuttoned than his publications', asserts:

> Religion dies with the sense of mystery, and worship becomes mere servility. That is why our theologians are so irreligious; their treatise *De Deo* is as definite as their treatise *De Romano Pontifice*, and they worship God merely as an anti-pope…They speak as though the inadequacy of our God-idea were merely quantitative; as though he were comprehensible up to a certain point.[37]

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[35] Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, pp. 48-9; quoted by Figgis, 'Mystery', p. 46. The text given here is that appearing in Tyrrell's original. It contains some errors in Figgis' quoted version (e.g. 'definitely' for 'infinitely', a significant difference). Figgis also omits the section in square brackets which is pertinent to the present theme.

[36] Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 145.

[37] Daly, *Transcendence*, p. 145 n. 32; *George Tyrrell's Letters*, ed. M.D. Petre (London: T.F.

Daly, with part of the same passage as that quoted by Figgis in view, further remarks of Tyrrell that

> In his spiritual theology [he] frequently comes close to that of Laberthonnière. Both of them, in rejecting the primacy of the intellect, found themselves turning to the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition which accorded an importance to the affective and conative that overrode, or at least corrected the excesses of a purely cognitive dimension in man's quest for God.[38]

Thus is suggested the similarity between Figgis and Tyrrell: a shared suspicion of that cognitive impulse which sought to explain and rationalize to the point of the extinction of mystery as they conceived it: a vital component in the language of loving dialogue between God and humanity. Thus Figgis can note of the rationalism he rejects 'its want of quiet and control, its habit of mistaking mere instruction for education, and information for culture.'[39] This raises questions for the liturgical theologian and practitioner, as to the extent to which liturgy actually encourages these things – quiet in the sense of lack of disturbance or excess, control of ideas of language and of physical movement, perpetuating of social constructs deriving from secular theories of hierarchy and of the modern state (of which Figgis was especially suspicious, and in 1908 presciently so), and the temptation to educate and inform as primary goals. Is this Tyrrell's 'worship as mere servility'? Importantly, Figgis suggests of transubstantiation that 'it is not to the truth therein enshrined that the English mind objects, but to the attempt to rationalise a mystery.'[40] Leaving aside the attempt at national caricature, there is an important point here which relates precisely to what we have said and will later say about 'seeing': transubstantiation is evidence of the breakdown in intellectual relationship between the language of the liturgy and the intellectual context in which it is

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Unwin, 1920). This has an interesting similarity to Figgis's use of Browning in relation to the Pope (see above).

[38] Daly, *Transcendence*, p. 145 n. 33.

[39] Figgis, 'Mystery', p. 47.

[40] Ibid., p. 49. His comments are not reserved for the doctrine of transubstantiation alone. Of discussions of the Atonement in the nineteenth century Figgis declares that 'Men did not so much object to the doctrine of the Atonement, but they shrank from the familiar and almost vulgar way in which coarse analogies were pressed, and attempts were made to measure a profound and glorious mystery by line and rule' (p. 49).

celebrated, which in Part II we will seek to show once existed in the pre-Berengar era. Breakdown, because what might be called its extreme realism confirmed that the truce between realist and symbolist interpretations of the Eucharist which had held in the latter centuries of the first millennium had ended, and that, while the liturgical language that supported it remained, the dimension of reticent seeing in respect of artistic and linguistic imagery which also held it in place had dissolved into a differently ordered, more literal conviction that in the eucharist God is 'seen'.

More recent writers have embraced the tensions apparent in Scheeben as part of their view. Torrance places mystery at the heart of his christological position, such that knowledge of the divine-human nature of God in Jesus

> we may describe as *sacramental*, for it is knowledge in which visible and invisible, audible and inaudible, earthly and heavenly, the human and the divine, are held together in the unity of the self-communication of the Truth of God to us and of our communion with that Truth. To use other New Testament language, the Truth is communicated to us in the form of mystery, that is, in the form of a concrete fact or particular event to which nevertheless the Truth is infinitely transcendent...the more we know of it the more we realize the ineffable and infinite fulness of its reality which defies complete disclosure within the limits of our experience. [But] this is not arbitrary mystery, for while it reaches out indefinitely beyond our apprehension it throws an increasing light upon ever wider areas of our experience. 'Mystery' of this kind expresses the objective depth of rationality...mystery means that our knowledge contains far more than we can ever specify or reduce to clear-cut, that is, delimited, notions or conceptions, and is concerned with a fullness of meaning which by its very nature resists and eludes all attempts to reduce it without remainder, as it were, to what we can formulate or systematize....mystery means that behind the objectivities in which the Truth discloses itself to us there is an infinite depth of reality calling for our recognition and reverence, openness of mind and wonder toward it.[41]

A.E. Taylor is even more direct in seeing mystery as indispensable to what he calls an 'adequate religion':

> When all has been said, it is as hard to conceive of an adequate religion without mystery, and consequently without the note of authority, as it is easy to smile at the shifts to

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[41] T.F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: OUP, 1969), pp. 149-50.

> which the theorist is driven when he attempts to provide authority with its clearly defined seat and to compile a register of its declarations...it remains true that 'God comprehended' would be no God, but a mere artificial construction of our own minds. *Christianity not Mysterious* is no proper title for a work on the Christian religion by a writer who seriously believes that religion to be something more than an invention of ingenious moralists and statesmen.[42]

Therefore, while it is true that even Einstein saw mystery as impossible to eliminate by an increase in knowledge,[43] in general it may be said that science believes that 'mystery' is equivalent to 'problem',[44] the religious thinker and the theologian will assert that 'while problems can eventually be removed, the encompassing domain of mystery remains a constantly receding frontier the deeper we advance into it.'[45] Gabriel Moran applies such thought to the language of scripture itself. In attempting to define mystery in its Pauline sense as 'the person of Christ and man's relation to Christ in the plan of the Father', Moran asserts that

> the apostles were forced to strain the capacities of their language and to create images which indirectly expressed but never fully expressed what they desired to say. It would be inaccurate to conceive of this language as either mere covering which can be stripped off to reveal the 'truths' contained there or as empty markers which stand for a reality but do not convey any truth. The sensible and verbal images are never neutral or expendable; they unfold the mystery more deeply or else they distort it. The biblical language must be appreciated and understood within its full human context; it cannot be converted into 'rational truths' which supposedly express the same thing in more scientific language.[46]

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[42] A.E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, series 2 (London: Macmillan, 1932), p. 211. *Christianity Not Mysterious* is the title of a work by the Deist John Toland to which we shall refer in Chapter 4; Torrance concurs with Taylor in the fact that something real 'cannot be reduced to our constructions of it', loc. cit., n. 2.

[43] A. Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (New York: Bonanza, 1954), p. 11.

[44] For the distinction between 'mystery' and 'problem', referred to earlier in this chapter, see Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 117; also J. Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, 2nd edition (London: SCM, 1981), pp. 359-60.

[45] J.F. Haught, *Mystery and Promise: A Theology of Revelation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 47.

[46] Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), p. 99 and n. 5 for references to the work of Lonergan and Hill.

The limitations of language are precisely the characteristics which identify mystery in its proper theological sense, limitations known to the apostles and to Christians today:

> In the apostolic experience, as in all human experience, there was a jumble of impressions, a shifting of attitudes, a convergence of evidence. What man knows always goes beyond what he can bring to full, objective awareness; in the moment of truth he always knows more than he can express. Man cannot avoid representing his knowledge in concepts and words, but the least reflection makes him realize that his concepts are rooted in a more primordial consciousness not completely expressible. But it is senseless to berate conceptual expressions because they are not exhaustive of human knowledge. Words, ideas, and propositions are indeed limited and defective instruments, but they are so because they are human and are the means by which men communicate their experience and bring to full awareness their own experience.[47]

Newman believed it to be plain wrong to diminish mystery by too much explanation, and was therefore careful to write, in a sermon on 'The Mystery of the Holy Trinity':

> I propose to state the doctrine, as far as it can be done, in a few words, in the mode in which it is disclosed to us in the text of Scripture; in doing which, if I shall be led on to mention one or two points of detail, it must not be supposed, as some persons strangely mistake, as if such additional statements were intended for *explanation*; whereas they leave the great Mystery just as it was before, and are only useful as impressing on our mind *what* it is that the Catholic Church means to assert, and as making it a matter of real faith and apprehension, and not a mere assemblage of words.[48]

Rahner coins the phrase *reductio in unum mysterium*[49] as a methodological guard against the attribution to mystery of an illusory provisionality when that is expressed as a conviction that increasing scientific knowledge means the steady eclipsing of mystery as a necessary theological reality. For Rahner, theology *is* the science of mystery of which growth by systematic deduction is rejected in favour of a constant and increasing relation of

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[47] Moran, *Revelation*, pp. 134-35.
[48] J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Longmans, Green, 1896), pp. 347-48.
[49] Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology', *Theological Investigations* Vol. 11: *Confrontations: I* (London: DLT, 1974), 68-114, esp. pp. 101-114.

all being and experience to God. Mystery is not a 'mere assemblage of words', in Newman's phrase, and the experience of it not a finite one as often negatively assumed and expressed by the Church in reference to the mortal pilgrimage of earthly existence. The Church has come to speak of many mysteries, which while not incorrect in itself is meaningless unless seen against the all-encompassing backdrop of the single mystery of God,

> only one single absolute mystery in the strictest sense of the term, God himself and in relation to him all those aspects under which man with his finite knowledge has to conceive of God.[50]

To bring together the many and the single mysteries, Rahner proposes the categories *God as remote*, which is the mystery at the heart of the world and worldly knowledge, and *God as near*, the whole content of the Christian mysteries. Rahner argues that the Christian mysteries are properly reduced, as the task of theology, to the single mystery, and shows how this may be done with creation, Trinity and incarnation. Since the incarnation is oriented to a humanity already clothed in grace,

> the task of theology must be precisely be to appeal...to this basic experience of grace...the truth, namely, that the absolute mystery...that permeates all things, upholds all things, and endures eternally, has bestowed itself as itself in an act of forgiving love upon man.[51]

For Rahner, theology must always move from the conceptual to the transcendental. The consequence for the Church is that it needs to be more allowing of pluralism precisely because mystery is radically incommensurable.

Torrance makes 'the centrality of Christ...all-determinative':

> He is the norm and criterion of our knowing and it is out of correspondence to Him that theological coherence grows...thus the organic unity of theology goes back in Christ to the unity of the Godhead, but in the nature of the case theology cannot, and must not try to seek knowledge of God apart from His whole objectivity, divine and human, in Jesus

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[50] Rahner, *Reflections*, pp. 105-6.
[51] Rahner, *Reflections*, p. 110.

> Christ. Therefore the modes and forms of our theological knowledge must exhibit an inner structural coherence reflecting the nature of Christ. Moreover, it is because mystery belongs to the nature of Christ as God and Man in one Person that it would be unfaithful of us not to respect that mystery in our knowing of Him and therefore in our systematic presentation of our knowledge. It is upon this fact that every attempt to reduce knowledge of God to a logical system of ideas must always suffer shipwreck.[52]

Mystery as religious language and as specifically Christian language, then, has senses which take it beyond those of philosophy or of scientific enquiry alone, and of non-religious culture and common usage. The point of mystery in religious terms is as much the looking, the experience and the consequences of looking as the possibility of finding, as much the journey, the experience, and the consequences of the journey as the goal. The element of hiddenness cannot go without that of revelation, and this can be shown to be the case in both pre-Christian and Christian contexts, and in the relationship between the two. But in saying this about mystery as a feature of religious language, there are limits to a purely linguistic approach to the study of it that must be acknowledged. The use of the word needs to be placed in its historical and theological context if its significance is to be appreciated and profitable conclusions drawn. Thus:

> Language is *the* symbol *par excellence*. Words can do much more than, for instance, pictures, which represent an object by giving an arrangement of parts analogous to that of the depicted object. Words *name* relations and by so doing are able to embody concepts not only of things, but of things in combination. Of course, all this requires that words be *in a context*. By themselves they would be merely indicative signs without intrinsic meaning.[53]

The context we are interested in is that of the liturgy as a composed, evolving and performed text, and as an expression of the theological, philosophical and historical concerns of its time. In examining what might be meant by 'mystery', we are effectively taking a sample of how this particular contextual matrix has operated by taking the medium of religious language as the starting point, but, it is hoped, not ring-fencing it with our own apologetic concerns or theological presuppositions. We are, above all, allowing the evidence

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[52] Torrance, *Theological Science*, pp. 138-39.
[53] Louis Dupré, *Symbols of the Sacred* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 43.

to speak for itself, and the contradictions and confusions we may discover to tell their own story about how liturgy and theology evolve and interrelate.

## Myth and Truth

An issue arising from the investigation of mystery as religious language is its relationship to notions of *myth*, particularly in the light of contemporary Christological debate. While it is not intended to focus too closely on this question in the present study it is important to note what we believe to be the important differences. Bernard Anderson points to the problem of definition in contemporary discussion of myth and associated terms, noting Herberg's separation of variant meanings: 'a fantastic story with no substance in fact'; 'a dramatic presentation of human existence in the face of Being.'[54] In both scholarship and popular thought there has been a preponderance of 'anti-mythical prejudice' originating, ironically, in classical antiquity and continued by the Fathers, Aquinas and Luther. A different line was taken by some biblical scholars, including Gunkel, whose more positive approach 'perceived the importance of myth in cultic recitations and specifically showed the influence of pagan myth upon the biblical tradition.'[55] Phenomenologists of religion such as van de Leeuw and Eliade are also positivists in that they try to see the value and authenticity of myth as, to quote Pettazoni, 'not merely a poetical value...or a symbolic one in the sense of the allegorists...but a positive, concrete worth, a functional value, an existential value as regards the condition of mankind.'[56] Heidegger, too, 'attempts to reinstate the poetic function of language as found in man's elemental experience in the face of Being,' in the sense that poets are most proficient in understanding how language functions, not as under the control of man, but as a 'window' of revelation of Being in relation to man. Indeed for Eliade, man 'sees himself as real, i.e. as truly himself, only and precisely insofar as he ceases to be so' by participation in archetypes expressed in myth and

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[54] B.W. Anderson, 'Myth and the Biblical Tradition', *Theology Today* 27 (1970), 44-62 (p. 44).
[55] Anderson, 'Myth', pp. 45-6.
[56] Ibid., p. 46, quoting R. Pettazoni, *Essays on the History of Religions*, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to *Numen*) 1 (1967), pp. 24-5.

'reactualized' in cultic forms.[57] Anderson himself, finally, notes 'pervasiveness of myth in human culture as the *sine qua non* of all human existence, the basis of social life and institutions.' He concludes that 'myth has *universal* truth to the degree that it exposes the human condition and brings men into contact with what is Real.'[58]

There are similarities between myth and mystery in terms of what they are taken to convey. Both have a particular relationship with truth, for example. However, some Catholic theology would dissociate myth from any revelatory function, and it is in this that ideas of myth part company with what we may call the classical function of mystery as Christian theological language. Heinrich Fries therefore argues that while

> the express revelation of God, which culminates in the historical epiphany of Jesus Christ, came to and still comes to men who know of God and the Godhead in a mythical way in historically and sociologically conditioned religions [nevertheless] revelation as event and word is not to be derived from myth, to which it is explicitly opposed.[59]

Revelation is 'the crisis of myth and the judgement upon it,' because of the nature of the God so revealed: transcendent, free, sovereign, creative. Revelation is 'the negation of myth, since in contrast to myth it recognizes the non-recurrent and irreversible character of history, historicity and time as a determinant of revelation, and the Christ-event within time as having taken place once and for all.'[60] In spite of this, the genre of myth is surely not without purpose. Language which appears to be 'mythical' in style can be actually expressive of revelation, and therefore of the hidden-yet-disclosed mystery of God. The structural characteristics of myth can be, as it were, a means by which mystery is encountered and engaged with. Myth can be part of the mystery.

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[57] Anderson, 'Myth', pp. 46-7; M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History: the Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 34, and *Sacred and Profane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 88.
[58] Anderson, 'Myth', pp. 48-9.
[59] H. Fries, 'Myth', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner, vol. 4 (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 152-56 (p. 155).
[60] Ibid., p. 156.

With this in view we now turn to an Anglican approach to the role of myth in the contribution of Maurice Wiles to the classic symposium *The Myth of God Incarnate*.[61] While the title of the collection might seem inherently inimical to notions of mystery in the senses we have begun to describe, Wiles nevertheless profitably rehearses some definitions and opinions surrounding myth, noting Baden Powell's view that 'every dogma is more or less a myth, as it is necessarily conveyed in analogical language and anthropomorphic action.'[62] Recalling ourselves that dogmas are sometimes called 'mysteries' in theological and catechetical discourse - the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation[63] - we then find Wiles offering Caird's opinion of myth as 'a pictorial way of expressing truths which cannot be expressed so readily or so forcefully any other way,'[64] but later Pannenberg's assertion that since the incarnation is 'historically unique' it must therefore be 'as far as anything possibly can be from myth, which expresses what is archetypal and valid for every age.'[65]

These views on the role of myth appear at first to reflect a shift in opinion from the 'all dogma is by definition myth' of Baden Powell, through Caird's 'myth is a last resort to pictorialism in the cause of inexpressible truths', to Pannenberg's 'incarnation is a special exception'. Surely, however, they equally beg a supplementary question: the relationship between *myth* and truth as compared to that between *mystery* and truth in theological terms. The use of mystery language in sacramental theology and liturgy, as we shall see, is only interested in the truth which lies behind it: it does not pretend to represent figuratively anything that cannot be expressed literally. For the early liturgists, a mystery *is* a truth the precise parameters of which cannot be defined by recourse to myth, metaphor or any other linguistic exercise. Myth, on the other hand, may well be employed in order to point to the truth, setting aside here a discussion of biblical or other literalism, but is not exclusively concerned with this function in

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[61] M. Wiles, 'Myth in Theology', in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ed. J. Hick (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 148-66.
[62] Baden Powell, *The Order of Nature* (London: Longman, 1859), p. 341; Wiles, 'Myth', p. 153.
[63] Scheeben's classic scheme, for example, specifies nine Christian mysteries, though not all dogmas, namely the Trinity, the Incarnation, Creation, sin, the Church, sacraments (especially the Eucharist), justification, predestination, and the Last Things: Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*.
[64] G.B. Caird, *St Luke* (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 79; Wiles, op. cit., p. 154.
[65] W. Pannenberg, 'Myth in Biblical and Christian Tradition', in his *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 3 (London: SCM, 1973), pp. 71-2; Wiles, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

a Christian context. It has a more didactic and literary quality and role, and in contemporary usage has a strong emphasis on non-literal truth, however instructive (the 'Greek Myths', for example). Indeed a myth may point to a mystery, but never the other way round. What the authors of *The Myth of God Incarnate* fail to appreciate, perhaps, is that mystery forms another, complementary layer of religious language which cannot be replaced by myth. This is not at all to deny that myth and indeed metaphor, as we shall see, form important, even essential tools of understanding that help to convey why belief is possible as a response to the texts in which they occur, while not dissolving the intellectually unknowable truths at the heart of faith; that is, when what can only be called 'mystery' is reached. As Anselm remarks, if a Christian 'succeeds in reaching this understanding, let him delight in it, but if he does not, let him venerate what he cannot comprehend.'[66]

For the Christian theologian it ought to be possible therefore to modify Baden Powell and say that 'every dogma is more or less a *mystery*, as it is necessarily conveyed in analogical language', and even that mystery as *language* better conveys mystery as *theology* than myth. A myth may, in theory, very easily become a means of accommodating subjective or convenient interpretations of doctrine, whereas a mystery is concerned less with interpretation than with the space that only God can fill, the existence of which is an aspect of faith. This is why, we assert, Ignatius' remark that the incarnation, a mystery which, though to be 'proclaimed with a shout', nevertheless took place 'in the quiet of God'[67] is of critical importance to understanding the indispensable role of mystery language in Christian discourse. It is by implication a doxological language, because it indirectly praises God by acknowledging the space and silence as positive indicators of divine initiative. It is therefore what myth can never wholly be: a liturgical language that spills out of euchology and informs theology. More than this, because, as Wiles declares in a later work, 'theological reflection is parasitic upon the life of faith and cannot survive a

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[66] Anselm, *Letter to Fulco*, quoted in J. Bayart, 'The Concept of Mystery According to St Anselm of Canterbury,' *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 9 (1937), 125-66 (p. 128 and n. 8).

[67] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 19: this trans. H. Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers* (London: OUP, 1956), p. 41.

sundering of the links between them...the reflective formulations of faith must be consistent with the experienced actuality of faith'; moreover 'the use of language in the articulation of faith in prayer and worship is very different from the use of language in critical reflection,'[68] presumably because one is fundamentally a performative language and the other, as Wiles would have it, a reflective language.

**Analogy, Poetry and the Language of Faith**

We remain with the important work of Maurice Wiles, though not uncritically, to take the discussion a stage further in attempting to establish the place and relationships of mystery in theological language. In asking how the language of faith is distinctive, what is required is simplicity that is not unambiguous, but is of a kind that reflects the 'complexity or ambiguity of our experience'. Such a language is symbolic of 'that which cannot be directly spoken' in that 'it takes hold of certain images that are basic to our experience of life and extends their meaning so that they point to what is ultimate.'[69] Mystery might well be spoken of as one such image, since it 'takes hold' of our experience of not knowing and makes it, sacramentally at any rate, both a symbol of and a point of intersection with revelation. If it is analogical, it is so in the sense of using the limitations of our knowledge of God and God's activity to make a positive statement about these things without reducing them to matters that may be solved in time or indeed, as with myth, conveying a possibility of untruth. As Wiles points out, ambiguity and precision are not necessarily incompatible in the language of faith. Using the analogy of poetic language, where words are carefully chosen but may still leave much to the imagination,[70] Wiles draws on the insights of Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Maritain to conclude that such language not only presents reality in a new way but is itself reality. Maritain says that poetry is recomposition of 'a world more real than the reality offered to the senses.'[71] The point of all this is

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[68] M. Wiles, *Faith and the Mystery of God* (London: SCM, 1982), pp. 17-18.
[69] Wiles, *Mystery*, pp. 17-18.
[70] 'There is, in all poetry, something which must remain unaccountable however complete might be our knowledge of the poet, and that is what matters most': T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957), p. 112.
[71] J. Maritain, 'The Frontiers of Poetry', in *Art and Scholasticism* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), pp. 68-94 (p. 75); Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 20.

the avoidance of subjectivity and reductionism: the use of a kind of language which takes hold of the ambiguity of experience of God and forges a new reality capable of new insights is not theology on the hoof, but itself a means of deeper encounter with truth. In a liturgical context, this is what mystery language is meant to facilitate. It is not an avoidance of ambiguity or contradiction, but a dynamic embrace of these things. It follows that if liturgy is lacking in this dynamism, not only in a linguistic but also conceivably in a performative and visual sense, then it will itself be prone to a subjective approach to encounter with God. In recognizing such a positive function of religious language, however, we must be aware of the danger, since 'religious language is always poised on a knife-edge between affirming nonsense and lapsing into vacuity.'[72] While agreeing with this, it is the geography of the knife-edge itself that most interests us. It is the very sharpness and narrowness in relation to the abysses of nonsense and vacuity that lie either side that give it the energy and dynamism to be what it is, as the mountaineer knows so well as he experiences the thrill of a Carn Mor Dearg Arète or a Striding Edge,[73] the element of risk producing the reality that simply would not be there if the mountain did not fall away for hundreds of feet on either side. Mystery-language is in this category, we assert: it engages with the fact that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'[74] It is impossible to avoid a sense almost of the erotic in putting it thus: religious language, like the poetic, ought to be able to produce an irresistible urge to know the object of one's fascination intimately, and to be satisfied and nourished by such an encounter which can never be expressed literally or subjectively. An indirect language is the best that can be used, lest the essential otherness of God be lost, inappropriately humanized and thus, as it were, un-divinized. It is for reasons such as this that the language of mystery is so appropriate to the eucharist, and has found such use in that context.

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[72] Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 23.
[73] Two sharp, rocky ridges in the Scottish Highlands and the English Lake District respectively which require great care to negotiate while providing an exhilarating experience of the mountains of which they form part.
[74] Heb. 10.31.

## Paradox

A further aspect of religious language discussed by Wiles is the fact that, in its parallels with poetic language, religious language expresses truth by way of paradox.[75] This has a clear relevance to 'mystery' and its uses, since the latter purports to have a positive, dynamic function in facilitating encounter with divine truth while not succumbing to the logical solution the possibility of which its non-theological usage may suggest. In contrast to his earlier output, the later writings of Lévy-Bruhl give greater credence to paradox in religious language in that they embrace notions of mystical participation which involve 'incompatibility in the physical sense, but not of logical absurdity.'[76] Just as earlier we encountered the suggestion of a new reality brought about by religious language, and by implication mystery language, so here, perhaps, we may perceive the beginnings of an understanding of paradox that is not incompatible with, but which incorporates it into the theological and liturgical function of mystery language. Thus Lévy-Bruhl's insight that

> man has had the revelation that the reality is such as he sees it and at the same time there exists another reality...the reality given to him is at one and the same time what is and other than what it is.[77]

On this basis mystery may represent both the reality of the unknown aspects of God's activity, and at the same time the reality of the hidden truth conveyed in the liturgical encounter with it. The paradox must either be accepted and incorporated or utterly rejected in favour of more direct language, since it is not possible to resolve it by means of the intellect. This surely ties in closely with the tradition of *theologia negativa* and brings liturgical language into its ambit. As if to confirm this, though not explicitly saying so, Wiles takes as an example of paradoxical religious language the central liturgical phrase 'This is my body'. In so doing he takes us to the heart of what we shall later wish to say about

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[75] Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 32 and n. 4.
[76] P. Lévy-Bruhl, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), pp. 7-11, 99-101, 126-27, quoted by Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 32.
[77] Lévy-Bruhl, *Notebooks*, p.103; Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 32.

eucharistic theology in the early middle ages in relation to mystery, since he points to the patristic ability to hold together 'symbolic and realistic language without any sense of strain,'[78] a positive embrace of paradox which was put to the test at the time of the Paschasius-Ratramnus controversy and was eventually to shatter with Berengar and Lanfranc. Wiles concludes that paradox is a necessary part of the religious language of worship in particular, since it is the language of faith rather than simply of the theological academy. He therefore warns of the danger of trying to over-theologize language intended for worship; a Scottish liturgy of James VI is an example of a disaster in this regard:

> Send down, O Lord, thy blessing upon this Sacrament, that it may be unto us the effectual exhibitive instrument of the Lord Jesus.[79]

This attempt to pin down the meaning of the eucharist shows clear disregard for the very role of paradox which Wiles and, as we shall argue, the western liturgical tradition, happily employs. It lacks 'the proper sense of mystery'[80] without which liturgy becomes mere words on human lips for human ends.

**Model and Metaphor**

Yet to be considered are the possibilities of mystery as model and metaphor in religious language: is mystery a metaphor or a model, and if either or both does this matter? A principal argument of Janet Soskice is that metaphor does not preclude realist language, but there is more to be said. It is to be doubted, for example, whether it is a *mere* 'model' for God's activity, as if there were others, since the tradition suggests it is the *very* means by which that activity is encountered. Conversely, even if exclusive, perhaps it has the characteristics of a model in that it provides a framework for discourse on and encounter with the ultimately unknowable aspects of the nature of God.

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[78] Wiles, *Mystery,* p. 37.
[79] *Scottish Liturgies of James VI*, ed. Sproth, Edmonston and Douglas (1871), p. 72: Wiles, *Mystery*, p. 38 and n. 25.
[80] Wiles, *Mystery,* p. 38.

Janet Soskice, in the latter part of her study *Metaphor and Religious Language*, does not treat this complex area directly but from some of the principles she proposes important insights may be gained. Comparing the role of models and analogy in science and theology - and here we recall Foster's comparison of philosophers and scientists with theologians - Soskice asserts that

> The fertility of a theory lies in its ability to suggest possibilities of exploration which, while not inconsistent with, are more than simply the logical extensions of mathematical formulas...A good model suggests possibilities.[81]

This is in accord with a notion of the 'moreness' of God which is opened up by mystery language when viewed as a language of *possibility*. Mystery is a 'model' in that it presupposes a construct of 'not-knowingness', where the latter is the defining and controlling characteristic, paradoxically providing the 'empirical' basis which, according to Ian Ramsey (see below) is needed in a religious language which habitually characterizes its models with such qualifiers as 'eternal', 'all-knowing' and 'infinite', with the attendant danger of absurdity.

The case for the types of model employed by theists, as opposed to those of scientists, is made by Soskice in the following statements:

> Building a theory is a matter of constructing a proper analogy and this analogy is provided by a model.

> Theists are less willing than scientists to revise or replace their models, but this is not because the reflective theist thinks his models are completely adequate to their subject-matter but because he thinks they are the most adequate he has.

> The limited applicability and potential dispensability of our models is re-affirmed each time we acknowledge that what we now think of God is but a crude reflection of what we shall know when we see him 'face to face'.[82]

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[81] Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), following Hesse and Harré, p. 114 and nn.
[82] Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 115.

The limited, provisional nature of 'mystery' is itself a way of talking about the things of God: like the 'new reality' created by poetic language as noticed by Maritain and Wiles, so the very limitations of mystery, as model too, posit a new reality of relationship between God and humanity. This is especially true in the context of worship, since it is there that the limits of our experience and knowledge are made the vehicle of grace, through faith.

Ramsey, however, as we have noted, identifies a 'logical oddness' in theists' models characterized by qualifiers. However, to pursue his ideas at source for a moment, Ramsey declares at the beginning of the second chapter of *Religious Language* that the latter must be '*appropriately* odd', and have a '*distinctive* logical behaviour'[83] in order to work - 'be appropriate currency'[84] - of which negative theology is an example.[85] He concludes the same chapter with an assertion that in fact

> at every point we plot and map our theological phrases with reference to a characteristically religious situation - one of worship, wonder, awe. Without such an empirical anchorage all our theological thinking is in vain, and where there is controversy and argument we are to look for their resolution where they are fulfilled: in worship.[86]

Therefore, he resumes, 'let us always be cautious of talking about God in straightforward language.'[87] It seems, then, that the possibility of absurdity effectively indicates a good 'model' for mystery language, because resolving it purely intellectually or linguistically would lead to an absurd proposition. This, returning to Soskice, is in the very nature of Christian presuppositions.[88]

Turning to metaphor, specifically in the context of theological realism, Soskice both states her case and anchors us in the tradition:

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[83] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, p. 49, my emphasis.
[84] Ibid., p. 53.
[85] Ibid., pp. 50-53.
[86] Ibid., p. 89.
[87] Ibid., p. 91.
[88] Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 116.

> It is...of the utmost importance to keep in mind the distinction, never remote in the writings of Anselm or of Aquinas, between referring to God and defining Him. This is the fine edge at which negative theology and positive theology meet, for the apophatic insight that we say nothing of God, but only point towards Him, is the basis for the tentative and avowedly inadequate stammerings by which we attempt to speak of God and His acts. And...this separation of referring and defining is at the very heart of metaphorical speaking and is what makes it not only possible but necessary that in our stammering after a transcendent God *we must speak*, for the most part, *metaphorically or not at all*.[89]

Present here is the image of the fine edge which we found significant in the work of Wiles on analogy and the poetic: there it was the ridge between the abysses of nonsense and vacuity, here its positioning between referring and defining is equally important. It is the existence and nature of the edge, and the new reality it allows because of where it is, that make it what it is. The tension between referring and defining, as between nonsense (or absurdity) and vacuity is where mystery as religious language and theological dynamic is to be found. If so, if mystery is a characteristic of this liminal, precarious reality, poised between the unclouded vision of God and the experience of humanity, then Soskice is right to say that

> the theist can reasonably take his talk of God, bound as it is within a wheel of images, as being reality depicting, while at the same time acknowledging its inadequacy as description. This, we believe, is the position a critical theological realist must take.[90]

On this basis mystery language is an acceptable way of talking about God and the activity of God, and by extension sacramental language too. Later we will suggest that it is not merely *acceptable* or *appropriate*, but *necessary*.

If mystery language is thus 'reality depicting' on the terms Soskice suggests, some consideration must be given to the objections with which she deals. These are principally those of Cupitt and Ayer. Cupitt objects to religious realism itself on the grounds that 'insofar as it succeeds in being realistic it

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[89] Ibid., p. 140, italics mine.
[90] Ibid., p. 141. See also M. Wiles, 'Worship and Theology', in his *A Shared Search: Doing Theology in Conversation with One's Friends* (London: SCM, 1994), 127-37(p. 134).

necessarily ceases to be religious,' which view Soskice believes to be incompatible with Christianity because it is dependent on 'residual empiricism.'[91] Ayer suggests that if we say that God 'exists', then we

> take refuge in saying that it falls short of what the words really mean. But words have no meaning beyond the meaning that is given them, and a proposition is not made the more credible by being treated as an approximation to something that we do not find intelligible.

Ayer's point is that if the transcendence of God is understood as being unintelligible, it cannot be a basis on which to talk about God, and he criticises mystics for doing precisely this.[92] Soskice, however, is arguing that metaphorical language *can* depict reality, and thus support Christian metaphysical claims. The danger of the positions adopted by Cupitt and Ayer is that mystery cannot thereby have a meaning beyond purely what it means in human terms, because those terms are the only basis upon which 'realism' is based. If a dynamic concept of mystery is accepted, however, then this *is* its human meaning: that in signifying the hidden reality of God and the manner of encounter with God, a 'new reality' is given to mystery language, its utterance and its reception.

A useful interjection at this point forms part of the treatment of religious language by E.L. Mascall, insofar as he argues for meaningfulness of language within communities. While much theological language is 'ordinary discourse', not having any special characteristics, nevertheless 'some of it...purports to describe, or at least refer to, realities beyond those that are immediately perceived by the senses', which places it in common with metaphysics to some degree. Religious language goes further, however, because 'the reality with which it claims to be specially concerned - what it denotes by the word 'God' - transcends not merely the realm of the immediately sensible, but the realm of all finite objects.' The meaningfulness of such language 'means the capacity to be understood'. While acknowledging, ironically, Ayer's 'verification principle', Mascall nonetheless concludes that the significance of meaning relates to the

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[91] D. Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM, 1980), p. 45; Soskice, *Metaphor,* p. 142.
[92] A.J. Ayer, *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 211-12; Soskice, *Metaphor*, pp. 142-44.

community in which the language is used: 'theological statements are meaningful, in the context in which theological talk occurs.'[93] Soskice broadens this by pointing to the importance of experience and the interpretive tradition alongside community, where the community provides the context for referential claims and in which 'we rely on authoritative members of our community to ground referring expressions', which in liturgical terms could mean the president at the eucharist or those who facilitate liturgical formation in the church. The latter depends on the interpretive tradition for 'the descriptive vocabulary which a community has at its disposal [and which] is embedded in particular traditions of investigation and conviction.'[94] Liturgical language is no exception, but its relatedness to the tradition may be differently configured over time. It may lose or gain acuity of focus as shifts occur in the intellectual context, although remaining as language in use in worship and therefore having a meaning in that sense that is more or less anchored in the deeper currents of theological change. It may happen that it becomes less embedded and truly referential through, for example, lack of attention to formation or on the part of the theological academy. This is why it is important to have a historical sense of the evolution and use of liturgical language in intellectual context.

Soskice takes the discussion of realism further with Ramsey's use of Locke's example of two figures in the mist: we cannot tell for sure whether one is a statue, the other a man, but we do know that something is there. Although neither shape is wholly defined, there is nevertheless an objectivity about the situation: 'we cannot be mistaken about that "something" which is other than ourselves.'[95] Locke's illustration might well be a way of explaining what is meant by mystery as reality-depicting theological language: it indicates a reality with which to engage, but acknowledges the limitations of that engagement in the present dispensation. The engagement nevertheless occurs in a climate of fascination, or to use Locke's terms, there is a desire to know what is in the mist, or in Christian language, 'beyond the veil'. In Soskice's view, realism of this

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[93] E.L. Mascall, 'Theology and Language', chapter 2 of *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (London: DLT, 1971), 18-35 (pp. 30-35).
[94] Soskice, *Metaphor,* p. 149.
[95] I.T. Ramsey, 'Facts and Disclosures,' in *Christian Empiricism*, ed. J.H. Gill (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), 159-76 (p. 174); Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 146.

kind 'accommodates figurative speech which is reality depicting without claiming to be directly descriptive' and doesn't seek to define God by using metaphor to refer to God. Rather, 'a reflective theological realism [which includes worship addressed to God] need not do violence to genuine religious conviction by vulgar anthropomorphism [but is] well suited to a theology which wishes to preserve the sense of God's transcendence.'[96] This, it might be argued, is precisely why the extreme allegorical interpretation of the liturgy deserves the criticism it has received: it aims to make the liturgy depict reality in a way it cannot without 'doing violence' to the sense of the otherness and hiddenness of the God worshipped therein. Revelation, on this basis, might be thought the ultimate example of 'doing violence' to this otherness, but, as we will now argue in the next chapter, this is far from being the case.

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[96] Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 148.

# CHAPTER 3

# MYSTERY, ART AND REVELATION

In this chapter we will discuss the nature of the relationship between concepts of mystery and revelation as treated by a range of traditions and writers, and as mediated through the visual characteristics of art and nature - what we shall call the 'mystery-aesthetics' of revelation – and conclude with some implications for the liturgical context.

The First Vatican Council declared:

> If anyone should maintain that no true and properly so-called mysteries are contained in divine revelation, but that all the dogmas of faith can be understood and demonstrated by the cultured intellect from natural principles: let him be anathema.[1]

The severity of this warning, in that it appears to preclude discussion, obscures the fact that there is a clear and fruitful connection between concepts of mystery and understandings of revelation. As Michel interprets, the conclusions of the First Vatican Council go on to affirm that there are mysteries hidden in God which can only be known by divine revelation (referring to I Cor. 2.7-10 and Matt. 11.25), and that while some fruitful knowledge of mysteries is available through faith, they are nevertheless veiled (referring to II Cor. 5.6-7). Michel deduces three properties of mystery. First, that there are truths hidden in God that are superior to all human and angelic intelligence: supernatural truths. Pius IX in the Brief *Gravissimus Inter* (11 December 1862) affirmed their impenetrability by natural reason or principles, and the Council accordingly confirms that they surpass all created intelligence. Secondly, they are only capable of being known by revelation: *nisi revelata divinitus, innotescere non possunt*. It is impossible that God created any intelligence capable of knowing them without revelation. Thirdly, being only known by revelation, they are covered by the veil of faith and enclosed in a dark cloud: *sacro ipsius fide velo tecta et obscura caligne*

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[1] First Vatican Council, session III, iv, *De fide et ratione*, canon 1, quoted by Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, p. 11, approvingly.

*obvoluta*.[2] Much of this interpretation is confirmed and rooted in Catholic theological tradition by Bayart in his study of mystery in the writings of St Anselm, numbering among its conclusions the theme of attraction.[3]

Pope John Paul II returned to and confirmed these themes in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* of 14 September 1998. A section entitled in the English translation 'Reason before the mystery' asserts that 'revelation remains charged with mystery…our vision of the face of God is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.'[4] While the final statement may be to claim too much, the encyclical does consider the sacramental implications of the first statement. These lead us closer to the liturgical consequences of the relationship between revelation and mystery and to the proposal of a reticent emphasis that is evident in liturgical development but is itself obscured by aspects of that development:

> To assist reason in its effort to understand the mystery there are signs which Revelation itself presents. These serve to lead the search for truth to new depths, enabling the mind in its autonomous exploration to penetrate within the mystery by use of reason's own methods…Yet these signs also urge reason to look beyond their status as signs in order to grasp the deeper meaning which they bear. They contain a hidden truth to which the mind is drawn and which it cannot ignore without destroying the very signs which it is given.[5]

This refers chiefly to the eucharist, 'in which the indissoluble unity between the signifier and the signified makes it possible to grasp the depths of the mystery.' The role of knowledge in this 'does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the

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[2] A. Michel, 'Mystère', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol. 10 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928), 2585-2599 (cols. 2587-2588), quoting Vatican Council I, session III, iv, 'De fide et ratione'. See also the section 'Catholic Doctrine' in J.A. McHugh, 'Mystery', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 10 (1911), at www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm [21.05.2003].

[3] J. Bayart, 'The Concept of Mystery according to St Anselm of Canterbury', *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 9 (1937), 125-66. A mystery is 'a truth of faith the inner nature of which the human mind cannot adequately grasp' (Bayart), but interestingly also that a mystery *is* a revelation , an encounter with hidden truth in God (pp. 165-66). Anselm acknowledges obscurity, yet longs to engage more fully with the mystery. In Bayart's words 'a true conception of mystery [is] a glimpse of divine Truth, revealed to man in order to guide him through the twilight of this life to the full vision hereafter' (p. 166).

[4] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 14 September 1998, E.T. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), s. 13, p. 20.

[5] *Fides et Ratio*, s. 13, pp. 22-23. Note once again the notion of being drawn by what is hidden.

more.'[6] These conclusions with direct reference to the sacrament of the eucharist raise two issues. First, they are presumably intended to apply not merely to the eucharist in theory as a sacrament but also to its actual liturgical expression and to the language used in that expression. Secondly, the role given to knowledge and the extent of its capability with respect to the mystery is on the face of it surprisingly great. With regard to the first, it can be argued that such an assumption is made because insufficient attention has been paid by the churches to the implications of the process of development of the liturgy and what is actually said in it, to the extent that the apophatic stance assumed by the encyclical is not wholly the case in the actual texts, where it is at best an unrealized ideal. The point is that while this may well be all that liturgical texts can ever be, the doctrine with which they are assumed to be compatible does not adequately acknowledge their limitations. Liturgy in the first millennium, in its use of mystery, suggests a much closer alignment; contemporary liturgy has arguably lost this vital thread in that texts are used excessively to delineate, positively and negatively, doctrines such as the manner of the presence of Christ at the expense of that of the primary, hidden action of God in mystery. With regard to the second issue, the tensions inherent in the discussion are revealed by the apparent ability to 'grasp the depths of the mystery' surely running contrary to what has already been said and to what is then immediately said about not destroying the mystery: if the depths can be grasped, has the mystery not, in secular language, been 'solved'? This is not a criticism of the encyclical or its author so much as evidence of the limitations of language when it comes to speaking of how revelation 'happens' and where it is to be encountered.

Nineteenth-century Catholic dogma, its antecedents and its contemporary expression[7] give a clear lead on the matter of mystery in relation to revelation,

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[6] *Fides et Ratio*, s. 13, p. 23.

[7] Rahner could write in 1959 (i.e. before the Second Vatican Council, but presumably after its announcement in January of that year) that 'the notion of mystery as now proposed in fundamental and dogmatic theology, is more or less that of the first Vatican Council, which did not go beyond the usual problems of the schools, at least consciously and expressly': Karl Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', originally published in S. Behn, *Beständiger Aufbruch* (Przywara-Festschrift, Nuremberg, 1959), and in English in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 4, *More Recent Writings* (London: DLT, 1966), 36-73 (p. 38). This paper contains a useful summary of this pre-Vatican II 'official' understanding of mystery, although Odo Casel had long before published his ideas of *Mysteriengegenwart* which would influence the

and yet they show that questions remain. A wider net therefore needs first to be spread on the subject in order to equip us with the necessary tools to engage in the detailed historical argument which follows in subsequent chapters. John Haught remarks that the reason for an interest in the manner and means of revelation is that 'it brings with it an unexpected power to make reality more intelligible and our lives more meaningful.'[8] This would seem to suggest that revelation is concerned with increasing our knowledge of God. If this is Haught's understanding, then it is at variance with the theological understanding of mystery that incorporates our ultimate inability to 'solve the puzzle'. In this regard Henri de Lubac's reminder of St Bernard's warning to those who are content to be such theological 'investigators' is appropriate.[9]

For Rahner the relationship between mystery and knowledge is such that knowledge *of* mystery is not a secondary or defective *form* of knowledge: 'The essence of knowledge lies in the mystery which is the object of primary experience and is alone self-evident.'[10] The goal of knowledge is *in* mystery, because mystery is the condition for the possibility of knowledge: 'Knowledge is primarily the experience of the overwhelming mystery of this *deus absconditus*.'[11] Revelation is thus the *manifestation of mystery*, not the full, measurable disclosure of something previously hidden. It is not the giving of special knowledge by God, but entails the ever deepening perception of God *as* mystery.

Rahner gives the priority to mystery, by which revelation is to be understood in relation to mystery: it reveals distance yet to be travelled and yet *as mystery* the goal is encountered and experienced during the journey: 'The 'gloria' is nothing other than the loving surrender of man to the incomprehensibility of God which is now a directly present reality,'[12] where 'incomprehensible' is not to be taken to be synonymous with 'incoherent' (i.e.

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new Council (see Chapter 1).
[8] Haught, *Mystery and Promise*, p. 22.
[9] See Chapter 1; De Lubac, *Christian Faith*, p. 52.
[10] Karl Rahner, 'The Hiddenness of God', *Theological Investigations* Vol. 16, *Experience of the Spirit* (London: DLT, 1979), 227-243, esp. pp. 236-43 (p. 236).
[11] Ibid., p. 238.
[12] Ibid., p. 243.

not capable of being understood at all), rather as indicating that God cannot be *fully* understood or known. Indeed it is the significance of *this* 'incomprehensibility' of God in relation to mystery that pre-Conciliar theology had failed adequately to grasp:

> It is in fact remarkable that in general the theology of the schools does not confront the notion of mystery with the doctrine of God's abiding incomprehensibility even in the *visio beatifica*, a doctrine obvious in itself and dogmatically assured. God remains incomprehensible, and the object of vision is precisely this incomprehensibility, which we may not therefore think of as a sort of regrettably permanent limitation of our blessed comprehension of God.[13]

Therefore, argues Rahner,

> Vision must mean grasping and being grasped by the mystery, and the supreme act of knowledge is not the abolition or diminution of the mystery but its final assertion, its eternal and total immediacy. And the concept of mystery receives a new content, which does not contradict the standard notion but becomes for the first time authentic and primordial. It is no longer the limitation of a knowledge which should by right be perspicuous. It is an intrinsic constituent of the very notion of knowledge.[14]

Mystery is not a 'defective type of another and better knowledge which is still to come';[15] rather,

> knowledge...can only be realized in its *true* sense when and in so far as the subject is more than knowledge, when in fact it is a freely given love. This is only possible if knowledge is ultimately a faculty ordained to an object attainable only because the object is greater than the faculty. And what but the incomprehensibility of mystery can be such an object of knowledge, since it forces knowledge to surpass itself and both preserve and transform itself in a more comprehensive act, that of love?

As Rahner strikingly comments, this must be so because 'we are not saved by knowledge but by love'.[16]

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[13] Rahner, 'Concept', p. 41.
[14] Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[15] Ibid., p. 42.
[16] Ibid., 'Concept', p. 43.

Haught does not in fact mean to say that revelation is somehow dependent on human initiative and serves as a tool for human confinement of God, but that it is something which feeds a human fascination with the divine and makes possible our interaction with and experience of it. He centres an understanding of revelation in the self-emptying of God in Christ. Drawing on Moltmann and von Balthasar among others, he argues that the eclipse of mystery by what he sees as the increasing suffering of humanity in the modern world makes the divine *kenosis* all the more noticeable,[17] such that:

> a persistent reflection on this central image may be able to explain, to some extent at least, why Christian theology has arrived at so many dead-ends in its ruminations about mystery, creation, suffering, and human freedom. Theology's failure to take seriously this most shocking and yet so simple of revelatory images...leads only to further perplexities and incoherences.[18]

Haught's thesis suggests that the cross as *kenosis* standing at the centre of a theology of revelation is fundamental to a renewed understanding of mystery. In this he is effectively revisiting the thought of those earliest post-New Testament Christian writers for whom mystery was descriptive of the cross.[19] It is not clear, though, precisely how this association aids our ability to 'restate the meaning of reality, the meaning of mystery, cosmos, history and selfhood', as Haught claims.[20]

Nevertheless there is an acknowledgement that revelation is not the mere transmission of information, but a dialogical concept. Reducing it to propositional statements, or 'boundary maintenance', as Haught calls it, serves the purposes of the apologist, but does not take account of the fact that its content is experienced by the Church.[21] This would seem to draw revelation and mystery closer together in the sense that the third- and fourth-century Fathers did not understand mystery in the liturgical context in terms of apologetics. Their primary purpose in commenting on the liturgy was to convey its experiential

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[17] Haught, *Mystery*, p. 22.
[18] Ibid., p. 24.
[19] See Chapter 4.
[20] Ibid., p. 28.
[21] Ibid., p. 30.

sign-content and the consequent implications for the living relationship between God and humanity – what Kevin Irwin has called the *lex agendi* or *lex vivendi* that must flow from the interaction of *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, that is 'the spirituality and moral life dimension of liturgy in terms of living the spiritual life in congruence with the mystery of God and the gospel values experienced and celebrated in liturgy.'[22] Haught confirms this view later stressing that there is no developed theology of revelation in scripture, patristic writings or medieval scholastic theology precisely because in all these contexts 'the fact of revelation was so foundational to Christian faith that it did not need to be reflected upon in the deliberate fashion that apologetics requires.'[23] Furthermore, because 'mystery was so much a part of life's presuppositions...there was no need to make revelation the explicit notion it has become today.'[24] Thus while mystery and revelation are close partners in the dialogical relationship between God and humanity played out in the liturgy, revelation is secondary to mystery, because mystery describes the object of revelation. Later it will be seen how, in one interpretation at least, *mysterium* is the object of *sacramentum*.[25]

Haught describes the nature of the experiential in revelation in terms of 'limit-questions', or 'those happenings in our lives that shock us into a recognition that our ordinary existence is encompassed by a previously unacknowledged realm of the unknown', basing this assertion on the work of Tracy and Toulmin.[26] Revelation is 'a response not to our problems but to our limit-questions' and 'the symbol-laden unfolding of the encompassing presence of mystery rather than a magical response to specific sets of problems'.[27] In this sense sacraments are media of revelation because they are *loci* of encounter with the mystery of God in Christ. Thus Newman could write that 'every word of Revelation has a deep meaning. It is the outward form of a heavenly truth, and in

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[22] K.W. Irwin, 'Liturgical Theology: What do East and West Have to Say to Each Other?', *Studia Liturgica* 30 (2000), 94-111; Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Pueblo-Liturgical Press 1994), p. 46.
[23] Haught, *Mystery*, p. 33.
[24] Ibid., p. 44.
[25] Chapter 5.
[26] Haught, *Mystery*, pp. 47-9, discussing D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury 1975), pp. 91-118, and S. Toulmin, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP 1970), pp. 202-21.
[27] Haught, *Mystery*, p.51.

this sense a mystery or Sacrament,' and David Power can argue that 'sacramental liturgy belongs within revelation, since it is the communication of the Word and the Spirit to those who live by the memorial of Jesus Christ.'[28]

With regard to the God who cannot fully be known, Walter Kasper points to the tradition of *theologia negativa*, which found its most typical philosophical basis in Neoplatonism,[29] and which became an official doctrine of the church at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, whereby 'between Creator and creature no similarity can be uttered without this having to embrace a still greater dissimilarity between the two.'[30] The mystery of God is the content of revelation; it is not the Greek philosophical view of the mystery of God as the furthest horizon of knowledge attainable, yet constantly eluding our grasp, not moreover 'a theoretical, epistemological proposition [but] a theological statement'. Nor is it 'the final word of human self-perception [but] the first word of the perception of faith, given us by God'. Kasper concludes:

> this is not a negative statement but an eminently positive one, which says that in his revelation God actually reveals his hiddenness to men and women. The proposition about the mystery and the hiddenness of God therefore does not refer to the nature of God which is withdrawn from human beings, but rather to the nature which is turned towards them.[31]

For Kasper the mystery is something positive and active in its relation with humanity, while at the same time finding its roots and its power in the nature of God which by definition cannot wholly be known. For him it is both the 'word of judgement' which we cannot control, although we may try to do so, and the 'word of grace', at which we are accepted by God without, in fact, having to achieve or control anything.[32]

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[28] J.H. Newman, 'On the Essentials of the Gospel', in his *On the Prophetical Office of the Church*, in *The Via Media of the Anglican Church Illustrated in Lectures, Letters and Tracts*, 2v., (London: Longmans, 1901), i, 239-65 (p. 257); D.N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Herder 1999), p. 40.
[29] W. Kasper, 'Mystery and Revelation', in his *Theology and Church* (London: SCM, 1989), pp. 21-25.
[30] H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 33rd edition (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), para. 806.
[31] Kasper, 'Mystery', p. 25.
[32] Ibid., p. 25.

Another view of the 'unknowability' of God and its relationship with a concept of mystery and wider theological issues is that of Frances Young in her contribution to *The Myth of God Incarnate*.[33] Young offers an illustration of a two-dimensional world in which a circular ashtray looks like a circle if viewed from above while on its base, but as a line if viewed from above while placed on its edge. Young further comments:

> We might become aware of a number of different aspects of it if it were 'projected' on to our two-dimensional plane. All these different experiences might suggest to us that the three-dimensional ashtray was more complex and mysterious than our perception of it, but we could not realistically visualize it or even conceptualize it; we could only describe some of its properties, which to us would appear almost incompatible.

Therefore Young proposes a category of mystery in order to account for this experience in relation to God:

> We are bound to attempt to describe the unknown in terms of the known, indeed to experience the 'beyond' in terms of the 'here and now'; but this leaves areas of 'mystery', where we think we may perceive something but cannot grasp it fully.

For Young this means that 'every statement about God is inevitably inadequate' and that each may express

> one among many possible 'projections' of his reality…it may be that manifold ways of expression are the only way in which we can dimly perceive the depth of riches beyond.

Young's purpose is to comment on the implications of this position for christology, and her conclusion is that as a result of it 'a multiplicity of christologies is inevitable.'[34] For the purposes of this essay, however, we should note the assumptions of her method and their implications for a liturgical concept of mystery. The principal problem is that the 'unknowingness' becomes a tool for permitting a 'multiplicity of christologies', which could so easily become

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[33] F. Young, 'A Cloud of Witness', in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ed. J. Hick (London: SCM, 1977), 13-47.
[34] Young, 'Cloud', p. 40.

subjective according to the preferences of the proposer. In other words, the unknowingness is removed from the divine forum and made the servant of the human in a way that does not do justice to its own status as an attribute of God with sacramental consequences, for the purpose of easing the interpretation of the incarnation. This is not to say that there cannot be 'aspects' of the incarnation, but the logic of Young's argument is that these 'aspects' can effectively change the nature and purpose of the event itself. This would not be at all characteristic of the liturgical presentation of the incarnation, as a study of some texts for Christmastide will show. For the liturgy, the 'mystery' is central, rather than peripheral, and in terms of the incarnation is concerned to allow not for a 'multiplicity' of theories but for what we would propose to be a hidden activity of God which produces certain consequences, the effect of which is sacramentally encountered in the present. Indeed, Leo the Great seems to have established a sophisticated, if not systematic, theory along these lines in his use of language in relation to the liturgy. For example, he uses *hodie* both to refer to the celebration today of a historical event in the life of Jesus, and to mean the effectiveness of that event in present reality. As de Soos concludes, the past becomes active, 'charged with an effective power', because 'les fêtes liturgiques...rapellent le passé mais elles le renouvellent aussi, lui permettant d'agir sur le présent. Une telle affirmation est évidemment quelque peu paradoxale...'.[35]

The issue of paradox, however, may be regarded as critical in our attempt to argue for the dynamism of mystery as content of revelation, for we could indeed be accused of attempting to reconcile the impossible with the improbable. But this may be precisely the point; in attempting to reconcile, we may be missing the significant dynamics arising in the conceptual tension itself. The importance of the matter may lie there. A.E. Taylor declared it to be 'certain that a theology which professes to have cleared all the mystery out of the world must be false,' and that

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[35] M. de Soos, *Le mystère liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1958), pp. 26-27, where examples are given of both, together with evidence for the distinction.

> there is always in the confused, concrete, given fact a reminder of the perplexing, the not yet recognised, which intrigues us, and yet cannot be ignored without killing the experienced fact. A mere 'laboratory' fact from which this element has been artificially subtracted, is no longer the living fact.[36]

We may note Taylor's emphasis on 'the living fact', which relies on 'the not yet recognised' for its vitality. This is not so very far from the *hodie* of Leo on the incarnation, in that the historical and scientific perplexity which arises from attempts to rationalize the incarnation is part of the continuing effectiveness of the birth of Jesus in the present. For Paul Tillich,[37] it is precisely a matter of the central fact of God in Christ, 'the only all-embracing paradox in Christianity'. Paradox and the paradoxical are, he believes,

> abused to such a degree that their application to the Christian event produces confusion and resentment. The paradoxical must be distinguished from the following: the reflective-rational, the dialectical-rational, the irrational, the absurd, and the nonsensical.

Paradox is especially not to be confused with the dialectical, because 'dialectical thinking is rational, not paradoxical.' This is because, for Tillich,

> God is infinite, in so far as he is the creative ground of the finite and externally produces the finite potentialities in himself. The finite does not limit him but belongs to the eternal processes of his life. All this is dialectical and rational in character; yet in every statement it points to the divine mystery. In all its expressions theology refers to the divine mystery - the mystery of eternal being. The tools of theology are rational, dialectical, and paradoxical; they are not mysterious in speaking of the divine mystery.

Tillich is anxious to dissociate the Christian paradox in the terms in which he states it from the idea of the absurd, but does not wholly convince that some might not genuinely find it 'grotesque' and 'ridiculous'. The danger of appearing to want the Christian religion to be in a specific category of discourse is surely precisely what provokes intellectual hostility from many commentators. This may also be true of Tillich's concern to keep 'nonsense' at arm's length, in that

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[36] A.E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, series 2 (London: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 212-13.
[37] For the following paragraph and quotations therein, P. Tillich, 'The Meaning of Paradox in Christian Theology', in his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Welwyn: Nisbet, 1957), pp. 104-7.

'the divine truth cannot be expressed in meaningless propositions. Everybody could formulate sentences of this type indefinitely, but they would not make sense; and the paradox is not nonsense.'[38] For some it may still appear to be. There is always, after all, argues Lewis, a danger that 'an unnecessary mystery' may be 'made of matter capable of being rationally treated...rational criticism there must be if we are not simply to put one uncompromising dogma against another in hopeless agitation.'[39] Tillich is insistent, however, that the agitation is far from hopeless:

> mystery does not belong in this series [of logical categories compared with paradox, because] it is present whenever one speaks of God and divine 'things'. It is based on the nature of the divine itself, its infinity and eternity, its unconditional and ultimate character, its transcendence of the subject-object structure of reality. This mystery of the divine is the presupposition of all theology. But it does not exclude the *logos* of *theos* and, with it, theology as such. The *logos* of *theos* must be expressed in reflective, dialectical, and paradoxical terms. But *theos*, the divine mystery, transcends all of them. Those who pile paradox upon paradox are not nearer the divine mystery than those who, with the tools of reflective reason, give an account of the semantic meaning of religious concepts - supposing that both acknowledge the ultimate mystery of being.

Notwithstanding the status of other logical categories, Tillich wishes to place paradox at the heart of an understanding of what it means to be Christian. This is because 'the Christian paradox contradicts the opinion derived from man's existential predicament and all expectations imaginable on the basis of this predicament.' The mistake we make is trying to reconcile the Christian paradox with ordinary experience: it is in the very paradox itself and in its action on us and in us in mystery that we find the truth and objective content of what we claim to believe as revelation. This is not, however, 'knowledge' in the acquisitive, intellectual sense.[40] Rather, 'the paradox is a new reality and not a logical riddle,'[41] Tillich concludes, and this resonates with the view of metaphor in Janet Soskice: something new and real is made from what cannot be

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[38] Tillich, 'Paradox', pp. 104-6.
[39] H.D. Lewis, *Our Experience of God* (London : Allen & Unwin, 1959), p. 38.
[40] Tillich is emphatic that revelation and mystery are in tension; the one does not dissolve the other into knowledge, 'nor does it add anything directly to the totality of our ordinary knowledge, namely, to our knowledge about the subject-object structure of reality': *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Welwyn: Nisbet, 1953), p. 121.
[41] Tillich, 'Paradox', p. 106.

reconciled in terms of human empirical analysis or evidence of experience nor resolved in language on the basis of these things.[42]

For the liturgical mind it is the consequences that matter, not how they are achieved. Moreover this is a matter touching the depths of humanity as well as reaching out to encounter the divine. As von Balthasar says,

> The important thing...is that, at the level of total humanity, we can speak of a knowledge worthy of man only where we do not preliminarily bracket out the 'substratum of unknowing'...but, rather, very expressly include this dimension of mystery. For it is only in this way that the figure which lies at the heart of the matter becomes legible as a figure of reality.[43]

Kasper concludes that the 'unknowingness' is itself a dynamic of the activity of God and the context of the revelation of Jesus Christ as 'word of judgement' and 'word of grace'.[44] Or as von Balthasar warns:

> if, in the manner of Kant and his followers, we construct a concept of knowledge and science by first bracketing out the unknowable: our concept will then be necessarily finite and necessarily rationalistic. If our ruling idea is limited to what the cognitive subject is able to construe, then we wholly lose the phenomenon of objective self-manifestation, the self-revelation of the object from the heart of its own depths, and everything runs aground in shallow functionalism.[45]

## The Mystery-Aesthetics of Revelation

Further reflections on the relationship between mystery and revelation, and the dynamic that this involves, may be found in von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, alongside which we may set others who seem to suggest a similar and equally fruitful approach. Von Balthasar argues that there is a dimension of

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[42] See Chapter 2.
[43] H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, 'Seeing the Form' (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), p. 446.
[44] Kasper, 'Mystery', p. 25.
[45] Von Balthasar, 'Seeing', p. 447.

'concealment' in 'every worldly revelation'.[46] He mines a rich seam of thought on this matter:

> In order to read a form within the world, we must see something invisible as well, and we do in fact see it. In a flower, a certain interior reality opens its eye and reveals something beyond and more profound than a form which delights us by its proportion and colour. In the rhythm of the form of plants - from seed to full growth, from bud to fruit - there is manifested an essence, and to reduce the laws of this essence to mere utilitarian principles would be blasphemous. And in the totality of beings, as they ascend and maintain their equilibrium, there is revealed a mystery of Being which it would be even more blasphemous and blind to interpret by reducing it to a neutral 'existence'. As especially the Romantics and many German Idealists knew, we are initiated into these mysteries because we ourselves are spirit in nature and because all the expressive laws of the macrocosm are at work in ourselves.[47]

Von Balthasar is insistent on the value of the arts in conveying this argument, particularly artists and poets: '*Anima* begins to sing when she feels alone and thinks that *Animus,* her noisy husband, has left the house. But poets and lovers know how to overhear *Anima* and induce her to sing.'[48]

Von Balthasar does not give detailed examples, but one may look, for example, at the work of the novelists Robertson Davies and Iris Murdoch to see how a revelation is conveyed in a mysterious yet real way through the visual qualities of nature and art. Davies describes the experience of a small boy seeing a flower and noticing its deeper form for the first time:

> It was in a garden that Francis Cornish first became truly aware of himself as a creature observing a world apart from himself. He was almost three years old, and he was looking deep into a splendid red peony. He was greatly alive to himself (though he had not yet learned to think of himself as Francis) and the peony, in its fashion, was also greatly alive to itself, and the two looked at each other from their very different egotisms with solemn self-confidence. The little boy was neat, clean, and pretty. The peony was unchaste, dishevelled as peonies must be, and at the height of its beauty. It was a significant moment, for it was Francis's first conscious encounter with beauty - beauty that was to be the delight, the torment, and bitterness of his life - but except for Francis

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[46] Ibid., p. 444 and ff.
[47] Ibid., 'Seeing', p. 444.
[48] Ibid., 'Seeing', pp. 444-45.

> himself, and perhaps the peony, nobody knew of it, or would have heeded if they had known. Every hour is filled with such moments, big with significance for someone.[49]

It is as if the little boy is experiencing in still-clouded form the classic revelation of Augustine in face of the beauty of God, with its acknowledgement of what could have been if only the perception of the hidden reality, von Balthasar's 'concealment to be found in every worldly revelation', had come earlier:

> Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong, I, misshapen. You were within me, but I was not with you. They held me far back from you, those things which would have no being were they not in you. You called, shouted, broke through my deafness: you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance, I grasped, and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.[50]

This introduces a note of struggle into the business of encounter with the hiddenness of God. Seeking God in mystery is integrated with life itself, its questions and challenges. As Rowan Williams comments, Chapter 10 of the *Confessions* is 'a particularly moving and passionate declaration of what it is to be on the way and not yet arrived at journey's end. It is a statement of the pain and labour of a life of unfulfilled desire, the stumbling advance towards that beauty whose compelling force first broke through the defences of the soul, drew it out and set it on its pilgrimage.'[51] The hiddenness of which we speak is nevertheless, and paradoxically, a real manifestation of God, a presence which inevitably invites, challenges and transforms.

Such a manifestation is possible because of the human potential for spiritual attuning that creates a 'new reality'.[52] This is not necessarily overtly religious, and it is this sort of encounter in the world which corresponds to the

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[49] Robertson Davies, *What's Bred in the Bone* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 62.
[50] Augustine, *Confessions,* X, 27, 38, tr. M. Boulding (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), p. 262.
[51] R.D. Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross* (London: DLT, 1979), p. 70, where Williams also gives his own translation of the passage quoted as the supreme example of 'the quest and the longing for God's beauty…inextricably bound to the struggle with temptations of body and spirit, the progressive purification of all experience.'
[52] See chapter 2.

potential of what happens in the unashamedly religious context of the liturgy, and thus intertwines it with everyday life, showing mystery to be within the human person as well as something externally acting on him. In fact, *inter*action is a better description, as the following examples will suggest.

Balthasar, too, uses the image of the flower to express his concern for the 'invisible' in a worldly form, and makes it an essential part of engagement with it. 'In order to read a form,' he says, 'we must see something invisible as well, and we do in fact see it. In a flower, a certain interior reality opens its eye and reveals something beyond and more profound than a form which delights us by its proportion and colour.'[53] Iris Murdoch expresses something of the same quality of the hidden potentiality of the worldly object, a painting, in describing the experience of the central character in *The Bell*, Dora, visiting the National Gallery in London:

> Dora was always moved by the pictures. Today she was moved, but in a new way. She marvelled, with a kind of gratitude, that they were all still here, and her heart was filled with love for the pictures, their authority, their marvellous generosity, their splendour. It occurred to her that here at last was something real and something perfect. Who had said that, about perfection and reality being in the same place? Here was something which her consciousness could not wretchedly devour, and by making it part of her fantasy make it worthless. ...the pictures were something real outside herself, which spoke to her kindly and yet in sovereign tones, something superior and good whose presence destroyed the dreary trance-like solipsism of her earlier mood. When the world had seemed to be subjective it had seemed to be without interest or value. But now there was something else in it after all.[54]

John V. Taylor calls such an experience an 'annunciation', defined as 'the mutual recognition of seer and seen', as suggested to him by renaissance pictures of the biblical annunciation 'which emphasize the mutually enraptured gaze of the angel and the Virgin, and the dove-symbol of the Holy Spirit spinning, as it

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[53] Von Balthasar, 'Seeing', p. 444. Elsewhere in discussing 'truth's character as mystery' he uses the term (translated as) 'thereness' as an aspect of mysterious wonder; 'mystery...is not something "beyond" truth but it is a permanent, immanent property of it': *Theo-logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 1, 'Truth of the World', p. 131. See also pp. 206-16.
[54] Iris Murdoch, *The Bell* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1958] (London: Granada, 1977), p. 190-91.

were, the thread of attention between them.'[55] Taylor emphasizes that in the first instance such an encounter can occur in 'quite unreligious commonplace experiences.' For example:

> The mountain or tree I am looking at ceases to be merely an object I am observing and becomes a subject, existing in its own life, and saying something to me – one could almost say *nodding* to me in a private conspiracy. That, in fact, is the precise meaning of the word 'numinous', which comes from the Latin *nuo*, to nod or beckon. The truly numinous experience is not marked by primitive awe in the face of the unknown or overwhelming, but occurs also when something as ordinary as a sleeping child, as simple and objective as a flower, suddenly *commands* attention.[56]

In such experiences, Taylor perceives two stages: recognition of an 'otherness' in that which is observed, and a 'communication' not wholly stemming from the observer. Moreover, such an encounter is a mediator of truth: the truth *of*, not merely *about* another person or object, and indeed of oneself.[57] If such experiences seem to begin and end in the world, for the Christian, the seeker of the truth in God, it is nevertheless 'natural to give a personal name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.'[58]

In his Clark Lectures for 2005 Rowan Williams presents a series of insights on the nature of art that build on the notion of 'moreness' in a visual context. Especially important is the discussion of Eric Gill and David Jones, for both of whom the liturgy of the Catholic Church was interwoven with their writing and visual creation. Against the background of the thought of Jacques Maritain and by his close association with Gill and his circle, for Jones

> the basic insight of post-Impressionism had already implanted in him a sort of receptivity to sacramental theology – and to Maritain's understanding of art. 'The

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[55] J.V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), pp. 10-11.
[56] Ibid., pp. 11-12.
[57] Ibid., pp. 12, 13.
[58] Ibid., p. 17.

> insistence that a painting must be a *thing* and not the impression of something has an affinity with what the Church said of the Mass.'[59]

We know that the liturgy made a deep and lasting impression on Jones. It suffuses his *In Parenthesis*, where his innate liturgical sense and ability to see the liturgical character of apparently secular events is revealed. For example:

> So they came outside the camp. The liturgy of a regiment departing had been sung.[60]

As Christopher Knight has written, 'one of the most significant events in [his life] was his first glimpse of a Roman Catholic Mass.' It was, in Jones's words,

> not the dim emptiness I had expected but the back of a sacerdos in a gilt-hued *Planeta*...two points of flickering light...white altar cloths and the white linen of the celebrant's alb and amice and maniple [which] made a big impression on me. For one thing I was astonished how close to the Front Line the priest had decided to make the Oblation and I was also impressed to see Old Sweat Mulligan, a somewhat fearsome figure, a real pugilistic, hard-drinking Goidelic Celt, kneeling there in the smoky candlelight.[61]

The superficial vividness and reality of this experience was to find significant depths in Jones's subsequent career in which, as Knight reminds us, Jones literally 'placed himself in the order of signs', and in the liturgico-artistic context became convinced that it is 'axiomatic that all art is "abstract" and that all art "re-presents"'.[62]

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[59] Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 59, quoting David Jones, letter to Harman Grisewood, 1971, in Rene Hague, *Dai Greatcoat: A Self Portrait of David Jones in his Letters* (London: Faber, 1980), p. 232, Jones's emphasis.

[60] David Jones, *In Parenthesis* (London: Faber, 1963), Part I, p. 4.

[61] Christopher C. Knight, 'Some Liturgical Implications of the Thought of David Jones', *New Blackfriars* 85 (2004), 444-53 (p. 444), and quoting Jones, Letter to Rene Hague, 9-15 July 1973, in *Dai Greatcoat*, ed. Hague, p. 249.

[62] Knight, 'Liturgical Implications', pp. 444-45, and quoting David Jones, 'Art and Sacrament', in *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings by David Jones*, ed. H. Grisewood (London: Faber, 1959), 143-79 (p. 173). Jones is here referring to 'an unrewarding and somewhat unreal battle...the war of theories concerning "abstract art" and "representational art"' ('Art and Sacrament', p. 173). The quotation 'he placed himself in the order of signs' appears on the title page of *Epoch and Artist*, and though unattributed there is said of Jesus by M. de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion Contrasted and Defined*, E.T. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), p. 212 (Knight, 'Liturgical Implications', p. 445 and n. 3).

This liturgical association is further explained in Jones's essay 'Art and Sacrament', where he describes an experience of realization that must surely be seen in conjunction with that early experience of the liturgy:

> With relative suddenness, the analogy between what we called 'the Arts' and the things that Christians called the eucharistic signs became (if still but vaguely) apparent. It became increasingly evident that this analogy applied to the whole gamut of 'making'.[63]

Moreover Knight comments that

> the hyphen in that term *re-presents* was, for Jones, crucial. For although the 'reality' conveyed in any work of art may be a complex one, the work itself...is 'a "thing", an object contrived of various materials and so ordered...as to show forth, recall and re-present [that reality], strictly within the conditions of a given art and under another mode...It is a *signum* of that reality and makes a kind of anamnesis of that reality.' Thus, for Jones, if the anamnesis of the eucharist is instrumental in making Christ really present in the sacrament of the eucharist, the reality conveyed by a work of art becomes truly present to the beholder – if not 'in the particular sense used by the theologians' then at least 'in a certain analogous sense.'[64]

Thus we begin to see the outline of a connection between the 'revelatory' potential of something primarily seen as a work of art and that of the sacramental dimension of Christian life which finds its primary focus in the celebration of the liturgy; it enables us to suggest that liturgy has the same capacity in that how it 'works' can be discussed in similar terms. This in turn proposes the conclusion that liturgy *is* art in the sense that Jones understands art – and implicitly as Maritain conceived it and as Williams most recently interprets it. Indeed Jones declared that 'without *ars* there is no possibility of *sacramentum*'.[65] 'But for Jones', Williams continues,

> the 'thinginess' of a product of art could not be, as for Gill, primarily or perhaps exclusively its firm and defined location in the geography of a mapped culture. From the beginning, what preoccupies him is a set of problems about representation – not imitation or reproduction, but precisely what so concerns Maritain, *the showing of the*

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[63] Jones, 'Art and Sacrament', p. 171.
[64] Knight, 'Liturgical Implications', p. 446, and quoting Jones, 'Art and Sacrament', p. 174.
[65] Jones, 'Art and Sacrament', p. 176.

> *excess that pervades appearances*. The artwork is indeed, as Gill put it, an extension of 'nature; but it is so by the thoroughness of its transmutation of given nature into *another material reality that reflects it and in so doing alters it and displays the hidden 'more than it is'*.[66]

When considered in the context of the eucharist, the 'moreness' is as present and real as it was in the visible human flesh of Christ:

> [For Jones] the substance of Christ's body is such that it is real only in the matter of the world – but no less intelligibly (even if more ambiguously) in the matter of the sacrament or the believing community than in the flesh that could be handled in Galilee. *That flesh is more than it is, gives more than it (as flesh) has*.[67]

It is this 'more than it is', ultimately true of the body of the Lord, that is the 'real' of the liturgy as context for the eucharistic 'representation' (not imitation or reproduction), and it is mystery language, we argue, that recognizes this property of liturgical celebration that is also true of it as art: the confident rejection of any possibility of 'dim emptiness' in art or sacrament (and one because of the other), which after his first experience of the Mass Jones spent a lifetime assimilating. As an example of the visual consequences of this Williams says of Jones' picture 'Cyfarchiad':

> its point is in its absolute refusal to be anything other than linear, so that further detail can be interwoven or posed in tension with it. This is how you show what is 'more than it is': the birds are not a naturalistic or even symbolic-naturalistic background for Mary's spiritual encounter as they might be in a mediaeval or pre-Raphaelite depiction, they are the mobile life of an actual landscape that is being 're-lit' by the non-local but utterly concrete presence of the coming of the Word of God.[68]

The consequences of this for liturgical language (or any language which 'places itself in the order of signs') might be seen when

> the half-apprehended consonance of impressions out of which an artwork grows has to be realized in the process of actually creating significant forms which, in the process of

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[66] Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, p. 60, my emphasis.
[67] Ibid., p. 61, my emphasis.
[68] Ibid., p. 68.

> their embodiment, in stone, *words* or pigment, uncover other resonances, so that what finally emerges is more than just a setting down of what was first grasped.[69]

Jones himself had little time for the reform of liturgical language that introduced the vernacular in Roman Catholic liturgy, about which he 'fulminated publicly and articulately'. However before this he did raise as a vital issue 'precisely the problem of conveying historical context in translation', this in respect of the hymn *Vexilla Regis*.[70] This is important to note in the context of the present thesis: the historical context of the texts to be examined in Part II is of vital importance, and even though their translation into another language was not an issue in the period studied because it did not take place, the fact that many of them remained in use through many subsequent changes of intellectual and cultural context is significant, as we shall suggest. There are implications for meaning and interpretation when the original context has changed, although equally the text retains an independence of impact arising from its performance in liturgical celebration. Jones clearly placed emphasis on visual sign-making, by which he understood principally the non-verbal, and yet the inclusion of 'words' by Williams encourages us to propose in respect of liturgical forms that it is indeed not only the visual aspect, in which the 'moreness' or 'thatness' can be perceived as if it were a piece of visual art, although constantly changing. In this respect it is perhaps more like a contemporary installation which makes use of modern media such as film and so is more obviously changing in the eyes of the viewer, but it can also be applied to a liturgical text and the liturgical language that text contains, with the same inherent potentiality, 'moreness' or 'thatness' that we term 'mystery', and which is indicated with particular emphasis when 'mystery language' is employed, and especially when 'mystery' itself is used. As with art, the intentions of the artist (here the writer, setting down 'what was first grasped') have only limited relevance once the text is in use, subject to scrutiny, and placed and celebrated in the context for which, paradoxically, it *was* intended to be placed 'in the order of signs'. The 'moreness' lies partly in this consequent freedom from the human limits in which it was composed, and the 'beyond-ness' of the text as living sacramental language is disclosed or 'revealed', but not the

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[69] Ibid., p. 71, my emphasis.
[70] Knight, 'Liturgical Implications', p. 447 and notes 16, 17.

delineation of the beyond itself, because of God. The 'beyond' is a reality, not an impression, and in the performative context of the liturgy it is a 'new reality', its 'newness' constantly *re*-newed in the celebration of the sacrament. In this way, too, liturgical repetition is properly understood as 'change' tending towards newness, in respect of interaction with the liturgical person: such repetition ceases to have any relation other than the superficial similarity to previous occasions on which the words were used, *except* in terms of the 'newness' which is brought to be each time.[71] The 'newness' cannot be separated either from the language or the performative context, and *vice versa*.

To conclude this chapter and Part I of this thesis, we propose that an 'interior reality' of this kind as a dimension of revelation is therefore integral to worship, and may be explored in terms of the dynamic theological concept of mystery which springs from the classical and patristic roots to be reviewed in the following chapter, and which can be seen in the interpretation of western liturgical texts of the first millennium, studied later in Part II. We suggest that the encounter with mystery of von Balthasar's lover or poet, Davies's little boy, and Murdoch's young woman, can be that of the participant in the liturgy. What lies behind the historical and textual elements of our argument is a liturgical version of Balthasar's continued reflections on poets and lovers:

> By a strangely contradictory cunning they are able to be both things at once: the persona which has again become involuntary and spontaneous, which is permeable to and receptive of the deep meaning of things, and the calculating persona that, by means of its art of verse, sound, and colour, lays for the fearful deer a trap in which it is caught, panting and unharmed. Thus, the artist is at once wise and ignorant: he knows profounder depths because before them he assumes an attitude of docile ignorance, and

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[71] This is to say something rather different about liturgical repetition than Stephen Sykes, for whom 'rituals and repetitions', although as he rightly says 'undervalued or under attack' by an increasing pluriformity of liturgical texts and orders, are nevertheless principally 'neglected *resources* at the Church's disposal.' (my emphasis): S. Sykes, 'Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word', *Christ: the Sacramental Word*, ed. D. Brown and A. Loades (London: SPCK, 1996), 157-67 (p. 157). This is surely to imply that they are the vehicles of a product for the benefit of the worshipper – in other words they are aspects of human control. While Sykes is also undoubtedly right that their selection and imposition is 'a very considerable act of power' (p. 158), this is to neglect the independent potential a text has once written, and the actual 'newness' of each context in which it is spoken, and so also a renewed limitlessness of possibility: the 'more than' of Jones and Williams.

> yet, technically, he commands the surface or artistic expression because he knows how to transform it into an expression of the sacred unknown.[72]

The liturgical participant can be such an 'artist', whether presiding or participating in any other way, including seeing and hearing. What is sought in the liturgy is encounter with that 'sacred unknown' in the sacramental interface of worship, the marriage of heaven and earth brought about by the incarnation and animated in word, movement, colour and attitude. It is an encounter which does not remove the character of concealment, but which nevertheless engenders a real, transformative engagement with the divine, however dimly perceived. Much of this study concerns itself with the text of the liturgy and its theological implications, but this wider performative, experiential context must not be allowed to fall from view, as the work of the liturgical theologians and ritual theorists to whom we have referred shows. While in what follows we often concentrate on particular words in particular places and with specific uses, it is only in the context of this whole that an attempt to grasp the significance of mystery makes any sense. It is the whole of the liturgy, in whatever form, that conveys and makes accessible the mystery of God. To the context of mystery in the first millennium and its liturgical significance there we now turn in Part II.

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[72] Von Balthasar, 'Seeing', p. 445.

# PART II: MYSTERY IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM WESTERN LITURGICAL EVOLUTION

## CHAPTER 4

## THE BACKGROUND

### Inheritance or Inception? Mystery Cults and the Christian Mystery

The Latin *mysterium* is in origin a loan-word from the Greek *mysterion*. Some of its meaning is transferred to the Latin context, in which further development also takes place. The precise etymology of the Greek *mysterion* is uncertain, although it is probable that it originates in *muein*, to close the eyes/lips/mouth, with the developed meaning of something concerning which one is to keep silent. Its fundamental sense as an established term in Greek religion is a secret to be hidden and revealed only to initiates,[1] although the closing of eyes and mouth forms part of a symbolic structure concerning the destiny of the soul in the Attic death-rites as claimed by Damascius' commentary on the *Phaedo* of Plato:

> The closing of the eyes and mouth signifies the end of outward activity and reversion to the inner life; the laying down on the earth is a reminder that the soul should unite itself with the universe; the washing means purification from the world of process; the unction a disengaging from the mire of matter and a calling forth of divine inspiration; cremation transference to the higher, indivisible world; inhumation union with intelligible reality.[2]

The mystery-cults themselves[3] may be defined as the context in which this meaning was worked out, characterised by initiation into the secret knowledge, often involving ritual meals, dances and other ceremonies as an essential part of the initial and ongoing revelation of the mystery, sometimes with soteriological

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[1] B. Studer, 'Mystery', in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church,* ed. A. Di Berardino, tr. A. Walford, 2 vols (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1992), vol. 1, p. 577; A. Michel, 'Mystère', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol. 10 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928), 2586-99 (col. 2586); D. Zeller, 'Mysterien/Mysterienreligionen', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 23 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 504-26 (p. 504).

[2] Damascius, *On the Phaedo,* II, 150, ed. & tr. L.G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo,* 2v (Amsterdam & Oxford: North-Holland, 1976-77), vol. 2 (Damascius), at section quoted.

[3] See for example Zeller, 'Mysterien', pp. 504-519 for a concise systematic treatment of their nature, structure and participants, including a description of mystery in ancient Egyptian religion; also U. Bianchi, *The Greek Mysteries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976); J. Godwin, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

associations[4] that may have been a central concern, such that 'Mysteries' were 'a special form of personal religion linking the fate of a god of...dying-rising type with the individual believer.'[5] While recent views of the place of mystery cults in antique religion have suggested a less important role in the wider context of antique religion, and likened them to the practice of the cults of saints in the Christian era, nevertheless three 'modes' have been identified in attempting to classify their nature: the 'mystery' proper as the entire initiatory structure; the 'mystic cult', not as initiation only, but as 'a relation of intense communion...with the divinity'; and the 'mysteriosophic cult', as 'an anthropology, and eschatology, and a practical means of individual reunion with divinity.'[6] To these may be compared Bornkamm's four characteristics of the mystery cults: 'rites in which the destinies of a god are portrayed by sacred actions before a circle of devotees in such a way as to give them a part in the fate of the god'; the necessity of the participants to be initiated, and subsequently 'know each other by confessional formulae or symbolical signs'; the promise of salvation through knowledge of and participation in the cult; and a common vow of silence.[7]

In phenomenological terms alone, these structures are of immense significance for understanding the background of early Christianity. In so regarding them, it is necessary to go beyond the apologetic concerns of earlier generations of scholars, some of which are discussed below in a consideration of the limits of a purely philological approach, and accept the likelihood of strong phenomenological links between the religions of antiquity and early Christianity. As Nock remarks in his important article on the subject, 'we have perhaps reached the point where we can think of these things *sine ira et studio*, with no desire to explain away the rise of Christianity and with no feeling that the

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[4] See for example L. Bouyer, *Le salut dans les religions à mystères* (Paris: Desclée, 1963).
[5] R.L. Gordon, 'Mysteries', in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 1017-18 (p. 1017).
[6] Gordon, 'Mysteries', pp. 1017-18; D. Regan, *Experience the Mystery: Pastoral Possibilities for Christian Mystagogy* (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1994), pp. 12-13.
[7] G. Bornkamm, 'μυστήριον ', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.4, ed. G. Kittel, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 802-28 [hereafter 'Bornkamm'] (pp. 803-8). A. Boulanger notes that the gods themselves were saved, and that there was no idea of leading the faithful to salvation through their own death and resurrection: *Orphée: Rapports de l'Orphisme et du Christianisme* (Paris: Rider, 1925), p. 102.

suggestion of Hellenistic elements in it would involve something "common or unclean".'[8] As the evidence of the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era are seen to show, there cannot but have been a conscious inheritance of mystery terminology and cultic structures, although modified and developed for their new use. Even for the Christian apologist this does not have to heap discredit on the development of the Christian liturgical and sacramental system, because, as Yngve Brilioth argued, a linguistic and phenomenological association does not have to mean similarity of nature, as appears to be confirmed by the consciousness of early Christian writers of the essential difference between pagan cults and Christianity. The seminal liturgical historians Baumstark and Jungmann also accept the influence of Hellenistic as well as Jewish culture on the origins of Christian worship specifically, albeit in the qualified manner both on account of the nature of the sources and, no doubt, the apologetic requirements of their own contexts.[9] Nevertheless, it is worth pondering further the circumstances of the connection.[10] A number of scholars have tackled this from a chiefly philological stance. In the seventeenth century, for instance, Isaac Casaubon saw the employment of mystery terminology as a means of early Christianity gaining credibility through the medium of familiar language.[11] Others have concentrated on matters of ritual. Thus in the same century the Deist John Toland, repudiating any association of Christianity with mystery, claimed that the addition of ceremonies to the simplicity of the gospel made Christianity indistinct from the pagan mysteries. Initiation in the early Church was in his view an example of confusion and corruption, and the liturgy generally the same in

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[8] A.D. Nock, 'Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments', *Mnemosyne* ser. 4, vol. 5 (1952), 177-213 (pp. 177-78). See also H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963); D.H. Wiens, 'Mystery Concepts in Primitive Christianity', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* II, 23.2 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1980), 1248-1284; L. Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), pp. 19-36 and J. Poovannikunnel, *The Concept of "Mystery" (Rãzã) in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana* (Vadavathoor, India: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1986), pp. 10-26, for studies of the issue from different ecclesial perspectives.

[9] Y. Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice Evangelical and Catholic*, tr. A.G. Hebert (London: SPCK 1953) [original Swedish edition pub. 1930], p. 49; A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy* (London: Mowbray 1958), pp. 12-13; J.A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (London: DLT 1960), pp. 152-63.

[10] See Wiens, 'Mystery Concepts' for a survey of research and some indications of recent thinking.

[11] Isaac Casaubon, *De sacrosancta eucharistia*, in *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis XVI. Ad Cardinalis Baronii Prolegomena in Annales*, 4th ed. (Geneva 1663), 441-512 (pp. 477, 480).

many aspects as pagan religion.[12] More than two centuries later, Hatch argued that the co-existence of Greek religion and early Christianity must have led to some degree of assimilation of mystery terminology as much as other elements of speech and practice, to the extent that 'mysteries have arisen in the once open and easily accessible faith, and there are doctrines which must not be declared in the hearing of the uninitiated.'[13] The overtones of polemic and apologetic overtones in these writers must be noted, however. Indeed, shortly afterwards Kennedy refuted even this kind of cautious accommodation with the assertion that any relationship is accidental, not genealogical, springing 'directly from that strain of Mysticism which seems to be everywhere latent in humanity...Here Christianity and Pagan religion were bound to manifest affinities.'[14] Although this is not so far from Brilioth's view of conscious inheritance, it lacks his recognition of early Christian awareness and control of the use of the acquired terminology, whether or not it was mostly accidental. Armstrong believed that Christian use of mystery language in the context of initiation probably owes more to contemporary Platonic influence (see below) than to mystery cults, although the *disciplina arcani* appears to be a parallel *in form* with the practices of the cults. For him it is significant that Christianity becomes a *public* mystery, unlike the cults, although we would have to place this general truth alongside the circumstantial need for clandestine celebration in times of persecution in the early church. For Armstrong the difference is quite clear: Christianity is a mystery revealed in one moment of history in one man; a community is to be saved, not individuals. 'Who Christ is' is the primary focus, not the rites themselves, and there is no doctrinal correspondence even though rites may appear similar in form.[15]

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[12] J. Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious,* pp. 152-53, 157-66. Toland's polemic prompted a contrary reply from John Norris, *An account of reason and faith: in relation to the mysteries of Christianity* (London: for S. Manship, 1697).

[13] E. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church*, Hibbert Lectures 1888, ed. A.M. Fairbairn (London: Williams and Norgate, 1890), p. 293.

[14] H.A.A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p. 120.

[15] A.H. Armstrong, 'Mystery and Mysteries', *Downside Review* 80 (1962), 111-17, 214-25 (pp. 219-23).

The 'history of religions' approach has had a particular dominance of the issue.[16] As we have already indicated,[17] Odo Casel in the mid-twentieth century made the relationship between Pagan and Christian forms a foundation of his *Mysterienlehre*. For him the pagan rites are a *Vorschule Christi*, and for this, like Loisy before him, he has been criticised by fellow Catholics,[18] although the real significance of his work lies in his use of the patristic material (again sometimes questioned), his theology of the mystical presence of Christ in the sacraments, and his foreshadowing of the approach of the Second Vatican Council to liturgical theology.[19]

**Hellenistic Philosophy and Christian Apologetic**

Greek philosophy has at least as much importance as part of the background of Christian theologies of mystery, as argued by Armstrong,[20] and forms one of the bridges by which concepts of participation in the divine passed from the religion of the ancient world to that of the early Christian. For one thing, the philosophers are better at conveying reticence as a component of the dialogue with Christianity than the practicalities of the cults, so that rigorous intellectual contact was possible. Plato, with the school he inspired, has been held to have introduced mystery language and the word *mysterion* itself into philosophy.[21] This needs to be qualified in that Plato does not use the actual word except on only one or two occasions, and according to Bornkamm was 'averse to mystery terminology'.[22] In *Theaetetus* (156a) it is employed of a doctrine he attributes to his opponents and characterises, precisely because they do not actually say this, as esoteric. In *Meno* (76e) it appears to have no direct philosophical point at all. In *Phaedrus* (250e), although the word itself is not used, the vision of the highest

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[16] See Wiens, 'Mystery Concepts', pp. 1252-58 and references therein.
[17] Chapter 1.
[18] For example Gozier, 'Mysterienlehre', for whom this is 'la partie la plus faible de son oeuvre' (col. 1887); A. Loisy, *Les Mystères païens et le mystère chrétien* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1919), on which see Wiens, 'Mystery Concepts', pp. 1255-56. A more balanced near-contemporary but pre-Conciliar Catholic view is J. Gaillard, 'La théologie des mystères', *Revue Thomiste* 57 (1957), 510-51.
[19] See Gozier, 'Mysterienlehre'.
[20] Armstrong 'Mystery and Mysteries', p. 219.
[21] This is the impression given by Studer, 'Mystery', p.577; M.B. Foster, *Mystery and Philosophy* (London: SCM, 1957), p. 33.
[22] Bornkamm, 'Mysterion' p. 809.

philosophical principles is discussed in the language of initiation, although this may not say any more than that philosophy is progressive.[23] Nevertheless a recent study suggests that the concept was important to Plato in his analogy between an initiation into the ancient mysteries and that into philosophy.[24] It has also been argued that because, in Burnet's words in relation to Plato, 'philosophy is itself a purification and a way of escape from the "wheel"',[25] therefore 'philosophy for Plato was a means of salvation and was depicted in images appropriate for one involved in the movement of the mystery cults.'[26]

It is more certain that the *Platonic tradition* did have a significant and influential effect on the development of *mysterion* and its assimilation by Christian apologetic. It is Middle Platonism that Hamilton calls 'the meeting-ground, or battle-ground' in this respect. Plutarch of Chaeronea makes mystery language a 'philosophical commodity', for instance in the *De Iside et Osiride*:

> Knowledge of that which is pure and simple flashing through the soul like lightning, at a stroke gives one power to attain and to behold...when those who have by reason gone beyond objects of opinion, mixed and variform, come to that which is simple and immaterial, and in a sense attain unto the pure truth concerning it.[27]

This sense of a pure truth being revealed is central to Christian doctrine. An important stage in the development of this language, however, is found in the dialogue between Judaism and philosophy in Philo, which emphasizes hidden or symbolic meaning, although this is not yet a cultic phenomenon in practical terms; yet the initiatory language typical of the mystery cults is employed in philosophical terms. For him, moreover, the Hebrew scriptures are the inspiration

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[23] I am grateful to Dr G.R. Boys-Stones for commenting on these direct uses Plato makes of the root *myster-*, and the indirect example quoted.
[24] S.M.M. Scharnagl, 'Plato and the Mysteries: mystery terminology and imagery in the *Symposium*, the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995, *passim.*
[25] J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1930), p. 83, quoted in J.D.B. Hamilton, 'The Church and the Language of Mystery: The First Four Centuries', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 53 (1977), 479-94 (p. 479).
[26] Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', p. 479.
[27] Ibid., p. 480, quoting Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 77.

for Greek philosophers and contain the same truth: Judaism he believes to be 'the great mysteries'.[28] Moreover:

> the Christians...needed to show that *Christianity itself* was the tradition of prior antiquity...the way in which they did this – not to say the fact that they did it at all – is one of the...indications of how deeply the invention of orthodox Christianity was influenced by the Platonists' model of the history of philosophy.

This led to the claim by the early second century that the Hebrew tradition 'was philosophically identical with orthodox Christianity.'[29]

While the primary concern of the mystery religions was ritual initiation into secret practices, thus focusing on the experiential, philosophy brought an additional doctrinal element to bear which was held to have greater importance. Plotinus emphasized the transcendence of 'the One'. According to Armstrong, the

> unique transcendence and otherness which Plotinus gives the One...comes nearer than anything else in Greek philosophy to what we mean by God. We have taken over Plotinus's 'negative theology of positive transcendence' and speak of God by negations to show that He is more than and cannot be contained in the inadequate words and thoughts which we apply to Him and that He is different in kind to the realities we know.[30]

Neoplatonism becomes defensive of paganism in the face of expanding Christianity, reaching its pinnacle with Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in the fifth century, dismissed by Armstrong as an 'amazing metaphysical museum' which, in the form of the Henads or subdivisions of the Plotinian 'One' makes a definite move away from Plotinus' vision of the transcendent other.[31] This suggests that the philosophical tradition had a capacity for reticence that was to be taken up by

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[28] Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', p. 481.
[29] G.R. Boys-Stones, *Post Hellenistic Philosophy: A study of its development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 163.
[30] A.H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, 2nd edition (London: Methuen, 1949), p. 182.
[31] Ibid., pp. 198-201.

the Christian tradition also, where it was partly to be expressed in terms of mystery.

Regan, although failing to distinguish between Plato and Platon*ism*, thus comments that 'mystery is now the asceticism of philosophical knowledge, leading to the contemplation of the real, of beauty, the way to the divine.' Mystery therefore becomes something 'abstractly intellectual' as well as experiential, a way into the deeper truths of philosophy,[32] and surely by implication a means of engaging with the transcendent 'One'. Intellectual thought is what really reveals the divine, and true initiation occurs through education in science and virtue.[33] The cultic mysteries, intensely practical in nature, therefore become secondary to mysterious *teachings*, although with the same aim of union with the divine. Nevertheless, for the Platonic tradition secret participation in hidden realities in the realm of the divine occurs through the media of shadows, images and symbols, appreciable by the physical senses.[34] This fusion of the experiential and the doctrinal is of great significance for later Christian thought, especially when mystery comes to be associated with sacramental theology and practice. For Greek Christianity, this is especially the case with the initiatory language common in the mystery cults.

As well as the mystery religions, later Neoplatonism's rejection of Plotinus gave rise to theurgy, which took the form of both semi-magical rituals and non-ritualistic processes of mystical union.[35] Theurgy was a growing phenomenon of connection with the next world alongside early Christianity, and in Neoplatonism it replaced the forms of mysticism hitherto practised and introduced material objects as means of such participation. While it cannot be said to have had direct influence on the development of Christian liturgy, the notion that ritual gave access to the divine is held in common, as it is with the mystery cults. According to Armstrong, in theurgy the late Neoplatonists adopted a philosophical principle whereby

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[32] Regan, *Experience the Mystery*, p. 13; Studer, 'Mystery', p. 577; Foster, *Mystery and Philosophy*, p. 33.
[33] Foster, *Mystery*, p. 33.
[34] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*, pp. 600-1.
[35] Robert van den Berg, 'Towards the Paternal Harbour: Proclean theurgy and the contemplation of the Forms', www.kheper.net/topics/Neoplatonism/Proclus-theurgy.html [29.06.2005].

> the effects of a higher principle reached further down the scale of being than the effects of a lower principle and consequently that something very low in the scale of reality might participate in something very high with fewer intervening terms than were necessary in the case of a higher participating principle.[36]

For Proclus, then, 'the most direct way to the divine was...through theurgy and not through philosophical speculation'. Armstrong remarks that 'it would be an interesting and valuable exercise to work out the differences between this conception and Catholic sacramentalism',[37] and indeed there may be elements of theurgy which bear a structural resemblance to the latter. Having said this, the greater knowledge of the divine which the principle implies does not sit easily with what Whittaker identifies as the late Hellenistic notion of the unknowable and incomprehensible God which had a clear philosophical, speculative affinity with early Christianity, for example in the Gospel of John.[38] It is rather this principle which we believe to be more evident in the subsequent Christian use of mystery language in liturgy and liturgically-related discourse, corresponding as it does with what we have proposed to be the 'moreness' of God which liturgical mystery language acknowledges.

The significance of Hellenistic philosophy for the development of early Christian thought becomes properly apparent in terms of the debate between pagan and Christian, a dialogue which was conducted essentially on equal terms[39] since the philosophy of the Neoplatonists provided a common language of argument. Occasionally this can lead us to question the true convictions of some of the main players. Andrew Louth, in asking whether the writings of the Neoplatonist Denys the Areopagite can be considered Christian, concludes that 'by the end of the fifth century educated Greek Christians and pagan philosophers had much in common, because they *shared a culture*' and that

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[36] Armstrong, *Ancient Philosophy*, p. 202.
[37] Ibid.
[38] J. Whittaker, 'Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity', in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal & R.A. Markus (London: Variorum, 1981), 50-63 (p. 50).
[39] See for example E.R. Dodds, 'The Dialogue of Paganism with Christianity', in his *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: CUP, 1965), 102-38: 'the dialogue with paganism was to be a dialogue between intellectual equals' (p. 106).

'even in the West in the fifth and sixth centuries, there were educated men whose Christianity was expressed in the clothing of a pagan culture to such an extent that one wonder what their real allegiance was: one thinks of Sidonius Apollinaris or of Boethius.'[40] This is enough to suggest that the early liturgy must also bear some of the marks of this shared culture, although to answer this question fully would require a separate study. It can be argued, however, that what we shall later discover about mystery language in pre-millennial western texts is at least plausibly consistent with a doctrinal context which emerged from and was conditioned by such a 'shared culture', even in the west where, as Louth comments, pagan culture 'did die and yielded to a "Christian" culture', unlike in the east where the philosophical tradition suffuses Christianity perhaps even as late as the fourteenth century CE.[41]

In terms of mystery specifically, Clement of Alexandria uses *mysterion* in both the pagan sense and in connection with divine revelation, including as a synonym for *parabole* and *symbolon*, to denote the Christian faith as a whole system, and as a tool in allegorical exegesis to emphasize the prevention of the profanation of the truth by the unworthy. Here the spiritual quality is as important as the intellectual exercise. Marsh does not think there is 'any special appropriation' of the word to a sacramental association in the writings of Clement; where it does appear in that context it is in one of the senses already given.[42] It has been suggested that he refers to Christian baptism in his contrast between the mysteries of Dionysius and of Christ in *Protreptikos* 12, although this is probably to read too much into a text which has more of a sense of the Christian life in its entirety rather than a specific cultic comparison.[43] However, Clement does provide some of the most important evidence that Greek philosophy played a pivotal role in the development of Christian apologetic. In *Stromateis* 5 there are examples of the use of philosophy to show the value of a

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[40] Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), p. 23, his emphasis.
[41] Louth, *Denys*, p. 24.
[42] H.G. Marsh, 'The Use of *Mysterion* in the Writings of Clement of Alexandria with Special Reference to his Sacramental Doctrine', *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1936), 64-80 (pp. 64, 79-80).
[43] H. Echle, 'Sacramental Initiation as Christian Mystery-Initiation according to Clement of Alexandria', in *Vom christlichen Mysterium: gesammelte Arbeiten zum Gedächtnis von Odo Casel, O.S.B.*, ed. A. Mayer, O. Casel, J. Quaesten, B. Neunheuser (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1951), 54-65 (p. 59); Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', p. 485.

concealment of the truth in mystery and symbol, applied by Clement to scripture.[44] Nevertheless, it can be seen how little distance remains between this use and a direct application to sacramental ideas, and so in his use of philosophy, where Christian mysteries are indeed philosophical rather than cultic, Clement is an important contributor to the intellectual momentum which would result in the flowering of such language in a sacramental and liturgical context, not least in the fact that there are initiatory ideas expressed. For Clement Christianity is a matter of secrecy to the initiated, even of *gnosis*.[45] What is important to notice is his overall assumption that what Marsh calls a 'doctrine of reserve' is an essential part of Christianity. Most directly he associates this with the importance of secrecy, but it could also be read as an accepted characteristic of divine truth which can play a part in an emerging sacramental theology, the apophatic sense of a God whose attributes and activity are more than can be wholly defined or explained by human agency, in that 'the God of the universe, who is above all speech, all conception, all thought, can never be committed to writing, being inexpressible even by his own power.'[46] This argument forms a central part of the present discussion as a key characteristic of authentically Christian liturgy. The matter of *silentio mystico* in Greek philosophy, studied by Casel,[47] and the emerging concept of the *disciplina arcani*, comparatively short-lived and perhaps in any case less important than has hitherto been thought,[48] must not therefore be allowed to obscure the more lasting effect of Clement's thought, in which the

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[44] Marsh, 'Use of *Mysterion*', p. 65 and references therein.
[45] Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', pp. 485-86.
[46] *Stromateis* 5: 10, 65, 2.
[47] The significance of 'mystical silence' in Greek philosophy is examined in a little-known Latin monograph by Odo Casel, *De philosophorum Graecorum silentio mystico* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1919), in which Casel argues that 'silentium mysticum' originates not in philosophy but in the mystery religions, and points to instances of the refutation by Christian writers of accusations of a similar principle being applied to early Christianity, for example Tertullian, *Apology*, 7 and Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 7 (p. 27). Casel's concern is to investigate how 'mystical silence' made the transition from the cultic to the philosophical: 'quomodo silentium mysticum a mysteriis ad philosophorum transierit huicque paulatim coaluerit cognoscamus' (p. 2).
[48] The status of the *disciplina arcani* is questioned in Juliette Day, 'Adherence to the *Disciplina Arcani* in the Fourth Century', *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001), 266-70: 'The Eastern Fathers…discussed here all pay lip service to the idea of secrecy but…the content of their preaching displays some very different understandings of what should be kept secret and of why secrecy was necessary' (p. 266) such that 'in reality there can have been few secrets left for a fourth century catechumen as he commenced his instruction' (p. 270). By contrast, Jeanes is typical of those who accept the practice without question: G. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona*, Alcuin Club Collections 73 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 101-105. See also, classically, E. Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), pp. 54-59).

*locus* of the hidden truth in God is a permanent feature of continuing revelation, and mystery-language its expression in theology and liturgy. It may be argued that it is this, moreover, that rescues mystery theology from accusations of neo-Gnosticism.

Later, Stoic thought fuses the mystery cults and philosophy still more by making the latter the mystagogy of the former, advocating a distinction between real truth and symbolic appearance. This is achieved by the use of allegorical interpretations of the names, rites and symbols of mystery-cults, as well as more widely of the pagan gods.[49] This is an interesting prefiguring of the use of allegory by Christian writers in respect of the ceremonies and setting of the liturgy, beginning with Theodore of Mopsuestia but becoming truly established as a dominant influence in liturgical writing in the works of Amalarius of Metz in the ninth century.[50]

In Greek philosophy, then, *mysterion* acquires the primarily ontological sense which later becomes one of the essential aspects of Christian usage, and which as religious language is at the heart of the Christian's engagement with the unknowable, rather than simply experiencing the revealing of a secret. The process of changing the emphasis of the meaning in this way laid the philosophical foundations for the Christian understanding of mystery, although the latter was to give the experiential a renewed and, it may be said, equal role as sacramental theology entered an important stage of its development in the fourth century. It is therefore possible to argue that philosophy far more than the mystery cults was the more significant Hellenistic antecedent of the Christian usage because the earliest Christian uses of mystery were in the main doctrinal; also because the Christian experience of God's action through the sacramental life of the Church was understood only in terms of what was being revealed about God's nature and the consequences it had for Christian living; and perhaps most persuasively because the Christian understanding is always of a mystery that can never be fathomed, but with which a real and ultimately transformative engagement is possible. What this may be pointing to is a need to investigate

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[49] Bornkamm, p. 809 and nn. 57, 64.
[50] See Chapter 9.

further the philosophical background of mystery and the possibility that it had an influence at least as great as the biblical understanding of the word and the concept. It must be noted also that the sources for the philosophical mediation of Christianity are understandably Greek, but this is not to diminish the role of later western thought in the assimilation of mystery language in a liturgical context, with which this study is more specifically concerned and which will emerge more fully in the discussion in Chapter 5 of the relationship between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in western theological writing and liturgical material.

**The Semitic Background and the Septuagint**

The LXX used *mysterion* to translate the Hebrew *raz*, a word found also in Aramaic and Syriac, being a Persian loan-word in all three languages. The LXX also uses *mysterion* where there may never have been a Hebrew *Vorlage* (e.g. Wisdom 2.22; 6.22; 14.15, 23), or where the Hebrew/Aramaic *Vorlage* is either lost or now known only in fragments (e.g. Judith 2.2; Tobit 12.7,11; Sirach 3.18, 22.22, 27.16, 17, 21).[51] The word *raz* has strong apocalyptic and heavenly associations and prophetic links, for example in the Dead Sea Scrolls.[52] In relation to Christianity, Driver argues that 'the Covenanters' who

> accepted divine revelation as a mystery, in the same way as Paul declared 'we speak of the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom' and that 'the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God' [I Cor. 2.7-8] ...regarded these mysteries as a revelation reserved for their own society, whereas the 'hidden mystery' of God after 'being made manifest to His saints' [Col. 1.26-28] was preached by the church to all.[53]

In Syriac, the word comes to be used of the sacraments in general, but also of the Old Testament types of Christ, and appears in the *Anaphora of Addai*

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[51] For assistance with the background of *raz* here discussed I am indebted to Professor C.T.R. Hayward.

[52] See especially L.H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 206-10; also M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London, Edinburgh &c: Nelson, 1961), pp. 130-31; G.R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p. 566; M. Wilcox, 'Dualism, Gnosticism and Other Elements in the Pre-Pauline Tradition', in *The Scrolls and Christianity: Historical and Theological Significance*, ed.
Matthew Black, (London: SPCK, 1969) 83-96 (pp. 92-3); Poovannikunnel, *Concept of 'Mystery'*, pp. 5-9.

[53] Driver, *Scrolls*, p. 579.

*and Mari*, discussed in Chapter 6. In Aramaic the word *raz* is the equivalent of the Greek *mysterion*, and means 'what God has decreed shall take place in the future...the eschatological secret to be made known.'[54] This lacks the Greek notion of something into which one is initiated in order to know the secret, but is paralleled in later Christian sacramental theology. The LXX makes use of *mysterion*, where it is first employed in writings of the Hellenistic period, specifically in references to mystery-cults (e.g. Wis. 4.15), idolatry (e.g. Wis. 12.5), wisdom as the revelation of a mystery (e.g. Wis. 6.22), and in secular use as secrets not to be divulged (e.g. Tob. 12.7,11; 2 Macc. 13.21). There is no connection with initiation, which suggests that the use of the word has its roots outside Greek mystery cults. There is an eschatological emphasis in the book of Daniel which is significant for the further development of the term: the mystery is the concealed intimation of divinely ordained events, whose disclosure is for God alone (Dan. 2.28,29).[55] In apocalyptic Judaism, too, there is a prominent role for mystery, for example as divine secrets: 'Deep and without number are thy mysteries, and there is no calculating thy righteousness' (Enoch 63.3). Further senses in apocalyptic usage are mystery as the hidden basis of sensible reality, such that 'what is, what happens, what is to come, has its being in heaven rather than in itself';[56] as a looking forward to God's final destiny and judgement; and similarities to mystery-cults, for example the importance of silence. However, apocalyptic mystery is, as Bornkamm sets out, distinctive in that, unlike the mystery-cults, it does not understand a destiny undergone by the deity, but one decided by the deity; it does not result in union with the divine; and in that it shares with other Jewish understandings an orientation to eschatological cosmic vision.[57]

Over against the apocalyptic use of mystery is that of the opposing rabbinic tradition. Here mystery can refer to secret doctrines, an understanding of

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[54] D. Hill, 'Mystery', in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan (Oxford: OUP 1993), 538-39 (p. 538).
[55] Bornkamm, pp. 814-15.
[56] Ibid., p. 815.
[57] Ibid., p. 816; Studer, 'Mystery', p. 577.

the whole oral tradition of the Israelites as children of God, circumcision, the calculation of the calendar, and various cosmological and theosophical insights.[58]

**The New Testament**

Does the use of mystery in the New Testament have the world of the Old Testament as its exclusive background? The vast amount of material about mystery in the New Testament is definitively handled by Bockmuehl, for instance, but what follows can only be a summary of what is an important area of study in itself;[59] any conclusions are only part of the wider picture with which the present essay is concerned.

While Studer narrows the field of influence to apocalyptic Judaism, as essentially 'heavenly realities to be revealed at the end of time',[60] Raymond E. Brown, in an important paper, seeks to show that 'the NT writers, particularly St. Paul, had all the raw material they needed for the use of 'mystery' in this [i.e. the OT, the pseudepigrapha, and the Qumran literature] background, without venturing into the pagan religions.'[61] Brown adds in a later paper that 'the recurrence in the Scrolls of various types of "mysteries", including God's mysterious plan of salvation, suggests strongly that *mysterion* has its roots in Semitic thought rather than in the Hellenistic mystery religions.'[62] In this specific instance he is in accord with the much earlier, more sweeping opinion of Deden,

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[58] Bornkamm, p. 817.

[59] M. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) [original edition: Wissenschaftlich Untersuchungen zum NT - 2 reihe, 36 (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990)]. Treatments of *mysterion* in Pauline literature often centre on the use of the word in Eph. 1.9, and provide useful summary context. They include J. Armitage Robinson, 'On the meaning of μυστήιον in the New Testament', in his *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1909), pp. 234-40; Markus Barth, 'Mystery or Secret?', in *Ephesians 1-3*, The Anchor Bible 34 (New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 123-27; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), p. 134; A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), p. 30; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, tr. H. Heron (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 58.

[60] Studer, 'Mystery', p. 577.

[61] R.E. Brown, 'The Semitic Background of the New Testament *mysterion*', *Biblica* 39 (1958), 426-48; 40 (1959), 70-87, p.427. This paper is based on his doctoral thesis 'The Semitic Background of the Pauline *Mysterion*' (Johns Hopkins University, 1958). See also his 'The Pre-Christian Semitic Conception of Mystery', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20 (1958), 417-43.

[62] R.E. Brown, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament', in *John and Qumran*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 1-8 (p. 5); also Black, *Scrolls and Christian Origins*, pp. 142-43.

who believed that 'Nous possédons dans les présupposés juifs tout ce qui est nécessaire pour expliquer le vocabulaire et la formation des idées chrétiennes'.[63] Characteristically, Brown is very persuasive in this argument, although for a Roman Catholic scholar writing in the late 1950s there is likely to be some apologetic interest in seeking to exclude pagan religion from the background to the NT. The assertion of Christianity over pagan religion is an important element of Acts and the Pauline writings in particular, and so this may persuade us to accept Brown on the grounds that the NT writers themselves consciously intended to exclude any hint of pagan influence over Christianity. However, it seems equally possible that pagan terminology was used to strengthen the assertion of Christianity as the new religion which entirely supplanted the former beliefs and rites, and indeed may have made the business of communicating the new faith easier at least by implying that these words were capable of positive meaning in a new context.[64] In this way the linguistic culture of pagan religion may have served as a powerful tool in the spread of Christianity. Furthermore, as Harvey argues, there may also have been a legitimate consciousness on the part of writers and readers of a background of Greek mystery, even if the actual uses of *mysterion* can be shown to have entirely semitic roots.[65] If this is the case, *mysterion* would have had an important place in the handing on and transformation of this culture. Kennedy suggested as much in answering the question 'how far does the use of mystic terminology involve the adoption of the ideas it expresses?' with the assertion that Paul could not appropriate anything 'without transforming' it, and that, in any case, such terminology surely provided 'convenient channels of appeal to the popular interest.'[66]

The single synoptic use of *mysterion* Mk 4.11 (Mt 13.11; Lk 8.10), which RSV translates: 'And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the

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[63] D. Deden, 'Le "Mystère" Paulinien', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis,* 13 (1936), 405-42 (p.434); The argument of both Deden and Brown is further reinforced in K. Prümm, 'Mystères', *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928-), supplement vol. 6 (1960), 1-225 (p. 180).

[64] Indeed Brown also suggests that 'The strong "mystery" langauge of [the Epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians] and the moral admonishments which bear strong resemblance to Qumran paraenesis may represent the author's attempt to speak in a language that the opponents would understand.' ('Dead Sea Scrolls', p. 6).

[65] A.E. Harvey, 'The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible', *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. 31 (1980), 320-36 (p. 331).

[66] Kennedy, *St Paul*, pp. 121-22. By 'mystic' we here understand 'mystery'.

kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables.'" Bornkamm sees the interpretation of this text as a matter of the function of parables (in this case, the parable of the sower), and draws an important conclusion: the parables can be understood as pointing to 'the incursion of the divine rule in the word and work of Jesus', and to the fact that Jesus himself *is* the '*mysterion* of the kingdom'.[67] In this, Mark prepares the ground for Paul's *mysterion* of God's plan of salvation in Christ, but no less important for the present study is the matter of how and by whom parables are understood. The disciples know the mysteries of the kingdom because through God's free gift their eyes have been opened to the coming of the personification of those mysteries, the Messiah, though paradoxically 'veiled by the parables, not because they are obscure or complicated, but precisely because of their simplicity'.[68] This would seem to parallel the association of mystery with the Christian liturgy in the fourth century, when access to the rites and doctrines which convey the presence of Christ may have been restricted to those to whom such rights are given, although in the synoptic context at least, as Brown contends, 'we should not over-emphasize the denial by Jesus of knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom to outsiders...even to outsiders the mystery is at least given; and the parables which cloak it are not meaningless narration.'[69] Eliade would dismiss altogether any influence of Hellenistic mysteries on primitive Christianity since 'although Jesus's message also has an initiatory structure [it] has it precisely because initiation is an integral part of any new religious revelation',[70] but this does not of itself prove that there was no specific transfer of *form*, given the clear philosophical and cultural connections between early Christianity and the Hellenistic world.

The principal Pauline uses of *mysterion* first develop the Marcan use, such that the mystery *is* Christ: e.g. Col. 2.2f, Col. 1.27. Secondly the *mysterion* is hidden (literally 'secret'), but then revealed and made present by the advent of the Messiah (Col. 1.26: 'the mystery hidden for ages...but now made manifest'; I

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[67] Bornkamm, p. 817.
[68] Ibid., pp. 818-19.
[69] Brown, 'Semitic Background', p. 431.
[70] M. Eliade *Birth and Rebirth: The Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture* (London: Harvill Press, 1961), pp. 118-19.

Cor. 2.7: 'a mystery which was kept hidden'; Rom. 16.25: 'the mystery which was kept silent about for long ages'), as part of God's plan for creation (Eph. 1.9 'the mystery of his will', including but not exclusively Jesus Christ). This ties in with the Marcan view of the kingdom once hidden but now revealed, leaving aside the issue of precisely to whom.[71] There are a considerable number of further nuances in the Pauline writings, mostly eschatological in intent,[72] but including as a synonym for 'testimony', thus bringing it close to a more general sense of 'the gospel' as the subject of Paul's proclamation. Also, it appears in Eph. 5.32 in an exegetical context as 'denoting the inner meaning of a passage whose more obvious sense is something other'.[73] The latter use finds a liturgical expression in the eventual development of notions of symbol in worship. The connection of *mysterion* with Christian sacraments and worship is not explicit in the NT, as Nock pointed out,[74] but it can be argued that the ground is prepared for it through its association with Christ himself and his personification of God's revealed plan. Thus Guiver argues that since Christ is present in baptism in Gal. 6, there is already a sense of Christ the mystery being dynamically and effectually present in the beginnings of the sacraments. A similar case is made for I Cor. 11.26: 'as often as you eat this bread...you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'. Hill, too, would see the NT uses of *mysterion* as part of the essential background to Christian worship: 'the use of the word...with reference to the sacraments is post biblical, but an understandable development from the...usage of the word to denote the inner meaning of a phrase or symbol.'[75]

Also important to an understanding of the biblical background of *mysterion* is its relationship with revelation. Thus the central purpose of Bockmuehl's study is 'to locate the Jewish and Pauline understanding of such divine secrets [*mysteria*] firmly within the wider framework of corresponding views of *revelation*.'[76] Such an association is not new, and has long had a firm

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[71] Guiver, *Pursuing*, pp. 58-59; Bornkamm, pp. 817-19; Hill, 'Mystery', p. 539.
[72] Bornkamm, pp. 822-24.
[73] Hill, 'Mystery', p. 539.
[74] A.D. Nock, 'Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background', in *Essays on the Trinity and on the Incarnation by members of the Anglican Communion*, ed. A.E.J. Rawlinson (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), pp. 53-156 (p. 81).
[75] Guiver, *Pursuing,* pp. 60-1; Hill, 'Mystery', p. 539.
[76] Bockmuehl, 'Revelation and Mystery', p. 2.

place in biblical theology, as shown by Moule's comment on *mysterion*: 'once it was in the Bible, it became especially a vehicle for conveying ideas peculiar to the biblical conception of revelation.'[77]

**Mystery in the Patristic Church**

For the early Fathers, mystery does not have a primary connection with the sacraments, partly because sacramental theology and its liturgical expression are still at an early stage of development.[78] Although the use of *mysterion* itself is relatively rare,[79] it is clear that in this period it is primarily a means of talking about the fundamental *loci* of revelation in the life and actions of Jesus: the incarnation and the cross, for example, are seen as mysteries, because they reveal in space and time things of God that were previously hidden. Ignatius in *I Magnesians* sees the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in *I Ephesians* the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing as *mysteria*. Elsewhere, there are references to 'the earthly mystery of the Church', although not without problems, and 'the secret [i.e. *mysterion*] of the [Christian] religion.'[80] Certainly after Justin, first to apply the word 'mystery' to Christianity (I *Apology*, 13; *Dialogue*, 74, 91), the terminology and concept were gradually applied more widely 'to express the whole panorama of the divine economy in the world...whether in its entirety or in its details.'[81] Justin is important in another sense, however, for it has been argued that since he described his own conversion to Christianity in terms of philosophy, his 'identification of Christianity with philosophy forms a necessary condition for the eventual acceptance of mystery-imagery and makes it possible for subsequent Christian writers to adopt such a vocabulary without fear of serious cultic over-tones.' Indeed such is the resulting confidence that the tables can neatly be turned. For example, Justin can attribute some pagan cultic practice in fact to imitation of Christianity and therefore the product of demonic

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[77] C.F.D. Moule, 'Mystery', in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick, vol.3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 479-81 (p. 479).
[78] See E.J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, vol. 1, *Systematic Theology of Liturgy* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988), pp. 213-14.
[79] Bornkamm, p. 824.
[80] Ibid., pp. 824-25; '*mysterion*', in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, F.W. Danker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 530-31 (p. 530).
[81] Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, pp. 599-600.

invention.[82] This confidence can be said to derive from the mediating influence of Hellenistic philosophy, and therefore further demonstrates the importance of the latter for the transition from pagan to Christian religious thought and practice.

Later, mystery is employed in apologetic material.[83] To understand further how the later Fathers understood mystery, and how they themselves were influenced by earlier contexts, it is useful to take note of Vagaggini's assessment of Origen's sacramental scheme, standing as he does on the cusp of the earlier and later patristic periods in terms of sacramental theology and use of mystery. In him, it may be argued, can be seen both the influences of earlier ideas and the beginnings of the mystagogical tradition.[84] In the writings of Origen, influenced by Greek philosophy to the extent that, in Prestige's words, 'the Churchman was stealing all Plato's and Aristotle's honey',[85] mystery is understood as something perceptible or sensible but embodying an underlying reality which is shown to those who are able to receive it through sense and disposition, to the degree that the sensible is divine reality under another form, in what Vagaggini calls 'a unity of participation'.[86] This is similar to the *mysterium-sacramentum* dialogue, but lacking an explicit notion of reflection back to the sensible element.[87]

Fundamental to Origen's sacramental scheme is that Christ is the primordial mystery: 'Flesh was perceived, God was believed'.[88] Vagaggini sees similarities here with the thought of von Balthasar. Christ the primordial mystery forms the first layer in a hierarchy of mystery, upon which the others depend and to which they relate. The second layer is the mystery of the Church, whereby all things in the Church have the value of mystery, including the hierarchy of ministry: 'the bishop, the priest, the deacon are symbols also of the truths which correspond to these names'.[89] The third layer in the scheme is the rites of worship

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[82] Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', p. 483; Justin, I *Apol.*, 62.
[83] Bornkamm, pp. 825-26; Vagaggini, *Dimensions,* pp. 601-4.
[84] Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, pp. 601-4.
[85] G.L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London: SPCK, 1963), p. 51.
[86] Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, p. 602.
[87] See Chapter 5.
[88] Origen, *In Rom. com.*, 4, 2; Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, p. 602.
[89] Origen, *In Matt. com.*, 14, 22; Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, p. 603.

which derive from the preceding layers. Here Origen is not referring to baptism and the eucharist alone, but to liturgical rites in general.

**The Third and Fourth Century Development**

Whereas previously mystery as applied to certain Christ-events had no explicit link with the liturgy, in the third and fourth centuries the liturgy was seen to be the means by which these events are represented, symbolized and made real, for and in the life of the believer. There was a growing understanding of liturgical sign as an aspect of continuing revelation, 'the means par excellence through which the encounter of God and man takes place' in salvation history. This means and its power is derived from Christ in his life, death and resurrection. For these Fathers, Christ is the primary mystery; the liturgy is not arbitrary but 'filled with the mystery which is the life of Christ himself.' Every word and gesture in the liturgy become important, because in them is contained, through the tradition of the Church, 'the reality of Christ.'[90]

The third and fourth centuries signal a diversification of the use of mystery as a theological term, and particularly after the Constantinian settlement Christian writers become less wary of terminology previously suspect on account of pagan associations. In western terms this period sees the beginning of a distinct liturgical Latin and with it the emergence of the loaned *mysterium* and its partner *sacramentum*.[91] Mohrmann comments that 'the whole development of language and style, together with the changed attitude of the Christians toward the pagan culture, helped to make it possible for a liturgical language to arise in the second half of the fourth century,'[92] although the Latin of the Roman Rite may, ironically, show signs of the influence of pagan rites, as Alistair MacGregor has suggested.[93] Solignac places the use of the Latin *mysterium* in four

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[90] H.M. Riley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretations of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1974), p. 252.

[91] See Chapter 5.

[92] C. Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin: its Origins and Character* (London: Burns and Oates, 1959), pp. 52-53.

[93] A.J. MacGregor, ' "Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!" Solar Survivals in Christian Prayers,' *In Illo Tempore* 24 (January 2004), pp. 42-48.

categories: Christ the centre of the mystery, the prefiguring of the mystery of Christ in the Old Testament, the mystery of Christ accomplished in Christians, and the application of the term to Christian feasts and sacramental rites, a directly liturgical use.[94] Vagaggini notes and comments on the first three of these aspects of the broadening of the understanding of *mysterion / mysterium* in the third and fourth centuries.[95] The Old Testament is seen in terms of image, type and figure, relating almost wholly to Christ as the primordial mystery. This is almost wholly true of both Latin and Greek Fathers, and in those who write about the liturgy is a prominent theme.[96] The exception is Pseudo-Dionysius, who gives a lesser place to the Old Testament in the liturgy.[97] The events of Christ in real time and subsequently in the life of the Church have 'symbolic-real value expressive of a present spiritual reality'.[98] There is a wider broadening of language by 'the general concept of *mysterion*, of which the other concepts such as image, symbol, figure, sign etc., tend to become particular aspects or else synonyms.'[99]

For Pseudo-Dionysius, the stress is on the value of the *mysterion* as a bridge between the human and the divine, with a concentration on the transcendent in the abstract. According to this interpretation, it is the sign and symbol of the action of God in purifying, illuminating and perfecting through celestial and terrestrial hierarchies,[100] to the extent that the strong rootedness in the realities of Christ's birth, life and death in space and time is diminished. This would seem to detract from the otherwise common thrust towards *mysterion* as a dynamic means of understanding and encountering in the life of the Church the presence of Christ in *his* mysteries in the here-and-now through the medium of the liturgy, which the other Fathers seem to be approaching, and which would later be seized upon by Casel in the twentieth century as the basis for a recovered mystery-theology.

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[94] Solignac, 'Mystère', cols. 1866-69.
[95] Vagaggini, *Dimensions*, pp. 603-4.
[96] See J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (London: DLT, 1960).
[97] Vagaggini, *Dimensions,* p. 607.
[98] Ibid., p. 603.
[99] Ibid., p. 604. It is too simplistic to *assume* synonymity: see Chapter 5.
[100] Vagaggini, *Dimensions,* p. 607 and n. 67.

In spite of the differences of emphasis and detail, themselves indicative of sophistication rather than confusion, by the fourth century mystery has a firm place in theological and sacramental thinking, although sacramental theology itself was in a constant state of development. As far as a single definition is possible, it may be given in words of John Chrysostom: 'it is a mystery when we consider in sacred things that which goes beyond what we see.'[101] In one sense this achieves little more than to comment on the unsystematic nature of sacramental theology at this time, what Kelly describes as 'the universal, if somewhat vague, assumption...that the sacraments were outward and visible signs marking the presence of an invisible, but none the less genuine, grace.'[102] However, in terms of the theological, philosophical and cultural influences on the development of the liturgy, the arrival of the Church at this turn was of immense significance, for, as Vagaggini triumphantly declares, it was at this time that the terminology of mystery assuredly 'passed on a large scale into the vocabulary of the liturgical formularies of the historical and present-day liturgies, which, as is known, are substantially the fruit of the liturgical creativity of the patristic age.'[103] For this reason it is suggested that present day liturgical construction and revision ought to have a close interest in this fact and its consequences.

## Early Christian Mystery: Some Reflections on Method and Diversity

### The Limitations of Philology

The philologist Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614) pioneered the study of terminology as a way of examining the relationship between antique and Christian religion, particularly in his *De sacrosancta eucharistia*,[104] and particularly with respect to the vocabulary of mystery. However, as Smith has shown, Casaubon's exclusively philological work reduced the question entirely to terminology for several hundred years in which 'scholarship would be devoted to conceiving the relationship between early Christianity and other antique religions primarily as a

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[101] Chrysostom, *In ep. I ad Cor. hom.*, 1, 7; Vagaggini, *Dimensions,* p. 604 n. 55.
[102] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 4th edition (London: A. & C. Black, 1968), p. 422.
[103] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions.,* p. 606.
[104] *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis XVI. Ad Cardinalis Baronii Prolegomena in Annales*, 1st ed. (London: Eliot's Court Press, 1614), pp. 500-86.

linguistic affair', such that 'the first modern scholarly treatments of the topic are essentially concerned with comparing vocabulary (largely, Casaubon's list of mystery-words)'.[105]

The debate centred on the terminological history of 'mystery' largely because it was a convenient apologetic tool. Casaubon and his immediate successors wished to point up the distinction between Roman Catholic and Protestant views of the origins of Christianity. Equally, later scholars from Hatch and Kennedy onwards sought to use philology to argue for uses of 'mystery' and associated words in Judaism as the main influence on the Christian 'mystery', but merely succeeded in giving themselves both 'an insulation for early Christianity, guarding it against "influence" from its "environment"', and at the same time 'an object to be transcended by Christianity.'[106] This reveals the limitations of a purely philological approach to assessing the meaning of mystery in Christian theology from earliest times, as it suggests a tendency to ignore other factors, and at any rate in its apologetic form has assumed that the association of Christian mystery-language is automatically to be deprecated, when in fact it may, when seen in a wider context and in company with other factors, be a major contribution to the discovery of how co-existing religions influence one another's development or decline. The philology of 'mystery' was really a missed opportunity for three hundred years after Casaubon. Recent scholarship of the influence of pre-Christian religions on Christianity, however, has sought to redress the situation by rescuing 'mystery' from a purely philological mind-set and showing it to be but one, though essential, part of a much more complex picture. Bockmuehl's work on Judaism and Pauline Christianity is a case in point, and indeed he warns of the danger of allowing form to have undue priority over content.[107] This is a danger attendant on liturgiology also, and wherein a concentration on the history of the text has often taken priority over what the text actually implies *once in context* and, however it got there, *since it is there*.

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[105] J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 57-58.
[106] Smith, *Drudgery*, p. 83; pp. 60-69 for discussion of Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*; Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*; and Nock, 'Early Gentile Christianity'.
[107] Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery,* p. 224, commenting on C.C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian* Mysterion*: Meaning and Content* (Lund: Gleerup, 1977).

However, the frontier is not as well-defined as this may seem to imply. Philology, although having its limitations, can also itself reveal the wider context in which the question must be seen, for while there may also have been as much Jewish influence on early Christian mystery-language as there was Hellenistic, the theological implications appear to have been quite different. Consequently, in examining the theological nature of the early Christian mystery, it can be seen that not only was the terminology influenced by both cultures, but also the theology, and that to argue for the exclusivity of either influence is to miss the crucial point that terminological similarity does not have to mean an identity of nature, but may well indicate a natural phenomenological inheritance whereby the Church saw nothing wrong in applying terms which had described the nature and effects of mystery religions and of Hebrew religion to the rites and beliefs which it firmly believed to have supplanted both. Brilioth adds weight to this argument in attributing later elements of the Christian liturgy to the influence of phenomenological, rather than theological, characteristics of mystery religions: silence in the Canon of the Mass, the veiling of the rite in secrecy from the uninitiated, and the protection of the eucharist from profanity by the insistence on prior confession.[108]

It is therefore important to realise both the limits and the possibilities of terminology, and to become comfortable and confident with the range of meaning and contextual influence on meaning. The New Testament uses the word in a range of different senses, as does Paul himself, although it may be argued that they are aspects of the same concept. Another stage of development occurs in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and their immediate successors, and yet another in the thought of the fourth century. These stages are of a different character in that they are not dealing with pre-Christian influence alone, but are concerned chiefly with the organic development of Christian thought and practice. So terminology may be used in these periods and after as a signpost of much more deep-seated flux in the ideas and associations to which the words used point. Perhaps from the Christianisation of the Roman Empire onwards

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[108] Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice.*, pp. 65-67.

there is no longer such a need to show the exclusivity of Christianity, and so terminology which once recalled the religions of former times is able to acquire its own vitality. There does not need to be a single definition if the overall sense of the concept is expressed in diversity of expression. The terminology is made to work hard to express what cannot ultimately be defined, and in this way is its own 'definition' of the 'more than it is'. Earlier studies of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the modern period have largely failed to take this approach as they have depended on traditional philology. For example Coless' 1967 thesis is, by his own admission, 'primarily a lexical and semantic enquiry [and] has no intention of erecting a "sacramental" theology centred on *mysterium* and *sacramentum*'. He is concerned 'to come to a fair estimate of the exact nuance of these terms in each case' out of an 'honest desire of removing some of the vagueness that is attached to these terms in our liturgical texts.' It would seem to us that to want to remove vagueness and seek 'precision' is entirely to miss the point, for all that it is claimed to be 'an express rejection of the literary pattern' employed by earlier scholars such as de Ghellinck.[109] It is to miss an opportunity of going *beyond* the tempting goal of precision and considering whether what appears 'vague' is in fact *precise in its indication of an underlying and indispensable principle of divine initiative*. It is because precision has been given so high a place so often at the centre of debates about liturgical language, revision and translation that there is a need for a fresh approach which takes account of philology and other disciplines but which ultimately indicates the need for a wider vision.

**On the Mystery of Objects, Persons, Beliefs and Ideas**

It will be apparent from the discussion that 'mystery' has been applied to idea and belief, person and object. Moreover sometimes 'a' mystery is referred to, and sometimes 'the' mystery. It would seem right to ask whether one can apply the term with equal force to such diverse categories, as such apparent breadth can seem to imply a vagueness of meaning. Or does 'mystery' after all mean little

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[109] G. Coless, 'Mysterium – Sacramentum in the Sacramentarium Veronense', unpublished doctoral thesis (Pontificium Athenaeum Anselmianum: Pontificium Institutum Liturgicum, Rome, 1967), pp. vi-vii.

more than 'secret', and is it really just a convenient 'catch-all' for philosophical and theological concepts of inexplicability? Certainly at its broadest level, 'mystery' can be understood in precisely this way. But it is also clear that in the various contexts outlined, it has acquired more specific meanings that make it a more dynamic term because it is applied to an idea, a belief, a person, a rite, an object, or to the deity. However, these more specific uses are critically related to their context, and may not necessarily exclude others, whether within the same context or outside it. This is a matter of the extent to which cultures influence one another, and of how theology and philosophy interrelate, and so a discussion of mystery is its own commentary on the nature of this process.

**Mystery and Initiation**

Inevitably parallels are drawn between initiation in mystery religions and Christian initiation.[110] Similar comparisons can be made in terms of ritual meals, but must be viewed with care.[111] The patristic use of mystery in the context of the sacraments comes to revolve chiefly around the understanding and teaching of Christian initiation, and indeed has an emphasis on the revealing of privileged information, although as we have suggested a similarity of form does not automatically mean a parity of theology, but may simply indicate decisions as to an appropriate way to handle the very different theological content. Much of the written evidence for mystery as a dynamic term in this context appears in catechetical and mystagogical works, for example those of Ambrose (*De mysteriis*, *De sacramentis*) and Cyril of Jerusalem (*Mystagogical Lectures*).[112] What is not so clear, and certainly lacking in such comparatively full documentation, is how far mystery is regarded as having importance for other sacraments as they emerged and became part of a fixed scheme, and thus for the liturgies by and through which they were celebrated.

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[110] Zeller, 'Mysterien', pp. 520-21.
[111] Ibid., pp. 521-22; A. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), e.g., pp. 12-13.
[112] See Mazza, *Mystagogy,* and E. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring*, which includes translations *in extenso* of the key texts.

Initiation is discussed relatively briefly in this study of mystery precisely because emphasis on initiation elsewhere has caused other equally important aspects of mystery language and theology to be obscured in later liturgical development. Even so it is important here to acknowledge the role of Christian initiation in the emergence and retention of a Christian mystery terminology and theology which was later put to wider use in liturgical texts. The principal meaning of *mystagogia* is 'initiation' into the mysteries, although it can also mean the performance of a sacred action and an oral or written explanation of the mystery hidden in scripture and celebrated in the liturgy.[113] As an example of scholarly interpretation, Mazza argues that *mystagogia* should not be mistaken for a relatively narrow means of instruction of the newly-baptized, but is itself a liturgical theology, because it 'is applied to the entire field of liturgical action.'[114] Setting out what he calls 'the problem', Mazza emphasises that in the fourth century there is no single sacramental theology, as we have already noted, but a related continuous process of development. Vocabulary is one of the ways in which this is shown to be the case, although the picture is complex since terms may continue to be used while underlying ideas and assumptions change.[115] We may point to the persistence of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the Easter Vigil of the Roman Rite of 1570 and after as an example of this.[116] We must therefore be careful of assuming continuity and practical identity when there has really been a shift in thinking. Even so, the persistence and the resulting apparent tension between what is said and done and what is intellectually and theologically current is interesting in itself, as we shall have reason to see. As Mazza remarks, 'it is precisely these changes...that chiefly determine the lines along which the shift from one theology to another takes place. A change in vocabulary is simply a consequence of a change in approach, but it is, therefore, also a valuable indicator of the latter.'[117] This, then, is the context and

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[113] Mazza, pp. 1-2, with examples. For cognate words such as *mysterion, mystikos* and *mystes* and their relationship the reader is directed to T. Federici, 'La mistagogia della chiesa. Ricerca spirituale', in E. Ancilli, *Mistagogia e direzione spiritual* (Milan: 1995), 162-245, and for the additional, and it must be said later, meanings of *mystagogia* to R. Bonnert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siécle,* Archives de l'Orient chrétien 9 (Paris: 1966), p. 29.

[114] Mazza, *Mystagogy*, pp. 2-3.

[115] Ibid., p. ix.

[116] E.g. in the *benedictio fontis: Missale Romanum, Sabbato Sancto* (Holy Saturday).

[117] Mazza, *Mystagogy,* p. ix.

methodological caution for the specific development of liturgical catechesis in Christian initiation in this period. We have noted the triumph of Christianity over pagan religion as a factor in the emergence of Christian mystery language, and the phenomenological affinities in terms of initiatory intention. However, Mazza believes that there were more specific triggers in the area of initiation. For instance, canon 46 of the Council of Laodicea orders the baptized to study the faith thoroughly.[118] Mazza assumes too that the Fathers of the end of the fourth century were moving on from biblical typology as a way of explaining sacramental realism, thereby anticipating later developments, even those of the twentieth century:

> Contemporary [i.e. 20th century] theology displays two characteristics: difficulty in accepting the biblical perspective and, in an attempt to overcome this drawback, a retrieval of the theology of the mysteries. Both of these phenomena are directly due to the loss of biblical typology, which was the method at work in mystagogy.[119]

These consequences are attributed to the increasing reliance on allegory by post fourth-century liturgical commentarists, culminating in the extensive, and in Mazza's view excessive, schemes of Amalarius of Metz and others, in the works of whom, argues Mazza, 'the allegory...often deteriorates and presents us with arbitrary and groundless interpretations.' Mazza concludes that this is the reason why mystagogy in catechetical and commentary form dropped out of use in the church until very recent times: 'allegory has historically been the death of mystagogy.'[120] Later in the present study we shall to return to Amalarius in order to see how some at least of his work is not as unsophisticated as Mazza and other critics have claimed, particularly in the evidence of a rich vocabulary of mystery which seems to preserve at least the apophatic emphasis which we argue is at the heart of an authentic liturgical theology of mystery. In this sense allegory may have a positive role, since even if on one level arbitrary, its use would seem to proclaim confidence in a continuing flexibility of interpretation of what had become relatively fixed liturgical forms. Further evidence of this may be seen in

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[118] Ibid., pp. x-xi.
[119] Ibid., p. xii.
[120] Ibid., pp. 11-13.

the eucharistic debates of the ninth and tenth centuries, contemporary with Amalarius.

**Mystery Experiential and Doctrinal**

In pre-Christian antique religion and in Greek philosophy there is a parallel but mutually influencing movement from the primacy of the experiential to that of the doctrinal in the use and understanding of mystery. The experiential emphasis in Judaism is supplanted by the doctrinal approach of Christianity and the emergence of a personalized mystery (who Christ is) as a realization of God's hidden plan. In the early church, this doctrinal emphasis continues until in the third and fourth centuries it is not replaced but enhanced by a renewed experiential understanding, by its association with the sacraments and the liturgy. Liturgy, it may be argued, fuses the doctrinal and experiential and makes possible a powerful means both of expressing and encountering the reality of God's activity. In order for this to be fully understood, however, the historical, theological and philosophical elements in this process of development need to be kept in view. The question then is to see how the relationship changes over time and is further influenced by these elements and expressed in the liturgy. This is an important question for the relationship between theology and liturgy, in that it asks whether the doctrinal or the experiential is the primary influence in the development of the liturgy, or whether there is a more complex interplay between the two in the light of the historical and philosophical contexts in which this is taking place. In this respect it is the overall contention of this study that mystery can be experienced and encountered in liturgy, but that the experience is mediated in different ways, which include language, structure, ritual action and silence, and that these may themselves not only contain further sub-categories, but also involve spiritual, intellectual and sensible dimensions of appropriation, about all of which we can make theological comment. Mystery in liturgy, by the very tapestry it weaves, paradoxically has the universal function of pointing to the limitations of our knowledge of God and the essential acknowledgement of the 'moreness' of divine action in the context of the intertwined responses of

theological speculation and worship. The following chapters will therefore focus more closely on the role of *mysterium* in Latin Christian writing and liturgical texts, beginning with the enduring question of the meaning of *mysterium* in relation to the term *sacramentum*.

# CHAPTER 5

## 'LA TERMINOLOGIE FLOTTANTE'?[1]
## *MYSTERIUM* AND *SACRAMENTUM* IN LATIN CHRISTIANITY

The Greek word *mysterion* becomes two words in Latin: *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. In seeking to establish the significance of *mysterium* it is therefore necessary to examine its relationship with *sacramentum*, which has often been misconstrued as simply synonymous. This is not an adequate reading of the complex evidence of Latin versions of the Bible and other Latin theological and liturgical texts, and so this issue is explored in this chapter. It should be noted that there are further terms which have a close but non-synonymous relationship with both *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, for example *figura*, and which would repay further detailed study.[2]

### The Latin Bible

The emergence of Latin texts of the Bible is an important component in the developing interrelated meanings of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* as translations of *mysterion*.[3] The complexities of this are still apparent and to some extent concealed in modern translations into English, for example the Revised Standard Version. Placing the RSV alongside the Vulgate text[4] and its translation of the Greek texts reveals continuing confusion but, more positively, also indicates a

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[1] C. Mohrmann, '*Sacramentum* dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens', *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954), 141-52 (p. 151).

[2] The *CETEDOC-4* and *-5* electronic texts contain many examples of *figura* and *mysterium* in the same sentence. Mazza, for instance, notes Francesconi's interpretation of the relationship of these terms in Ambrose, where *figura* is not a synonym of *mysterium*, but sets up a dynamic relationship between Old and New Testaments, and 'points to a historical precedent that only today can be fully understood.' (G. Francesconi, *Storia e Simbolo: 'mysterium in figura': la simbolica storico-sacramentale nel linguaggio e nella teologia di Ambrogio di Milano* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1981), p. 248); in Ambrose's phrase *figura mysterii*, *figura* refers to historical realities as carrying a salvific meaning (Francesconi, p. 256); Mazza, *Mystagogy*, pp. 16-17.

[3] On Latin versions and further bibliography see for example, B.M. Metzger, 'Latin Versions' in his 'Versions, Ancient', in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. G. Buttrick et al., 4v. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), i, 749-60 (pp. 752-54); J. Gribomont, 'Latin Versions', in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Suppl. Vol., ed. K. Crim et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 527-32; K.G. O'Connell, 'Latin Versions', in R.E. Brown, D.W. Johnson, K.G. O'Connell, 'Texts and Versions', *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 1083-1112 (pp. 1100-1102).

[4] Many editions, here using *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, 4th edition revised, ed. R. Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

more flexibly sophisticated range of meanings in the Latin tradition than this particular English text would seem to show. This is to say nothing of direct translation from Greek to English; rather it is to place the Latin text in intermediate relationship with both in order to be able to comment on its role as a witness to the emergence of Latin concepts of *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, and to indicate contemporary implications of the original complexity: It is also to highlight the importance of treating a text as a text that exists and so carrying meaning in itself *since it is there*, whatever its translation history. This is a different approach to that of Coless, for example, whose discussion of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* relies on more traditional philological method, makes relatively little reference to the Latin Bible, and does not discuss potential contemporary implications for how texts function independently of their etymological and transmissional history.[5]

**The Old Testament and Deuterocanonical Books**

The text of the Vulgate uses either *mysterium* or *sacramentum* in place of the exclusive LXX[6] *mysterion*, the background of which as *raz* in the original Semitic languages was discussed in the previous chapter. The fact that Jerome used the Hebrew Bible for the Old Testament (whereas the Old Latin versions had used LXX) may conceivably have influenced the decision to employ two words, but even if it did the presence of both in the Vulgate text is worthy of note given the contemporary context.[7] What follows is an attempt to interpret the usage in relation to a modern English rendering of the texts.

RSV translates the occurrences of *mysterium* in Judith 2.2, Ecclus 22.27, 27.24 and 2 Macc 13.21 as 'secret'. From the Hebrew Bible it adds Prov. 20.19, also 'secret' in RSV. These are all non-theological uses, referring either to a secret military plan (Judith 2.2 and 2 Macc. 13.21) or to the notion of betrayal.

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[5] See Coless, 'Mysterium-Sacramentum', *passim.*

[6] *Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, ed. A. Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935, 1979).

[7] To Professor C.T.R. Hayward I owe the realistic advice that establishing the relationship between the Vulgate, LXX and Hebrew bibles in terms of translation preference is 'no simple matter' (personal communication).

The five occurrences of *mysterium* in Daniel (2.19, 2.27, 2.28, 2.29 and 2.47) are all given as 'mystery' or 'mysteries' in RSV. All are theological or at least semi-theological. Daniel's vision in 2.19 is described as the revealing of a mystery (here probably simply an unknown thing) for which he blesses God. The mystery the king asks to be revealed in 2.27-29 is in the hands of 'a God in heaven who reveals mysteries'. There is an implication of the futility of pagan religion, and of mystery religions in particular, which cannot but have resonated with the early hearers and readers of the Latin Bible. The primacy of God and the uniqueness of his revelation is being underscored: the true mysteries are in the hands of the one God, who will reveal himself in his son. Daniel 2.47 is more sophisticated since in LXX *mysteria* and *mysterion* appear in the same sentence. They are translated into the Latin *mysteria* and *sacramentum* respectively (RSV 'mysteries' and 'mystery'). This may have been for simple reasons of syntactical felicity, and indeed the RSV translation makes no particular distinction between the mysteries that God is able to reveal and the specific one that has been revealed, but the use of the two words is also further evidence for the complex but deliberate relationship between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, beyond mere equivalence, that clearly exists elsewhere in early Latin Christianity and not least in liturgical texts.[8] This is further implied by the fact that *sacramentum* is used to translate the LXX *mysterion* in the remaining instances, many in a theological context. This is true by association in the case of Tobit 12.7, where the propriety of keeping the 'secret of a king' (RSV) is set alongside the desirability of revealing (*revelare*) 'the works of God' (RSV). Wisdom 2.22 and 6.24 both use *sacramenta* in direct association with God, translated in RSV as the 'secret purposes' of God in 2.22. The second example also refers to the *sacramenta Dei*: this corresponds to 6.22 in LXX and subsequent versions, but while *mysteria* are mentioned, the direct association with God (*Dei*) in the Latin text is absent. The purpose of the insertion may have been to dissociate wisdom from pagan contexts by an unambiguous statement that mysteries are 'of God'. *Sacramentum* appears again in Wisdom 12.5 of the Latin Bible, but here it is as a translation of *mystas*, and in the context of the writer's railing against pagan practices *a medio sacramento tuo* is translated in RSV as 'the midst of a heathen cult', thus softening the

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[8] On this the evidence examined by Coless, including Papal literature from the fourth to the sixth centuries, is convincing: 'Mysterium-Sacramentum', pp. 44-143.

accusation in the second person of both the Latin and the Greek. Such a use of *sacramentum* to refer to a non-Christian religious rite is interesting and unusual in the light of the apologetic agenda of dismissing the validity of such cults, but may simply point to the possibility that the word could be so used without any implication of approval if the context was clear. It suggests that here at least *sacramentum* was thought to be the right word for an actual rite as opposed to a theological truth, and in this corresponds to the pre-Christian Roman association with the military oath.

*Sacramentum* translates *mysterion* a further three times in the book of Daniel (2.18, 2.30 and 4.6). All are theological. In 2.18 the sense is of something that God will in his mercy reveal, in 2.30 it has been revealed. Both clearly point to the unique agency of God, and RSV translates both as 'this mystery'. The third instance (4.6) is more sophisticated since it is in the context of an address to Belteshazzar: *omne sacramentum non est impossibile tibi*, 'no mystery is difficult for you' (RSV). In the light of all the other uses in Daniel this would seem to employ a deliberate irony because this is precisely only true of God and not of Belteshazzar. Therefore the agency of the one true God and not 'the holy gods' of Belteshazzar is once more underlined.

From these examples we can conclude that in the formation of the Latin Bible, the issues of precise meaning and interchangeability of *mysterium* and *sacramentum,* which non-scriptural liturgical and other texts will be seen to reveal, are equally present. The main question which arises is why *sacramentum* is used instead of *mysterium* on many occasions, when LXX uses *mysterion* in every case except Wisdom 12.5 (*mystas*) which is deliberately cultic. One solution could be that *mysterium* and *sacramentum* really *are* interchangeable, but unless a theory of entirely random whim on the part of translators and copyists is accepted, this does not sufficiently explain why one is used in preference to the other. It is far more likely that the theological concerns of the translators and copyists, indeed of Jerome himself, play a role in the distinction, and one may well conclude that there is a consistent and understandable intention to use both words to downplay pagan religion – the use of *sacramentum* may indicate occasions where there is a conscious desire to avoid *mysterium* in order

to make it quite clear that there is to be no association with pagan religion. This may be especially the case where the context concerns initiation, for example in Wisdom 6. Such concern would be entirely consistent with the debate between pagan religion and philosophy and Christianity in the period immediately preceding the final establishment of the Vulgate text. A further likely intention is to underscore the primacy of the action of the God whose sole revelatory power would result in the birth of Jesus Christ. In this sense there can be said to be both apologetic and prophetic aspects to the use of this vocabulary.

**The New Testament**

Both *mysterium* and *sacramentum* are used in the Latin New Testament, and here the context is most directly that of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Like LXX, the Greek NT uses only *mysterion*, and again, we must ask why Latin uses either of two words where in the Greek one is sufficient. A division may be made to the extent that only *mysterium* is used in the Gospels, once each in the synoptics and not at all in John. The three synoptic uses are the parallel texts of Matt. 13.11, Mark 4.11 and Luke 8.10, the words of Jesus concerning the 'secrets' (RSV) of the kingdom of God, knowledge of which is given to the disciples. This may have no more theological meaning than to say 'there are things about God which I am telling you which nobody else can know', in which case 'secret' is as good an understanding of the meaning as any. For the Latin Christian, however, the use of *mysterium* and to talk of 'those outside' (*illis...qui foris sunt*) in this context must have had a particular resonance in relation to mystery cults, since the terminology is now being applied to the 'mysteries' of Christianity. The proper context for this use of *mysterium* could therefore be the debate between Christianity and pagan religion.

Outside the synoptic gospels the picture is more complicated. *Mysterium* is used in both a general and a specific sense, as in the Greek. Thus, for example, *noverim mysteria omnia* in I Cor. 13.2 and *spiritu autem loquitur mysteria* in I Cor 14.2. There is the more specific sense of a divine truth in I Cor. 15.51: *Ecce mysterium vobis dico*; in Rom. 11.25 it is used to describe a particular aspect of

the mission to the Gentiles in relation to the Jews; in II Thess. 2.7 there is reference to *mysterium iniquitatis*. An additional specific use is *mysterium Euangelii* in Eph. 6.19: interestingly a similar phrase is later employed in the *Sacramentarium Veronense* (The so-called 'Leonine Sacramentary'): *mysterium quadriformis euangelii*.[9] The primary specific use, however, is in direct reference to the revelation of Christ, for example in Rom. 16.25: *revelationem mysterii temporibus aeternis taciti*, and in Eph. 3.4 the explicit *in mysterio Christi*. Aside from these uses Rev. 17.5 (the description of Babylon the Great as 'Mystery') may be placed in a special category: here the reference is to the element of the genuinely unknown, not to hidden divine truth.

Many of the uses of *sacramentum* are associated with the idea of making visible, or make specific reference to Christ, the visible manifestation of the mystery. All are, of course, *mysterion* in the Greek text, so the use of *sacramentum* in these instances suggests, to a greater degree than in the Old Testament, a deliberate attempt to make a distinction between the two words and employ a richer vocabulary than would be possible with a single word. Thus Eph. 1.9, the very verse which has prompted many commentators to make extended comment on mystery,[10] here has *sacramentum*. Christ is the (visible) 'sacrament' of God's will. Eph. 3.3 talks of the mystery being revealed, hence *sacramentum*, while Eph. 3.4 places this in tension with the *mysterium Christi*, the essential hidden dimension which locates the Son in relation to the Father. Christ has been revealed as *sacramentum* but this reality is still bound up in God as *mysterium*. Therefore in Eph. 3.3-4 the possibility of the distinction between the terms is made clear by their deft and surely deliberate juxtaposition in the Latin text. The sense of visible sign is continued in the Latin texts of Eph. 5.32 (the *sacramentum magnum* is Christ and the Church), and Col. 1.27 (the *sacramentum* 'which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'). Even more explicit is I Tim. 3.16, where the *sacramentum* (Christ) is *manifestatum* ('manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit' etc.). These uses prefigure, and may accompany, the emergence of *sacramentum* as a term likely, but not exclusively, to be used in this 'external' sense, to indicate the mystery made visible or present to the senses

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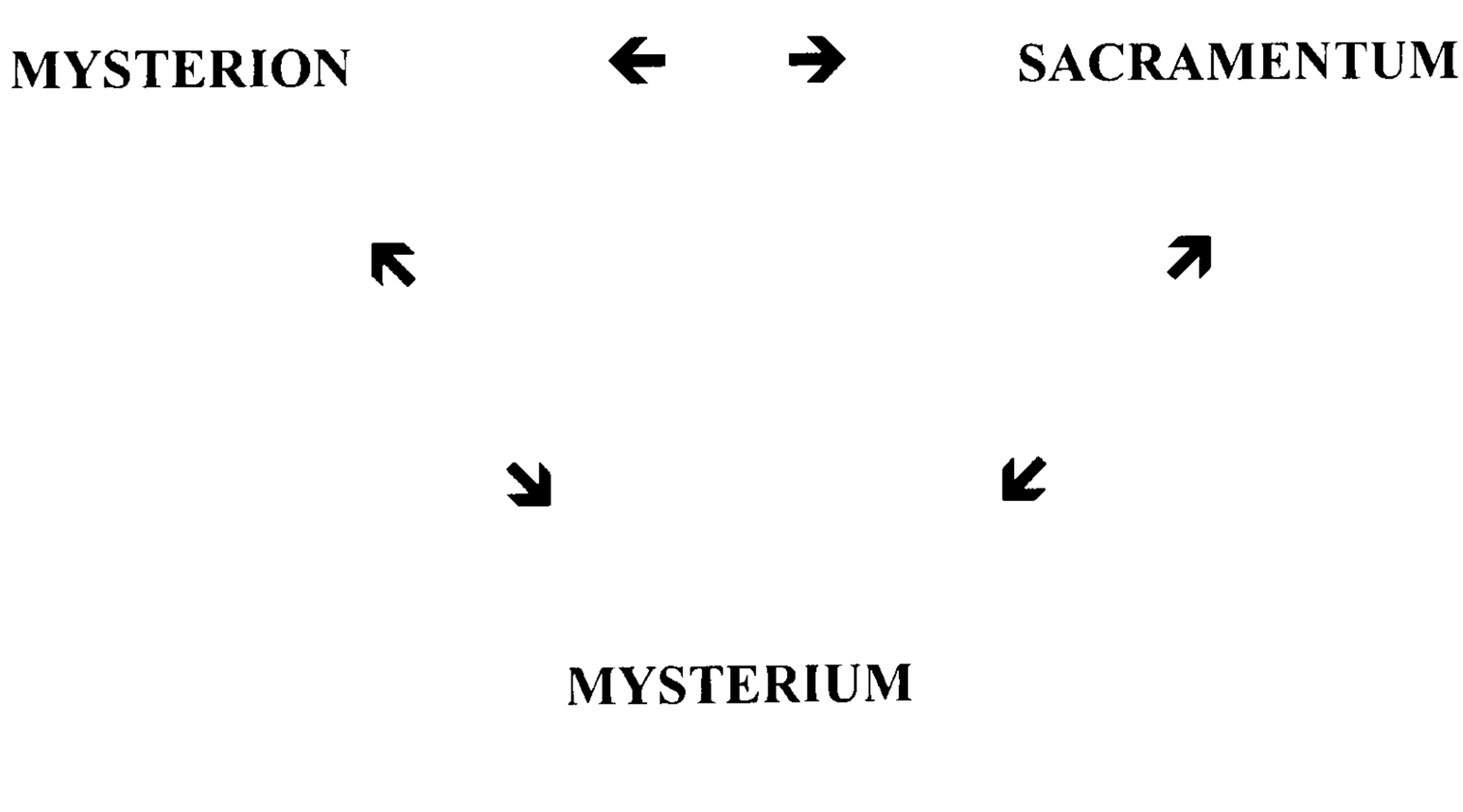
[9] See Chapter 7.
[10] See Chapter 4.

in sign and symbol. We cannot point to anything like a worked-out 'sacramental theology' here, but what we have is compatible with a stage in the development of such a theology and is therefore evidence for that development. This suggests that theological concerns shaped the selection of vocabulary in the Latin New Testament, using it in a sophisticated way to underpin contemporary theological developments. This is confirmed by the rich interplay between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the theological writing of the early Latin Church and in the liturgical material which emerges from this intellectual context and flowers in the subsequent centuries.

**An Emerging Language of Mystery**

The translation issues arising in the foregoing indicate that there are three relationships to be considered. They can most easily be seen in the form of a diagram:




The diagram indicates that the Greek term is connected with *both* Latin terms in a triangular fashion: it has a relationship of meaning with *sacramentum*, and a relationship of form *and* meaning with *mysterium.* The Latin terms which each have a direct relationship to the single Greek term also have a relationship of meaning *with each other*, which explains the use of both to translate differing occurrences of *mysterion*, which itself has a range of meanings. While it may be

tempting to conclude from the diagram alone that *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, as translations of the single Greek term, *are* synonymous and used interchangeably, the evidence of the Latin Bible shows that this is not the case in that context. We therefore need to assess the nature of the relationship between the two words to test this thesis in a wider western context, aiming to show that the Latin terms, while their meaning is influenced directly and significantly by the Greek, also each independently take nuances of meaning from outside the triangle. In what is effectively a fourth relationship acting on the triangle from without, for example, the independent etymology of *sacramentum* has significance for its theological and liturgical meaning. Therefore it is not sufficient to *assume* synonymity, although to complicate the picture this, conceivably, may nevertheless have *been assumed* by some contemporary authors, and has certainly been assumed by many modern writers. In at least some contexts, however, there is a *deliberate* interplay between the terms which indicates differences of meaning, and this may especially be seen in liturgical texts and related writing. This lends weight to the principal discussion of *mysterium*, since it suggests the deliberate use of the word in full awareness of its meaning in relation to *sacramentum* and other terms. In other words, it is to suggest that where *mysterium* is used, no other word will do. This in turn is to claim that it was used in a sophisticated intellectual context which made full use of the possibilities of such language of mystery in order to convey a distinct understanding of the liturgy and more widely of divine activity.

Speaking of *mysterion* and its *prima facie* Latin equivalent *sacramentum* (see below), Dalmais claims that these terms are

> used among Latin Catholics since at least the opening of the third century to express the same idea...Nothing is more significant or in accordance with tradition in liturgical language. They relate to a fundamental and essential character in the Christian liturgy.[11]

For Vagaggini,

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[11] I.H. Dalmais, 'The Christian Liturgy and the Mystery of Salvation', in *True Worship*, 5th Downside Symposium, ed. L. Sheppard (London: DLT, 1963), 1-13 (p. 9).

> Without doubt, during the third-fourth century, the concept of *mysterion*, *mysterium*, *sacramentum* appears clearly as the key to the whole irenic, expositive theological vision of the liturgy in patristic literature.[12]

Much is assumed here by Vagaggini in implying a *single* 'concept' of *mysterion*, *mysterium*, *sacramentum*; such an assumption is false insofar as a study of the interplay between the terms reveals a much more complex picture. Lying behind these forthright statements is the established fact that in the third and fourth centuries, the emergence of a more distinct sacramental theology, a more sophisticated liturgy and an associated mystagogical catechetical style created the conditions for a consequent development in the understanding of mystery. Nevertheless, as De Lubac and others recognise, the term *mysterium* has a complex history:

> Peu de mots - s'il en est un seul - furent à la fois pendant des siècles d'un usage aussi courant et d'une acception aussi large, aussi plastique, on est tenté de dire aussi floue. C'est comme un vaste confluent où les eaux de plusieurs rivières viendraient se confondre, pour se séparer à nouveau en multiples courants dérivés.[13]

The pluriform possibilities of western *mysterium* mirrored those of the Greek, where for Gregory of Nazianzus they indicated the importance of imagination in theological discourse. Gregory refers to both his ordination and the feast of Easter as *mysterion* in the same sentence, which Cooke interprets as 'an intriguing combination of appreciation for observable reality and the quest for the spiritual.'[14] *Mysterion* applied to a wide range of realities, and for Gregory, 'the best theologian is the one with superior powers of imagination and whose own interior life is at most an image or shadow of the truth.'[15] Western liturgical texts were not lacking in imagination either, as will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7.

Scheeben claims that

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[12] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*, p. 599.
[13] H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: L'eucharistie et l'église au moyen âge* (Paris: Aubier, 1949), p. 56.
[14] B. Cooke, *The Distancing of God: the Ambiguity of Symbol in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), p. 77, quoting Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discourses* 1, 2.
[15] Cooke, *Distancing of God*, p. 78, commenting on Gregory, *Discourses* 30, 17.

in its original meaning, the term 'sacrament' can be synonymous with 'mystery'; at any rate the terms involve no opposition to each other. In the language of the early Church the two expressions were used in a parallel sense. The Latin Fathers regularly use the word *sacramentum* as equivalent to the Greek μυστήριον. The difference...that *sacramentum* connotes something visible, μυστήριον something invisible or hidden, does not originally appear.[16]

This too fails to appreciate the complexity and, more positively, the sophisticated richness arising from the interplay between *sacramentum* and the *Latinized* term *mysterium* as distinct from the Greek original. It was no lazy borrowing of a Greek word nor automatic assimilation of its meanings. The fact that Latin acquires a distinct loan-word clearly arising directly from the Greek term suggests a more nuanced picture than Scheeben, and many after him, admit.

*Sacramentum* has its origins not primarily in Roman religion but as a military word for the oath sworn on enlisting. It had no technical meaning in mystery cults,[17] nor did Greek have, during the era of Christian prose, a specific word which corresponds to the theological developments of the Latin *sacramentum.*[18] The normal Greek term (classical and biblical) for an oath in a variety of contexts, *horkos*, (from which the verb *epiorkeō* is derived in Matthew 5.33-7) and the alternative verb *omnymi* (used in James 5.12) or sometimes *omnyō,* did not acquire a specifically religious use, although they may have occurred in reference to an initiate swearing not to reveal the mysteries to the uninitiated. A political usage was more common: *synōmotai* are conspirators because they have 'sworn together.'[19] The emergence of *sacramentum* as a Christian term 'fitted the idea of *milita Christi*', on account of its original meaning, but in suggesting this probability we must also note with Nock its 'wide range of meaning, and in seeking to understand its use by Christian writers we must not try to press any one sense.'[20]

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[16] Scheeben, *Mysteries*, p. 558.
[17] On this last point Mohrmann, '*Sacramentum*', p. 146.
[18] J. de Ghellinck, E. de Baecker, J. Poukens, G. Lebacqz, *Pour l'histoire du mot "Sacramentum"*, vol. 1 (Louvain: 1924), p. 246.
[19] I am grateful to Professor P.J. Rhodes for information and comment on this point.
[20] Nock, 'Hellenistic Mysteries,' p. 209 and notes.

Lechner Eisenhofer, placing the matter in a specific context of liturgical origins and development, seeks to narrow the use as it emerged in Christian writing to a direct connection between military enlistment and baptism. He defines the original meanings of *sacramentum* in the wider context of Roman law, not exclusively military in nature, wherein *sacratio* is a self-execration at the end of an oath, and *sacramentum* is 'a sum of money deposited by the plaintiff in a sacred place...if he lost his case [it] became forfeit to the temple, that is, to the God'. In a specifically military context, *sacramentum* is 'a religious dedication with military consequences.' Eisenhofer adds an interesting coda which claims a direct link with mystery religions, in which may be the associational origins of the *mysterium-sacramentum* relationship:

> Occasionally, as in Livy, this military consecration was already put on a par with the Mysteries [and more precisely with] the Mysteries of Bacchus.

For Eisenhofer this indicates that 'the equation of *mysterium* with *sacramentum*' was 'thus foreshadowed in classical times' and later picked up in Christian writing.[21] He argues that in Latin translations of scripture before Tertullian, the Greek *mysterion* and *mysteria* were 'almost always rendered by *sacramentum* and *sacramenta*'. Tertullian first uses *sacramentum* in its military oath sense, as do Cyprian (d. 258) and Arnobius (d. after 305), 'all three comparing the entry into the Christian Faith by means of Baptism with enlistment in the *Militia Christi*.'[22] Eisenhofer therefore wants to suggest a more specific link with emerging sacramental practice in the third century than Nock. However, he goes on to argue that in the fourth century, *sacramentum* 'reverted to its original meaning and thereby regained the richer content which clung to the term *mysterium*, even after its Christianisation.' Eisenhofer's purpose as a historian of the Roman liturgy is to show how the two words became associated with the eucharist, quoting Cyprian's description of the Eucharist as *dominicae passionis et nostrae redemptionis sacramentum*,[23] and concluding:

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[21] L. Eisenhofer, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, 6th edition [Freiburg: Herder, 1953], E.T. (Freiburg & Edinburgh: Nelson, 1961), p. 335.
[22] Eisenhofer, pp. 335-56.
[23] Cyprian, *Ep*. 63, 14: Eisenhofer, p. 336.

> Thus even the linguistic association shows the profound connection between Mass, the *mysterium* in the special sense, and 'sacrament' in its present-day narrower meaning.[24]

The desire to link *mysterium* with the eucharist at as early a date as possible is the consequence of his earlier argument in the same work that the eucharist is a 'mystery rite'. In this he associates himself with the thought of Casel and his disciple Neunheuser which saw pre-Christian classical religion as a *vorschule Christi*.[25] Eisenhofer therefore claims that in ancient Rome and Greece

> a *mysterium* was the symbolic cult re-presentation of the deeds and sufferings, and the death and resurrection of the gods and heroes of the fertility cults.[26]

In this way he attempts to solve the question of the *mysterium-sacramentum* relationship in terms of the origins of the Eucharist, but the more cautious, less specific approach of Nock is to be preferred, and indeed is vindicated by the wide use of *mysterium* in the later texts studied here, admittedly many of them used in the celebration of the Eucharist, but not always referring exclusively *to* the Eucharist itself, and certainly not narrowing the issue to the sacrifice. The fact that Eisenhofer does this is surely a reading-back from a scholastically oriented theology of mid twentieth-century Catholicism, in this case moderately excited, not repelled, by the relatively radical suggestions of Casel about hitherto relatively static notions of sacrifice and presence.

Eisenhofer does suggest an important line of enquiry, however, in that he seeks to show how *sacramentum* and *mysterium* are interrelated but not identical.

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[24] Eisenhofer, p. 336.
[25] See Chapter 1.
[26] Eisenhofer, p. 251. The use of the term 're-presentation' is a clue to the fact that the argument unfolds in connection with the notion of Eucharistic sacrifice and a supposed difference in understanding of *mysterium* between east and west. Christianity used *mysterium*, says Eisenhofer, in 'an analogous but basically different sense, which largely stripped it of its naturalistic meaning in order to meet the danger of a Hellenistic interpretation of the Christian notion of sacrifice. The Christian mystery is an objective and real commemoration (anamnesis) of, and thanksgiving for, the redemptive death and work of the now exalted Lord.' It has been mostly 'the [Christian] Greek Orient that has applied the mystery idea to the sacrificial meal, while the West…adopted it with greater reserve, diluting it and depriving it of its colour – a frequent and even everyday phenomenon is the migration of a word or idea from its original sphere into another. Nevertheless, the sound kernel of the mystery-idea has even in the West stimulated theological thought regarding the nature of the Sacrifice of the Mass in relation to that of the Cross' (pp. 251-52). This is largely to restate the commonplace about western and eastern approaches to mystery which the present study seeks to challenge.

While it may be so that *sacramentum vel mysterium* is common in assumption and actual usage before Isidore's definition of *sacramentum*, and that the equivalence of the terms[27] from this period onwards is often accepted without question, yet we may wonder if there were in fact reasons why a composer of euchological texts or a writer of catechetical or apologetic material would choose one in preference to the other, especially as they are distinctly different in origin. The answer lies in the requirements of a specific context, as Eisenhofer suggests, but the context in which the words appear may itself *allow* the interchangeability of meaning. As an example of this de Lubac identifies a phrase of Hilary of Poitiers (c.315-367): *ut et sacramentum nativitatis, et mysterium assumpti corporis manifestavet*.[28] Lucchesi examines the use of both words in early and later texts (including the Sacramentary of Verona, on which see Chapter 6), noting the difficulty of establishing why one or the other is used, and observes as an example that Ambrose writes the *De Mysteriis* to 'men of letters' (*per i letterati*) and the *De Sacramentis* to 'the people' (*al popolo*). Why should there be a difference? Lucchesi concludes that in view of the common use of the terms in liturgical texts any distinction can only be made with reference to the specific context.[29] However, it is possible and useful to ponder the relationship a little further, considering in particular the work of de Ghellinck, Mohrmann and Loi.[30]

De Ghellinck and his collaborators in an exercise in traditional philology, argue for a more nuanced relationship than simple equivalence, noting with some force that translators have made 'abusive use' of this for reasons of apparent convenience.[31] *Mysterium* would be insufficient, for instance, to convey what *sacramentum* does in the *De Divinis Institutionibus* of Lactantius (c.240-c.320), which attempts to dismiss pagan philosophy and assert *sacramentum verae*

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[27] Augustine uses them interchangeably, argues De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 56. The same is implied by R.A. Markus, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1996), p. 142.
[28] De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 55 and n. 70: Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, I.9, c. 55 (PL 10, 326B).
[29] D. Giovanni Lucchesi, *Mysterium Fidei: Il Testo della Consacrazione Eucaristica nel Canone Romano*, Biblioteca Cardinale Gaetano Cicognani 4 (Faenza: Stab. Grafico Fratelli Lega, 1959), pp. 79-88.
[30] J. de Ghellinck, *Histoire du Mot*; Mohrmann, *'Sacramentum'*; V. Loi, 'Il termine "Mysterium" nella letteratura Latina Cristiana Prenicena', *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965), 210-232; 20 (1966), 25-44.
[31] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 379 (index, s.v. 'Mystère').

*religionis...cum sit veritas revelata divinitus.*[32] It is therefore not enough to translate *sacramentum* as 'mystery', as some have erroneously done.[33] De Ghellinck concludes: 'le terme *mystère* est insuffisant pour rendre l'idée que l'auteur a voulu exprimer...il la fausse en ne donnant qu'un aspect en somme secondaire, de la réalité complex que désigne le mot *sacramentum*.' *Sacramentum* here seems to be the more sophisticated word, which means 'a body of revealed doctrine - in opposition to the pagan philosophers - accessible only to those who have learned it, not only by their intelligence, but by the direct revelation of God, transmitted from age to age.'[34] Therefore, if we follow de Ghellinck correctly, Lactantius, who uses *sacramentum* as an important element in his theology of revelation,[35] is arguing against a purely intellectual or rational apprehension of religious doctrine - with which compare the Deist approach of the seventeenth century[36] - and it is this that distinguishes Christianity from pagan philosophy and shows it to be the true religion.[37] *Sacramentum* is the word needed here because it implies the process as well as the content: God acting to reveal something of his nature, of which the outward sign is the resulting belief of the Christian. The *mysterium*, if it were used, would be the hidden truth so revealed; the *sacramentum* is here what might be called the 'truth-in-revelation' in a dynamic, active sense. Of course, it may also betray a desire to avoid mystery terminology at this third-century juncture, and yet de Ghellinck's analysis is attractive in that it insists on a distinct separation of meaning between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. While Lactantius sometimes multiplies synonyms in order to explain the same idea, and the two words *sacramentum* and *arcanum* (as a more plausible synonym of *mysterium* in de Ghellinck's view) share many common points of meaning, this is finite:

> The *sacramentum* contains hidden truths. Mysteriously, it only has that which God has been pleased to reveal in it: it is even the mystery, the secret *par excellence*. It is what explains when one may, in certain passages, replace one word by another, *arcanum* or *mysterium* by *sacramentum*, or vice-versa. But only in certain passages is *mysterium* the

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[32] Ibid., pp. 247-48, quoting Lactantius, *De divinis institutionibus*, I, 1 (*PL* 6, 117B-118A).
[33] Ibid., p. 254 and n. 2, where some examples of incorrect assumed synonymity are given.
[34] Ibid., p. 248. This and subsequent quotations from de Ghellinck are my own translation.
[35] Ibid., p. 251.
[36] See Chapter 4.
[37] See Chapter 4 and Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy,* particularly on Clement of Alexandria.

> equivalent of *sacramentum*, that is when the latter is not used in its fullness, when it only indicates *one* of its most characteristic aspects. *Sacramentum* does not conceal *mysterium*, it goes beyond it, it holds all the content of revelation, all the dogmas of the true religion.[38]

This is rather different to de Lubac's apparently less sophisticated view, identified by him in later writers including Paschasius Radbertus, that 'le *sacramentum* jouerait donc plutôt le rôle de contenant, d'enveloppe par rapport au *mysterium* que se cache en lui.'[39] However attractive this is as a potential neat solution, more realistic overall is the 'rapport complexe' most recently suggested by Solignac, who believes the matter to be 'far from settled despite diverse attempts at clarification.'[40]

De Ghellinck's collaborator de Baecker studies Tertullian, and argues that here, *mysterium* is the driving force in the relationship. Commenting on a passage beginning *et utique sacramentum passionis ipsius figurari praedicationibus oportuerat,* he asks why the passion of Christ should here be synonymous with a *mysterium*, and concludes 'because of the apparent disproportionality between the effects and their cause...has it not been announced in figures, to avoid the scandal that a plain prophecy would not have failed to cause, and to give nourishment to faith?'[41] Furthermore:

> In [such] uses *sacramenta* are *mysteria* because it is not possible to understand them without the help of divine grace; because their effects seem disproportionate to their cause, or that they are announced in figures. The idea of mystery, an accessory up to now in the concept of *sacramentum*, has there taken the first place; the *active* etymological sense has completely disappeared to make way for the *passive* sense. The total concept of *sacramentum* is here that of *mysterium sacrum, res sacra et mysteriosa*.[42]

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[38] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, pp. 255-56.
[39] De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 58 and nn. 83, 84. See Chapter 9 on the so-called 'controversy' between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus.
[40] A. Solignac, 'Mystère', col. 1863, my translation.
[41] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 130: Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeis* 10, 200-206 (PL 2, 626A).
[42] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 134.

De Ghellinck's analysis of the vocabulary of Tertullian reveals that *sacramentum* in its proposed *mysterium* sense occurs only about fifty times, whereas the other eighty-four are in the originally Roman military and civil sense of oath or pledge. Therefore we can conclude that it is not enough to regard *mysterium* and *sacramentum* as identical; they must be nuanced in relation to their context. Indeed as de Ghellinck notes there is at least one instance of Tertullian employing the terms more straightforwardly to distinguish between Christian and pagan religion, for instance his opposition of *sacramentum divinorum* to *idolorum mysteriis*.[43] A greater simplicity, this time in favour of synonymity, appears also to be the case, as identified by Poukens, although the attribution of authorship to Cyprian is now agreed to be false:

> Dedit pignus spiritus sancti gratiam credentibus in passione et resurrectione sua. In quo spiritu ipse Dominus volentibus, id est totis viribus quaerentibus servis suis revelat alta mysteria et manifestat obscura sacramenta.[44]

Nevertheless, the same work makes interesting use of *sacramentum* as a figure of prophecy:

> Hic est Christus Iesus, qui secundum carnem Abrahae fuit filius, in cuius mysterio centenario patri natus Isaac super humerus suos portat lignum...et ideo Abraham qui a Deo Domino dictus est propheta, cum manifeste sciret in sacramento Christi centenario sibi natum filium.[45]

Poukens concludes that a good explanation of the meaning of *sacramentum* in this and similar examples is given by Cyprian himself, namely *futurorum*

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[43] Ibid., pp. 99-100, quoting Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum.*, 40 (PL 2, 54A).
[44] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 170, quoting *De Pascha computus*, 1 (PL 4, 942A). Further examples from Cyprian and Novatian are given at pp. 170-74 and 176-83. The attribution of the *De Pascha computus* to Cyprian has later been seen to be false, for which see Loi, 'Il termine ''mysterium'', part 1, p. 223 and n. 61; also *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, ed. E. Dekkers & A. Gaar, 3rd edition (Steenbrugis: Brepols, 1995), p. 726 no. 2276 and references therein. This may in turn render erroneous Poukens' suggestion of simplicity in the genuine works of Cyprian. However, it is the pseudo-Cyprianic author of *De singularitate clericorum* who appears to supply the first use in Christian writing of pagan religious terminology in reference to a Christian rite, the Eucharist, for example *dum celebrantur sancta mysteria*. (c. 14, quoted by Loi, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-25). We may reflect that this is the root of centuries of use of the phrase 'the Holy Mysteries' for the Eucharist, not least in the Book of Common Prayer, perhaps an unlikely document in which to expect to find pre-Christian resonances.
[45] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 175: *De Pascha computus*, 10 (PL 4, 954A).

*praefiguratione*.[46] Loi argues that this use, 'con valore...di figura profetica', continues in the fourth century.[47] On this basis we may say that the *mysterium* is the future itself, the content of the prophecy. It retains its hiddenness in God, and the initiative for and the timing of revelation remains with God. In this sense Christ is the *mysterium*, the future to which the *sacramentum* points. This interpretation is close to de Lubac's suggestion of sacrament as 'envelope' of mystery.

De Ghellinck's discussion of the Latin translator of Irenaeus (c.130-c.200) poses further questions in that he

> uses *sacramenta*, always in the plural, in the sense of 'mysteries', that is to say 'mysterious things, secret doctrines, mysterious doctrines', that which strongly distances it from the profane usage of the word transmitted by classical authors.[48]

It is not wholly evident that this meaning does in fact create the required distance from 'classical authors', unless the simple avoidance of *mysterium* is meant. Earlier, though, de Ghellinck himself identifies examples of the use of *mysterium* for Christian teachings which apparently 'cannot be conveyed by [*mysterion*] which the translator renders by its equivalent Latin word *mysterium* and sometimes by *sacramentum*...did he find it easier to translate verbally [*mysterion*] by *mysterium*, contrary to the convention which characterises the ancient African translations of the Bible?'[49]

Mohrmann states in her contribution to 'the problem of the equivalence of *mysterion-sacramentum*' that Tertullian does sometimes use *sacramentum* for *mysterium*, but she believes that this was not maintained in Latin Christianity since the Christian usage of *sacramentum* does not begin with Tertullian but rather reflects contemporary language.[50] For her, *sacramentum* is often used in

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[46] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 178: Cyprian, *Epistolae* lxix, 14 (PL 3, 149B).
[47] Loi, 'Il termine 'Mysterium'', p art 1, p. 220.
[48] De Ghellinck, *Histoire*, p. 284.
[49] Ibid., pp. 277-78. Loi, 'Il termine 'Mysterium'' p. 216 confirms this, adding that Italian versions of the Latin Bible prefer *mysterium:* see H.F. von Soden, *Das lateinische Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians nach Bibelhandschriften und Väterzeugnisse*, Texte und Untersuchungen 33 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1909), pp. 192, 215.
[50] Mohrmann, '*Sacramentum*', pp. 141-43. Mohrmann's assertion that Christian terminology

preference to *mysterium* precisely because it avoids pagan connotations, for instance in Tertullian's contrast of *sacramenta divina* and *idolorum mysteria*. This would be in accordance with his rejection of philosophy since 'no image it used was suitable for expounding Christian doctrine.'[51] Later, however, the difficult question is 'why [subsequently] *sacramentum* has been adopted as equivalent of *mysterium*.'[52] Mohrmann does not see an answer in the Latin translation of scripture, which is not etymological but in terms of current language. Substitution of one word in exchange for the other does not happen because in *sacramentum* the 'holy' element (*sacer*) is primary, whereas in *mysterium* it is the theological and abstract sense which prevails. So the Bible is not the basis for what Mohrmann calls 'la terminologie flottante',[53] but rather the common use of the terms among second-century Christians which led to their gradual association. However, she is confident in the end that, as subsequent history shows, *sacramentum* was never completely suited to conveying a sense of the purely theological and abstract, and thus never entirely supplanted *mysterium*. Indeed for her it may have been the case that *sacramentum* was intended to be a word to associate with ritual action in order to avoid pagan connotations.[54] What Mohrmann does not find, it seems, is any sense of *mysterium* as a dynamic term relating to either ritual or divine action. In Novatian, for both the incarnation and revelation *sacramentum* is used where *mysterium* might have been expected.[55]

In Ambrose, varying meanings are attached to both terms. Indeed they form part of a wider, rich, overlapping sacramental vocabulary.[56] This includes

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takes common usage as its starting point is interesting given the debate about appropriate styles of liturgical language in the vernacular and the claims of those who favour forms no longer in current everyday usage, for example the language of the Book of Common Prayer. In what sense is this 'vernacular'?

[51] Hamilton, 'Language of Mystery', pp. 492-93, making reference to A. Labhardt, 'Tertullien et la philosophie, ou la recherche d'une position pure', *Museum Helveticum* 7 (1950), 159-80. See also L. Bouyer, *The Invisible Father* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999; original French edition *Le Père Invisible*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), for whom Tertullian among other Christian apologists 'repulsed Hellenist philosophy with horror' (p. 208).

[52] Mohrmann, '*Sacramentum*' p. 144; Tertullian, *De praescriptione*, 40.

[53] Elsewhere she attributes 'une grande plasticité dont le sens exact est parfois difficile à définir' to *sacramentum*: 'Les origines de la latinité chrétienne à Rome', *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949), 67-106, 162-82 (p. 170).

[54] C. Mohrmann, 'Les emprunts grecs dans la latinité chrétienne', *Vigiliae Christianae* 4 (1950), 193-211 (p. 197).

[55] Mohrmann, 'Les origines', pp. 170-71.

[56] For the sacramental vocabulary of Ambrose see Francesconi, *Storia e Simbolo*.

*figura, umbra, forma, typus, imago, species* and *similitudo* as well as *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. As Francesconi remarks, this richness is itself indicative that for Ambrose, 'God is at work *in mysterio*...we must move beyond figures, beyond external signs, and read the "deeper meaning" hidden in events. Openness and docility to God at work *in mysterio* is...a characteristic of faith. Meanwhile, every event of human history that is told in the scriptures can itself be, in Ambrose's eyes, a mystery pregnant with the divine plan for the human race.'[57] In Ambrose, therefore, '*sacramentum* emphasises more the external element that manifests the interior *mysterium*...the difference is suggested by the occasional use of the two words in combination (*mysterii sacramentum*)', for example in *De Mysteriis* 2.[58] Nocent, too, suggests that in Ambrose a specific distinction can be identified, so that *sacramentum* tends to mean 'what is seen', and *mysterium* its content, or interior reality: 'the *sacramenta* introduce us to the *mysteria* and, in turn, the *mysteria* make us understand the outer sign, the *sacramentum*.'[59] This may be compared with the 'present' and 'future' model discussed above in relation to Cyprian. Ambrose prefers a contrast between figure and fullness of truth. In his commentary on the gospel of Luke, too, Ambrose remarks: *sacramentum in figura ante praecessit, nunc autem plenum in veritate mysterium est*. In the opinion of de Lubac this shows both the distinctiveness and the complementarity of *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, although this must not be exaggerated. The difference is often one of nuance and is dependent on context. Nevertheless, here *mysterium* has the idea of depth and obscurity and also of type or symbol, perhaps of both passive and active in creative tension, whereas a *sacramentum* contains what it reveals and that of which it is a sign.[60] Here is de Lubac's 'envelope' once again, but it is probable in the light of the other scholarship we have surveyed that Ambrose, for one, sees the distinction in terms of a sacramental, interilluminative dialogue, whereby

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[57] Ibid., p. 35, quoted in Mazza, *Mystagogy*, p. 15; see Mazza, pp. 16-22 for a summary of Francesconi's conclusions with regard to the other terms.

[58] Francesconi, *Storia*, p. 74, quoted Mazza, p. 22, where is also noted Botte's commentary in the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of the *De Mysteriis,* that '*mysteria* are here distinguished from *sacramenta*. The latter are the sacred rites, the former the deeper meaning of the scriptures.' (p. 156 n. 2).

[59] A. Nocent, 'Sacraments', in *Encyclopaedia of the Early Church*, vol. ii, 749-51 (p. 750); Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, 2. That Ambrose appreciated the difference is surely most obviously indicated by the fact that he is the author of separate treatises entitled *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*.

[60] Ambrose, *In Lucam,* 1.vii, c. 96 (PL 54, 152A); de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 58.

*mysterium* and *sacramentum* depend on one another for their interpretation. De Lubac gives an example from Alger of Liège (d. 1131) as an example of the results by the high middle ages of a proposed 'constant interaction' of the terms:

> Sacramentum et mysterium in hoc differunt, quia sacramentum signum est visibile aliquid significans, mysterium vero aliquid occultum ab eo significatum. Alterum tamen pro altero ponitur...ut sit mysterium occultans et occultum, et sacramentum signans et signatum.[61]

When the number of the sacraments came to be fixed in the west, the general term for any of the seven is *sacramentum*, and hardly ever *mysterium*, unlike in the Christian east where *mysterion* continues to be the word, although there are interesting and unexpected exceptions.[62] *Mysterium* lends itself to much wider, less specific usage in the liturgy and in sacramental theology, as well as in systematics and philosophical theology. In fact, as Loi argues, the Christian literature of the pre-Nicene period shows the use of *mysterium* to be richer and more diverse than that of *sacramentum*, especially in Lactantius and Hilary of Poitiers.[63] The simple equivalence assumed by some modern liturgical and sacramental theological writing is not a sufficient conclusion; consequently it is possible to isolate distinct concepts of mystery within and between these contexts and in relation to the others already identified.

One way of shedding further light on the matter is, like Francesconi, to pay particular attention to instances where *mysterium* and *sacramentum* appear in the same sentence. Developments in information technology now make possible a survey of a great number and variety of western theological writing over a long period with a rapidity and sophistication that was not available to de Ghellinck

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[61] Alger of Liège, *De sacramentis*, 1.i, c. 5 (PL 180, 753B); de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum.*, pp. 59-60.

[62] These include a post-Reformation Anglican example, that of Bishop Thomas Deacon (1697-1753), whose catechism includes: 'What are the sacraments called besides? Mysteries....Are Baptism and the Eucharist Mysteries? Yes....Are Sacraments then and Mysteries the same? Yes: both those words have the same signification in ecclesiastical language.' Quoted in W.J. Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Alcuin Club Collections 11 (London: SPCK, 1958), pp. 198-99.

[63] Loi, 'Il termine 'Mysterium'', part 1, pp. 210-11. Hilary in particular uses *mysterium* 'con grande frequenza e con notevole varietà e ricchezza di significati.' (p. 211). Loi's detailed analysis of Lactantius' use of *mysterium* is at pp. 227-32 and part 2, pp. 25-26.

and other scholars mentioned in the foregoing discussion. The electronic edition of the *Corpus Christianorum* is accompanied by a search apparatus that permits this information to be extracted and examined. Thus a search for the roots *myster-* and *sacrament-* appearing in single sentences produces the following results, omitting those of post tenth-century date:

**TABLE: Occurrences of *Mysterium* and *Sacramentum* in the same sentence in pre-1000 texts.**

| Century | Writer | Forms used |
|---|---|---|
| 1st – 2nd | 'Flavius Josephus' (*see point 2 below)* | M of Ss |
| 4th of Ss | Ambrose | S of M Ss of Mm S of Mm Mm |
| | Ambrosiaster | S of M(3) M of S |
| | Chromatius of Aquileia | S of M(2) |
| | Hilary of Poitiers | S of M M of S M of Ss |
| 4th – 5th | Paulinus of Nola | Ss of M |
| | Maximus of Turin | Mm of Ss |
| | John Cassian | S of M(2) |
| 5th | Orosius | Mm of Ss |
| 6th | Cassiodorus | Ss of M(3) |
| ?6th | Disciple of Cassiodorus | S of M |
| 6th- 7th | Isidore of Seville | Ss of Mm M of S |
| 8th | Bede | M of S |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9th | Hrabanus Maurus | S of M |
| | Paschasius Radbertus | S of M(3) Ss of M(5) Ss of Mm M of S(2) Mm of SS |
| | Sedulius Scotus | S of M(2) Ss of Mm |

| Key: | **Abbreviation** | **Form** | **Number of occurrences** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | M of S | Mystery of sacrament | 6 |
| | M of Ss | Mystery of sacraments | 2 |
| | Mm of S | Mysteries of sacrament | (NOT USED) |
| | Mm of Ss | Mysteries of sacraments | 4 |
| | | | Total: 12 |
| | S of M | Sacrament of mystery | 16 |
| | S of Mm | Sacrament of mysteries | 2 |
| | Ss of M | Sacraments of mystery | 9 |
| | Ss of Mm | Sacraments of mysteries | 3 |
| | | | Total: 30 |

Data Sources:

(a) All instances in the table and in the discussion below ('Commentary' and 'Context') are from the fully searchable *CETEDOC Library of Latin Texts* e-database, of which the 4th edition (*CLCLT-4*) was used to produce this table.[64] It is argued that the scope of this ongoing project is sufficient to make such a table meaningful and as fully representative of the period as possible.

(b) The e-database version of the *Monumenta Germanica Historica* was also consulted, but produced only three instances of the combination of terms,

[64] Edition *CLCLT-5* is now available.

all in the *Epistolae* of Peter Damian and thus outside the period in question.

**Commentary**

1. There is no single explanation for the variations this information reveals. This in itself suggests a sophistication, unwitting or otherwise on the part of the authors, in the use of this vocabulary, and the very existence of the words in combination shows that it is not sufficient to treat them as synonymous.

2. In all these examples, *mysterium* and *sacramentum* always relate to one another in some way, such that one is the complement of the other in the form '*x* of *y*', suggesting complementary meanings, and, arising from the combination, an overall amplification of meaning in the context. There are no examples of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* that are not grammatically dependent on each other, except for a single instance of a sentence where a combination occurs, *and* two subsequent uses of *mysterium* (Maximus of Turin).

3. There is but a single instance in texts dating from before the fourth century. This one example is identified in *CLCLT-4* as from Josephus. However, it is attributed to 'Hegesippus' (*sec. transl. et retract. Hegesippi - Historiae libri V*). Although *CLCLT-4* retains a first- to second-century date, this attribution would in fact make it a much later text, since it is from a non-identical version of Josephus' *Jewish War*, of which the author is usually named 'Hegesippus', a corruption of 'Josephus'. It has also been thought by some to be by Ambrose, although this is not now accepted. Hence Studer calls the author 'Pseudo-Hegesippus', and describes this text as 'a free translation of Flavius Josephus's *De bello iudaico* which is attributed in the MSS to Ambrose. Compiled in the 4th or 5th c. in a careful style.'[65] Therefore it properly

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[65] B. Studer, 'Ps.-Hegesippus', in *Encyclopaedia of the Early Church,* vol. 1, p. 371.

belongs to the later body of fourth-century evidence, and so cannot be admitted in support of a much earlier use of mystery-language. The lack of an example of the combination before the fourth century supports the general view that mystery language was relatively uncommon in that period, and suggests that it is only in the fourth century and after that *mysterium* is used with particular sophistication, of which its combination with *sacramentum* is important evidence.

4. The greatest variety of combinations occurs in the early period, i.e. in the fourth to fifth centuries, which may indicate that a relatively clear distinction of meanings had not yet emerged.

5. Some writers are particularly fond of the combination, and again if this is suggested by the use of different combinations as well as overall total of instances of both words in the same phrase, the early period is richer. However:

6. Between the fifth century and the ninth, there are in general fewer examples of use, until the prominent usage of Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth, who makes the most use of the form and in the greatest number of variants, although with a preference for the 'sacrament of mystery' form, singular and plural. This may suggest a particular affinity for the possibilities of the combination of terms, a particular skill in their usage, and an especial interest in the concepts which lie behind them.

7. Writers who make little or no use of a combination of this type nevertheless often make extensive use of the terms separately. For example Bede, whose single use of a combination appears in the table, uses *mysterium* on 537 distinct occasions, and *sacramentum* 459 times.[66] On the evidence of the database, Alcuin makes no use at all of the combination in his writings, and yet in his *Commentarius in Iohannem*

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[66] Source: *CLCLT-4*.

alone makes independent use of *mysterium* 48 times and of *sacramentum* 44 times.[67]

8. Given the variety of forms within the limits noted, complete interchangeability might be assumed, that is *mysterium* and *sacramentum* are the same thing. This cannot be the case, since combination occurs because one term is being used to amplify the other adjectivally: 'the mystery of the sacrament' indicates that a 'sacrament' can have 'mystery' as its descriptor, and yet 'the sacrament of the mystery' indicates that a 'mystery' can have 'sacrament' as its descriptor. This means that when used in combination they cannot be synonyms because the one is effectively described or amplified by the other.

9. If the terms have distinct meanings, consequently there remains the question of why seemingly contradictory combinations occur: 'mystery of the sacrament', 'sacrament of the mystery', etc. The only possible solution is that the meaning of the combination depends on the intentions and abilities of the author and the context in which it is used.

10. If the terms can be distinguished when in combination, there are strong grounds for supposing them to be used discriminatingly when alone, e.g., *mysterium* is used because *sacramentum* (nor any other word) is not appropriate. Again, it is the context which decides the matter.

11. The context will also show whether either word or both words take a definite or indefinite article, or in some cases a possessive pronoun: this is one way in which a more precise meaning can be posited in each case.

12. The greater number of examples (30) are of the 'sacrament of mystery' form, as opposed to eleven of the 'mystery of sacrament' form. Purely on the grounds of this majority, it could be suggested that the 'sacrament of mystery' form is the more 'correct', or the more significant because more

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[67] Ibid.

correct. If so, it is implied that a pre-existing *mysterium* can have a *sacramentum* as a means of further describing what it is or how it functions. For example, this would lend weight to an argument that sacrament is the visible means by which mystery is encountered, but it would not explain the meaning of the 'mystery of sacrament' forms, which by the same grammatical argument would seem to indicate that it is sacrament which is further described by mystery.

13. None of the above dismisses the possibility of fluid meanings, which may mean that the terms *appear* indistinguishable in certain contexts, indeed the evidence rather suggests fluidity as opposed to precision. It is also possible that at least some authors *did* use the terms indiscriminately, because they *believed them to be* synonymous, because they wished for a richer written style, or even because they were simply not terribly good writers and did not use words accurately. None of these can finally be proven, but the possibility of all remains.

**Context**

If the context in each case is what clarifies the meaning, what do the contexts of these examples tell us? By context we can understand, firstly, the genre of writing to which each example belongs. Commentary on scripture is the largest single group, with examples in commentaries on books of both Old and New Testaments. Other genres include treatises on doctrinal subjects (e.g. the *De Trinitate* of Hilary of Poitiers, the *In Honorem Sanctae Crucis* of Hrabanus Maurus), and letters (An *Epistola* of Paulinus of Nola).

The specific context of the *mysterium-sacramentum* combinations in several of the commentaries on scripture is discussion of the advent of Christ and the sacraments of the Christian faith, whether in typological or prophetic terms in OT texts, the imminence or recent reality of the event itself in the Gospels, or subsequent theological reflection on it in the Pauline letters. In all these *mysterium-sacramentum* is used. Thus we find Ambrose in the *Apologia Prophetae David* (c. 12, 58) speaking of David's 'seeing by a spirit of prophecy'

(*spiritu prophetico uidit*) the 'sacraments of the heavenly mysteries' (*mysteriorum sacramenta caelestium*). Specifically, the text goes on to say, 'he foresaw the sacrament of baptism' (*praevidit baptismatis sacramentum*). Here the *mysteria* are heavenly, by implication hidden: he sees not the *mysteria* themselves, but can and does 'see' their *sacramenta*. Therefore in this context a sacrament is something that can be humanly grasped in order to gain access to a mystery which remains hidden, but the power of which is nevertheless encountered. This paragraph of the *Apologia* was also quoted by Casel in his *Mystery of Christian Worship*: 'St Ambrose writes: "I find you in your mysteries"'.[68] Ironically in the original text of Ambrose the phrase reads *te tuis invenio sacramentis*, which precisely reveals the complexity of the issue with which we are dealing: it is translated as if *sacramentum* is synonymous with *mysterium*, whereas the original context uses both words which, the combination example we have identified clearly indicates, have different meanings *in this context*. It also thereby calls into question Casel's use of the term 'mystery', and suggests that he (and his translator) believed the exchange of the two terms to be of little consequence. This, inevitably, makes one wonder if Casel's detractors (discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis) have a point, since it calls into question the accuracy of his handling of texts that are of key significance in his argument for *Mysterienlehre*. 'I find you in your mysteries' is one such text. This, moreover, further justifies the stance of this present work, which deliberately seeks to go beyond and behind Casel (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 9). Nevertheless, elsewhere Ambrose himself seems to 'reverse the polarity', as it were, when he says 'you have spoken of the mysteries of your sacraments, O Lord' (*Explanatio Psalmorum* 12 [on Psalm 38]), unless mystery is used here in a less specific sense and simply indicates a suitable degree of awe in respect of the sacraments. This, indeed, may explain other instances where the combination is this way round, but the other possibilities already discussed in the Commentary we have given above are equally valid – anything from deliberate contrast to mere carelessness. Given Ambrose's care elsewhere, for instance in paragraph 58 of the *Apologia*, and the fact of the existence of *De Mysteriis* and *De Sacramentis*

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[68] Casel, *Mystery*, p. 7 and n. 2.

as separate treatises, we would err on the side of sophistication rather than incompetence.

Further examples of the use of a *mysterium-sacramentum* combination in scriptural commentary make direct reference to Christ. The writer known as Ambrosiaster expresses it in different ways: as 'the sacrament of the mystery of God, which is Christ in the flesh' (*sacramentum mysterii Dei, quod est Christus in carne*)[69]; as 'the sacrament of the mystery of God, which is in Christ' (*quod in Christo est*)[70]; and, more obliquely, a reference to the opening of the gospel of John: 'the word which was in the beginning with God was God, so that the sacrament of the mystery of the eternal God, unknown for centuries and generations, God made to be believed…',[71] a clear if rather convoluted reference to the appearance in human form of Christ the Word. In all these examples, then, the sacrament is what makes visible the mystery: the incarnate Christ *is* the sacrament of the mystery of God. We may note here how suggestive this is of the notion of Christ as the primordial sacrament which was underscored in Catholic sacramental theology of the second half of the twentieth century by Schillebeeckx and others, and in the official documents of the Second Vatican Council. And yet Ambrosiaster can also appear to reverse the polarity: 'a mystery of the sacrament of God in Christ' (*mysterium sacramenti Dei in Christo*).[72] It can be argued that this effectively means 'the sacrament of God which is in Christ', and therefore 'which *is* Christ'. To account for this 'sacrament' being described as 'mystery', we may hazard the same lesser

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[69] *Commentarius in Pauli Epistulas ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Colossenses , ad Thessalonicenses, ad Timotheum, ad Titium, ad Philemonem (recensiones alpha et gamma): Ad Timotheum I*, commenting on I Tim. 3.16, 'Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh…' (RSV), where the mystery is identified directly with the incarnate Christ, that is *mysterion*, which is, as we have seen, translated as *sacramentum* in the Latin text. This would explain Ambrosiaster's use of *sacramentum* for Christ, but his use of *mysterium* for what the *sacramentum* represents is his development. It may be, of course, that he (and possibly other Latin writers) did this precisely because they were aware of the original Greek and were attempting to account for the presence of the two terms in Latin – a further argument, then, for sophistication and deliberate rich use of mystery language. It may therefore be that the use of *mysterium* in such a way by commentators on scripture had the effect of encouraging its wider use.

[70] *Commentarius in Pauli Epistulam ad Romanos (recensio gamma),* commenting on Rom. 3.20.

[71] *Quaestiones Ueteris et Noui Testamenti (Quaestiones numero CXXVII).*

[72] *Commentarius in Pauli Epistulas ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Colossenses , ad Thessalonicenses, ad Timotheum, ad Titium, ad Philemonem (recensiones alpha et gamma)*: *Ad Colossenses*, commenting on Col. 2.3: '[the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ,] in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2.2b-3, RSV).

adjectival function of *mysterium* which we suggested with regard to the same phenomenon in Ambrose.

Chromatius of Aquileia also uses the combination with reference to the incarnation in his Tract on Matthew: Joseph is told by an angel 'about the sacrament of the mystery of the heavens' (*de sacramento mysterii caelestis*),[73] and the incarnation is later called 'such a sacrament of the mystery' (*tanti sacramentum mysterii*).[74] Here the sense is the same as in Ambrose and Ambrosiaster: the sacrament is the means by which the mystery is encountered and, in the context of the birth of Jesus, by implication made present.

Also in the fourth-century group is Hilary of Poitiers, who uses the combination of terms three times in his treatise on the Trinity. In respect of these some translators have rendered *mysterium* in English as 'secret', and *sacramentum* as 'mystery'. For example, Hilary, discussing John 8.31-2, says

> Quod istud, rogo, sacramenti mysterium est? Deus in filio hominis glorificato glorificatum Deum glorificat in sese.[75]

which is rendered by Watson and Pullan as

> What, pray, is this secret mystery? God, in the glorified Son of Man, glorifies a glorified God in himself.[76]

Here, then, *sacramentum* is translated 'secret', and *mysterium* as 'mystery'. Elsewhere, however, Hilary comments on Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts:

> Tenuit autem beatus apostolus Paulus in hoc difficillimo ad humanam intelligentiam caelestium sacramentorum mysterio…[77]

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[73] *Tractatus in Mathaeum,* 3.
[74] Ibid., 3.
[75] *De Trinitate*, 9, 41.
[76] Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, in *St Hilary of Poitiers: Select Works*, trans. E.W. Watson, L. Pullan et al., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, vol. 9 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 40-233 (p. 168).
[77] *De Trinitate* 8, 31.

Watson and Pullan begin:

> Now the blessed Apostle Paul in revealing the secret of these heavenly mysteries, most difficult to human comprehension…[78]

Here, *mysterium* is translated 'secret', and *sacramentum* is 'mystery' (plural in the text). In this way a 'reversal of polarity' in the Latin is matched by another in English translation.

These two examples further reveal the confusion that has arisen concerning the two terms, and the assumptions that have accompanied their translation and interpretation. *Mysterion* can indeed mean 'secret' in the Greek, but the Latin *mysterium*, once loaned, cannot simply be assumed to have had this single possible meaning imported with it. Nevertheless, it may also give a clue to the interpretation of those occasions when 'mystery of sacrament' is used: if in these cases, *mysterium* is indeed intended to mean 'secret', then in these instances *sacramentum* could not be used in the same way as it is when it describes the means by which the *mysterium* is revealed. Yet lexicographers indicate that *sacramentum* in late Latin can indeed *also* mean 'secret': Lewis and Short, for example, give Tobit 12.7 in the Vulgate as an instance of this.[79] However, just as *mysterium* cannot automatically be assumed to mean 'secret' on every occasion, it follows that *sacramentum* cannot be so regarded either; and of course, where *sacramentum* might be understood as 'secret', in combination with *mysterium* where it is descriptive of it, the combination cannot anywhere mean 'the secret of the secret'. Once again, we are dependent on the context to make an informed decision about the correct understanding. Indeed, the fact that 'secret' is thought to be a possible meaning for *both* terms actually supports our argument for a distinction when they are used in combination, *because* a 'secret of a secret' stretches things too far. Therefore the range of possible meanings, the etymology and the emerging theological context must all be in view to begin to

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[78] 'On the Trinity', trans. Watson & Pullan, p. 146.

[79] *A Latin Dictionary founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, ed. C.T. Lewis & C. Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), s.v. 'sacramentum', II.1, p. 1612. The successor to Lewis & Short, *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G. Glare (Oxford: OUP, 1982), unlike its predecessor, does not include later Latin. For the Tobit text, see the previous section of the present chapter.

understand what is meant. The logic is, then, that neither can hasty assumptions be made about *single* uses of the terms, but that in each case the context will suggest possibilities. Furthermore, the issues surrounding *mysterium* and *sacramentum* actually serve to strengthen the argument about *mysterium*: in its combination with *sacramentum* is revealed a sophistication of use, not a rigid understanding or a status as poor relation of *sacramentum*. Moreover, the matter of translation into English is seen to be critical: the complexity suggested by the Latin needs to be reflected in English by a similarly rich vocabulary, and this must therefore apply to liturgical texts which seek to draw on the western tradition of liturgical development and sacramental theology. If *mysterium* and *sacramentum* are dealt with too hastily or superficially, an important dimension is neglected, and the possibilities of a rich liturgical language *in English* are surely diminished.

If *mysterium* is 'secret of sacrament' in at least some of the cases of 'reversed polarity' then the *sacramentum* becomes that which 'contains' the secret. Elsewhere, *mysterium* comes close to having this meaning, except that it is not necessarily the case that secrecy is the idea intended. In theological language a mystery is precisely *not* something that can be solved: a secret, once revealed, is no longer a secret, and is therefore 'solved'. If Christ is the *sacramentum* of the divine *mysterium*, it is not in order that the *mysterium* is diminished or exposed in its fullness – if it were, it would not be of God. However, this is not to say that some ancient writers may not have used the language of secrecy to make a point. They may have been particularly conscious of the secrecy which most certainly did surround the mystery cults, and perhaps, to their audience, the relationship of the seen Christ in the flesh to the unseen God did indeed seem like the relationship of solution to problem or of exposure to secret, an assumption which had to be contradicted. Therefore to understand *mysterium* as 'secret' in some cases, especially in the fourth-century examples, may in fact indicate a rich and significant polyvalence of language which *mysterium* and *sacramentum* represent: in other words an argument for sophistication rather than arbitrariness or carelessness. Could it not be that some authors aimed not to reproduce the vocabulary of the mystery religions *as understood by those religions*, but to take it and mould it in the service of the

Christian religion, where there were no 'secrets', and where the emphasis is not on secrecy but revelation? In this sense, *mysterium* is set free to serve as an indication of the unfathomable source of revelation, and therefore speaks of a proper reticence, an apophatic stance which of its nature does away with the deliberate, humanly fashioned obscurity of the mystery religions and instead embraces a confident trust in the unseen God, of whose unseen-ness in *mysterium* Christ the Lord is the *sacramentum*. Nothing of the unseen-ness, that-ness, or more-ness of the *mysterium* is diminished by the *sacramentum*, but neither can the *sacramentum* exist independently of it. Paradoxically what is seen draws its power and reality from what is unseen, an echo of Hebrews 11.1-3.

From the context of the fourth-century examples in Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, Chromatius and Hilary, then, it is possible to construct an argument which posits distinctive meanings *in context* for *mysterium* and *sacramentum* while at the same time accounting for 'changes of polarity' and allowing for a degree of polyvalence. Interpreted thus, these fourth-century examples would seem to support a claim for the emergence of a sacramental language in this period, a language which depended on and made sophisticated, rich use of mystery language that need not at all suggest improper adaptation of pagan forms. A question arises, however: if *sacramentum* is what enables sensible encounter with the reality of *mysterium*, can it not be argued that this effectively means that for the purposes of the encounter, and those who thus encounter it, the sacrament *is* the mystery? And might this close association be what leads to the effective equation and, for some, synonymity of the terms? If the association is so close, might not pointer and reality be easily and understandably fused? This relatively straightforward explanation might be all that is required, and yet it is clear that even if this contains some truth, the terms go on being used, at least sometimes, as if different, not least in their separate use as distinct from in the combinations discussed here. Once again, we continue to argue for a sophisticated and deliberate interplay, and in the parameters of this thesis for considerable sophistication in the use of *mysterium* alone.

Do later examples of the *mysterium-sacramentum* combination suggest anything different? In the period between the fourth and the ninth centuries, there

are examples of the combination in both *sacramentum-mysterium* and *mysterium-sacramentum* form which may suggest a growing fluidity of use, and yet, by the ninth century, the examples from Paschasius Radbertus would propose a settling down to the *sacramentum-mysterium* form on the whole. Whereas in the fourth-century group they are found almost exclusively in scriptural commentary, in the intervening period examples are found in a variety of genres. In the fourth- to fifth-century group is a letter of Paulinus of Nola, a sermon of Maximus, Bishop of Turin, and a treatise on the incarnation by John Cassian. The latter twice describes the incarnation itself as 'a sacrament of such (a) mystery'.[80] The application of *mysterium* to the incarnation is also found in the liturgical texts which will be considered in chapter 6. From the fifth century to the ninth the majority of examples identified are of the 'sacrament of mystery' type: among them Cassiodorus three times uses the form *sacramenta mysterii* in commentary on the Psalms. One of these is a reference to the Eucharist: *corpus et sanguinem ipsius inter summi mysterii sacramenta veneratur.*[81] Here, then, the visible body and blood are the *sacramenta* of the *mysterium*. The writer referred to in *CLCLC-4* as a disciple of Cassiodorus, probably in the sixth century, also applies this form to the Eucharist in a commentary on the description of its institution in I Cor. 11, where it is *magnum...mysterii sacramentum.*[82]

Isidore uses *sacramenta mysteriorum* to describe what was revealed to Daniel by an angel,[83] which would seem to make the 'sacraments of the mysteries' the subject of revelation (*angelo revelante*), where in other examples it has been the sacrament itself in which the mystery is accessed. Bede, finally, uses the combination *sacramenti mysterium* in a discussion about the liturgical calendar[84]: of all the authors so far considered, he is the first of those examined to use such a form in a directly liturgical context.

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[80] Both 'tanti mysterii sacramentum': Cassian, *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, 2, 2; 4, 6.
[81] *Expositio psalmorum*, on Ps. 137.
[82] *Commentaria in epistulas sancti Pauli: Ad Corinthios I*, cap. 11.
[83] *Sententiarum libri tres*, 2.
[84] 'Impium non est ut passio dominica tantum sacramenti mysterium foras limitem excludatur', *De temporum ratione liber*, 47.

Between the fourth century and the ninth are found only scattered examples, then, but which nevertheless suggest a flexible form which could be applied in a number of contexts, although as in the fourth century the majority make sacrament the pointer to mystery. The ninth century brings a relative multiplicity of uses in six different forms, twelve of which appear in the works of Paschasius Radbertus, who, again relatively speaking, has a particular liking for the potential of the interacting terms. One example is in his Letter to Fredegard,[85] the others all in the Exposition of Matthew.[86] It is important to note that Radbertus' use of the combination in these texts is almost always of the 'sacrament of mystery' type. Only twice does he reverse them. A context of the fulfilling of Old Testament prophecy in Christ is an example of their use by Radbertus: *mysterii sacramentum Christus veniens.*[87] Again, while not always directly stated, the clear implication is that Christ *is* the sacrament of the mystery. As a group these examples represent a sophisticated use of the vocabulary of *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, and in this suggest that in Radbertus' own setting mystery-language was important and used with care. It was also used by his contemporary Hrabanus Maurus in another way, to describe the effect of the cross: *mysterii sacramentum appareat.*[88] Liturgical texts too, as will be seen, refer to the 'mystery of the passion', and so here also is evidence of a deliberately flexible vocabulary which, whether by direct statement, allusion or implication, all finds its ultimate significance in Christ the sacrament of the mystery of God whether expressed in theological writing or liturgical celebration.

Indeed, if this is true of theological writing, as we have attempted to show, the same is likely to be true of the liturgy. The fluidity and complexity which has occupied scholars is in an important sense the whole point, because it reveals a richness of sacramental vocabulary *and* a reluctance to define too closely what ultimately *remains* mystery. It is a language grasping at what cannot ultimately be grasped, but which may nevertheless be experienced as transformative; it is a *dynamic* language that indicates divine activity, and

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[85] *Epistula ad Fredugardum.*
[86] *Expositio in Matheo libri xii.*
[87] *Expositio in Matheo,* 2.
[88] *In honorem sanctae crucis.*

therefore not *simply* poetic or figurative language. The relationship between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* is more complex either than one of straightforward synonymity or a *single* explanation of the distinction. Scholars who seek evidence for either of these solutions are bound to fail. It can only be discussed meaningfully in terms of individual writers and their own consistencies or otherwise. It is ultimately impossible to say in every case why one word was preferred over another, since orthographical and stylistic considerations are likely to have affected matters as much as apologetic or polemic concerns. This is by no means a disappointment, since the ambiguity is itself a statement about theological method and assumption. There is surely a place for imagination – as hoped for by Gregory of Nazianzus - and room for a flexibility of interpretation in dialogue with developing tradition. In this sense what emerges is a conversation between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* as well as rich usage of the terms individually. Therefore in liturgical texts in and beyond the period studied here constant heed must be paid to the polyvalent nature of *mysterium* and the interilluminative relationship it has with *sacramentum*, particularly in those rites which include material with an ancient provenance, such as the Paschal Vigil in the Roman Missal, and those parts of the Roman Missal, especially orations of various types, which derive from the pre-millennial period of the sacramentaries. Such origins can still be traced in texts of rites arising in pursuit of liturgical reform, revision and renewal, including the Missal of Paul VI and to some extent the rites of the Anglican Communion and some Reformed traditions, but much of their significance is unacknowledged. This is not, therefore, simply an interesting exercise in philology and liturgiology with no implications for the present: rather it is further to inform the present and to increase understanding of the implications of the historical provenance of texts in current use; it is also, *mutatis mutandis*, comment on the nature of texts of modern composition and the significance of changing context for the meaning of liturgical texts in general. We now turn to the evolution of liturgical texts and the place of *mysterium* in them.

# CHAPTER 6

# *MYSTERIUM* AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITURGICAL TEXTS

## Before the Fourth Century: Contextual Improvisation

The fragmentary nature of the sources makes it difficult to be certain and detailed about many aspects of the liturgies of the early period. The wider cultural and intellectual context suggests that at first mystery language tended not to be used in a sacramental context, being for the most part avoided in order to suggest theological and practical distance from mystery cults. However, where the distinction is clear there is some negative usage in the direct addressing of this issue, including where pagan religion copied Christian practice rather than the other way round. Justin Martyr, speaking of the eucharist, bemoans the fact that 'the evil demons have imitated this [the blessing of bread and wine] and ordered it to be done also in the mysteries of Mithras.'[1] The climate was not right, and the position of Christianity too precarious for mystery language to have the positive use it was later to acquire. This negative position was no longer necessary by the fourth century; neither may it have been *tenable*, given the similarities of *form* and *social character* between Christian and pagan initiation and sacred meals. Thus the *phenomenology* of non-Christian and Christian worship may have been very similar, though their *theological* object was wholly different. The critical change which occurred in the fourth century was to begin to make what previously may have been too suggestive of a pagan phenomenology expressive of a Christian theology, and it is in this way that mystery language becomes part of the vocabulary of sacramental discourse and liturgical evolution.

There are no extant liturgical texts which show even a limited use of mystery language before the fourth century. Very few texts survive from that period, partly because 'the Christian liturgy seems to have been for the most part improvised on the basis of some schemata taken primarily from Jewish usage and adapted to the new situation that was created by the teachings of Jesus, especially regarding baptism and the commemorative paschal meal.'[2] Hanson argues that

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[1] *Apologia* 66.4, in *Prayers of the Eucharist Early and Reformed*, 2nd edition, ed. R.C.D. Jasper and G.J. Cuming (New York: OUP 1980), p. 19.

[2] I.H. Dalmais, 'The Liturgy in the First Four Centuries', in *Principles of the Liturgy*, The Church

the bishop was at liberty to improvise the words of the Eucharistic Prayer until about the middle of the third century, perhaps later, and that consequently there are no surviving complete liturgies from before the fourth century.[3] Paul Bradshaw has recently suggested that the instruction in *Didache* 10.7, 'But allow the prophets to give thanks as they wish',[4] implies that those presiding 'would not be expected to extemporize their eucharistic praying but use something along the lines of the forms that are set out [in the text of *Didache* 10.7]'. Bradshaw encourages surprise at this in view of evidence from the first three centuries which shows that 'bishops enjoyed the same liberty of improvisation as the prophets do [in this text]', here referring to the earlier work of Bouley on the transition from oral to written eucharistic prayers.[5] The lack of evidence from the first three centuries, Bradshaw maintains, 'is not just because Christians generally do not seem to have written down their prayers but preferred oral transmission and improvisation', and he speculates on special circumstances giving rise to the exception in the *Didache*.[6] It is important to be aware of those elements of the intellectual context which *were* written down and which we have discussed in the previous chapters, wherein the language of *mysterium* (and in combination with *sacramentum* and other terms) is an indication not just of what may have informed extempore prayer, but also the background and possible influential origins of liturgical prayer when it *does* come to be written down. This is especially important with regard to Latin liturgy, for which even the period immediately following the first three hundred years of the millennium is lacking in written texts. Even where texts from the fifth and sixth centuries do exist, they

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at Prayer, vol. 1, ed. A.G. Martimort (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 23-26 (p. 23).

[3] R.P.C. Hanson, 'The Liberty of the Bishop to Improvise Prayer in the Eucharist', *Vigiliae Christianae* 15 (1961), 173-76. See also L. Bouyer, 'L'improvisation liturgique dans l'Église ancienne', *La Maison-Dieu* 111 (1972), 7-19, and *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari*, ed. A. Gelston (Oxford: OUP, 1992), p. 11 and references therein.

[4] *Didache* 10.7, in P.F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, Alcuin Club Collections 80 (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 25. The possible significance of this phrase is not noticed by Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), pp. 164-65.

[5] Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, p. 38 and note 54; A. Bouley, *From Freedom to Formula: The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from Oral Improvisation to Written Texts*, CUA Studies in Christian Antiquity 21 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1981). See also Bradshaw, 'Authority and Freedom in the Early Liturgy', in *Authority and Freedom in Liturgy*, ed. K. Stevenson, Grove Liturgical Study 17 (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1979), 4-10; M. Klöckener, 'Freiheit und Ordnung im Gottesdienst – ein altes Problem mit neuer Brisanz', *Freiburger Zeitschrift fürPhilosophie und Theologie* 43 (1996), 388-419 and A. Budde, 'Improvisation im Eucharistiegebet', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 44 (2001), 127-41.

[6] Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, p. 38.

are largely in the form of much later copies whose origin and redactive process has had to be deduced, and surrounding the precise dates of which a degree of uncertainty remains. However, given the flowering of mystery language in non-liturgical but sometimes sacramentally-related western texts in the fourth century, there should be no surprise at the frequency and the sophistication with which such language is used when it *is* possible to study it in written liturgical texts. Such language was so deeply rooted in the intellectual and devotional psyche of the western Church that it found an important place in written texts, some of which survive in original, near-original, or translated form in liturgies of the present day, including many of the prayers of the sacramentaries which found their way into what became the *Missale Romanum*,[7] and influential through its pre-Reformation English variants on the development of a distinctive Anglican liturgy in the Books of Common Prayer and after. This strand of survival further suggests why the early history and first flowering of written liturgical texts before the year 1000 is so crucial to our understanding of liturgical development and its shifting context after the turn of the first millennium down to the present day. It has shaped the assumptions of the present time, often in a hidden way, but its very survival effectively outside the period which provided the nourishment for its growth needs to be noticed as a potentially benign and beneficial variety of liturgical conservatism that sends an important apophatic signal to a very different theological and social culture that has lost confidence in the concept of divine active hiddenness – the 'moreness' and 'other-ness' to which these texts bear witness, and to which the 'language' of visual art also points.

Awareness of the context is vital for the assessment of the place of *mysterium* in the early period. Such a context, described by Bouley as an 'atmosphere of controlled freedom' in which eucharistic praying developed, is likely to suggest the sort of resources on which the improvisation drew, the language it employed, and the philosophical and theological assumptions it conveyed. Bouley believes that at least some fixed prayers must have existed by the third century, since in the second, he speculates, 'conventions governing the

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[7] P. Bruylants, *Les Oraisons du Missel Romain*, 2v, Études Liturgiques 1, Collection dirigée par le Centre de Pastorale Liturgique (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1952), in which the provenance and MS history of every collect-type prayer in the *Missale Romanum* is given.

structure and content of improvised anaphoras are ascertainable...and indicate that extempore prayer was not left merely to the whim of the minister.'[8] Bradshaw's interpretation of *Didache* 10.7 is an indication of this. Precisely what the conventions were and how they were agreed and shared in a manner that made them practicable is unknown. However, it is right to propose that a wider context affected the form and content of extempore prayer: there existed patterns of Christian thought, and behind and alongside them the Jewish, Roman and Greek worlds and their religious and intellectual traditions, themselves products of matrices of influence. Therefore if mystery does not have an overt *sacramental* use in the Christian thought of the period before the third century, we may reasonably argue that it is unlikely to have featured significantly in the liturgy either, except insofar as such language may have referred to salvific events or used with deliberate irony to discredit pagan mystery religions or directly condemn them. Liturgy has always been variously employed on occasion as a tool of apologetic and indeed of polemic.

We should not then *expect* much use of such language in the fragmentary picture we have of early liturgical forms. For example, the *Apostolic Tradition* in its Latin form[9] does not use *mysterium* or, for that matter, *sacramentum*, an even more unlikely word. Even in the Christian east, the picture is very uncertain. The *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, a Syrian text which may date from the beginning of the third century,[10] in Gelston's translation contains the phrase

> rejoicing and glorifying and exalting and commemorating and celebrating this great and awesome mystery of the passion and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ...[11]

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[8] Bouley, *Freedom to Formula*, p. xv, also quoted by Gelston, *Addai and Mari*, p. 11.
[9] See *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome*, ed. G. Dix & H. Chadwick second rev. edn with further corr. (London: Alban Press, 1992), pp. liii-lvii (Dix). Dix's original introduction and edition must be read in conjunction with the new introduction by Chadwick (pp. a-p), who adds some important material concerning the now-doubted authorship of Hippolytus (pp. d-i); also the more recent translation and commentary of Stewart-Sykes, Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, ed. & trans. A. Stewart-Sykes (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), who is more sympathetic towards a Hippolytan authorship while noting the problems that remain (pp. 16-32).
[10] Gelston, *Addai and Mari*, p. 11.
[11] *Addai and Mari*, ed. Gelston, section G, lines 53-55 (text and translation pp. 52-55, commentary pp. 103-109). It is possible that this passage is not original to the text, but a secondary addition, although Gelston ultimately doubts this (*Addai and Mari*, p. 103).

Here 'mystery' refers to the Christ-events of passion, death and resurrection as the mystery, as some early western sources do, not specifically to the *act* of their commemoration in the eucharist. Even so, to find the word used in a liturgical context is rare at this time. As will be seen later in this chapter, when western liturgical sources do become plentiful, *mysterium* continues to be used in this way *in liturgical texts* alongside directly liturgical uses, for example reference to the Eucharist. Far from detracting from the liturgical significance of *mysterium*, its plentiful appearance in texts makes the case for the richness and sophistication of such language and the apophatic flavour which pervades the texts all the more convincing, because the use is so frequent and so polyvalent. It also suggests that such language is *appropriate* to the liturgy, a far cry from the reluctance to use it in any context which characterizes the period before the fourth century in the west.

In *Addai and Mari*, however, there is certainly no indication of frequency. On the positive side the unique example Gelston identifies would appear to establish the concept of mystery (*raz*) in a Syrian liturgical context, even if the use is not directly in reference to the liturgical action. Even so, Gelston argues that direct use in relation to cultic representation is implied:

> The word…can also denote a type, symbol, figure, or likeness, but it is the natural word for a sacrament and the term 'mystery' with its overtones in New Testament and patristic Greek of the saving acts of God, once concealed in his hidden purpose, but now revealed in historical reality, and realized afresh in the present in both cultic representation and spiritual experience, seems an appropriate rendering.[12]

This suggests a more developed concept and use of mystery-language than is the case in the west at this time, where it cannot be said that there are liturgical acts consciously regarded as separate entities which can be placed in a delineated category – this would be to assume that there was such a thing as 'sacramental theology' in a narrow sense, when in fact the use of mystery language is not confined to liturgical contexts nor indeed those which would today be called 'sacramental'.

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[12] Gelston, *Addai and Mari*, p. 108.

Gelston points to the *direct* attribution of 'mystery' (*raz*) to the eucharistic elements and the taking and blessing of them by the Lord, in a sixth-century textual fragment edited by Connolly:

> He took bread and wine...made it holy with a spiritual blessing. And he left this awesome mystery to us.[13]

What is meant by 'this' in Gelston's translation? The implication is that it is an *inclusio*: the 'mystery' refers to the bread and the wine and is both that which is implicitly represented by them, having been 'made holy', and the *act* of making holy with this result. Unless this fragment is much earlier in origin than the sixth century this is a relatively late use of mystery, and on the face of it does not reveal anything concrete about the earlier period. Even in the west, mystery language had found its place in directly liturgical contexts by the sixth century. Gelston speculates on account of phrasal parallels with *Addai and Mari* that the fragment can be used as 'a partial basis for the reconstruction of an obscure passage', that quoted above, which in reconstructed form associates mystery with the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless Gelston concludes that 'it is not possible at present to trace the relationship between the fragment and the three extant East Syrian anaphoras', and that therefore it cannot be used to date *Addai and Mari*.[14] Nor can the fragment be used, therefore, as a significant parallel to Latin mystery language in the period before the fourth century.

**Towards a Text: the Fourth Century**

After 300 western written sources – not, yet, however, liturgical texts - which make more common and more explicit use of *mysterium* in a sacramental context become more plentiful. They reveal that a shift in the intellectual culture is taking place, although the roots of that shift are difficult to determine more specifically than an assertion of a new desirability of mystery language owing to the contemporary demise of pagan religion with which it may be associated or

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[13] Gelston, *Addai and Mari*, p. 108, quoting R.H. Connolly, 'Sixth-Century Fragments of an East-Syrian Anaphora', *Oriens Christianus* 12-14 (1925), 99-128 (p. 112).
[14] Gelston, *Addai and Mari*, p. 66.

confused. Equally there may have been a gradual realization that the avoidance of such a terminology was impossible and untenable given the obvious parallels of form, and that its positive usage, given the eclipse of that which previously had to be avoided, may actually have been *useful,* and a key element in the development of a Christian sacramental theology and liturgical euchology and praxis. As we have seen, there had already been a preliminary stage in this process whereby the debate between Christian and pagan had been engaged against a common background of philosophical discourse.[15] The cultural shift in both east and west was tending towards a more sophisticated intellectual grounding of Christianity, unafraid to employ what might be called the language of religious phenomenology once the possibility of theological confusion had largely been eliminated – disputes were to be about how the Christian faith was to be rightly expressed rather than in terms of its defence against avowedly non-Christian late antique religion.

While examples of western liturgical texts and orders are sparse at this time, texts from elsewhere in the Christian world show evidence of a developing liturgical language of mystery. Examples are to be found in both the document known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the anachronistically-named *Sacramentary of Sarapion.* The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a late fourth-century collection of Syrian provenance in composite form of earlier material, including the Church Orders the *Didache*, the *Apostolic Tradition* and the *Didascalia.*[16] The genre 'Church Order' comprises texts which set out the manner in which the life of the Christian community is to be organized, including its public worship. They are a particularly Syrian and Egyptian genre, and while therefore 'eastern' in terms of liturgical family, they came to be associated with the authority of key figures in the development of the western church and, as is implied by some of the titles by which some are now known, with apostolic authority.[17] The liturgical

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[15] See Chapter 4.

[16] W. Jardine Grisbrooke, ed., *The Liturgical Portions of the Apostolic Constitutions: A Text for Students*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 13-14 (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1990), pp. 5-7; the standard edition is now that of M. Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, Source Chrétiennes 320, 329, 336 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985, 1986, 1987).

[17] B. Studer, 'Liturgical Documents of the First Four Centuries', in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, vol. I, *Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. Anscar J. Chupungco, Pontifical Liturgical Institute (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 199-224 (pp. 200-205); see also Paul F. Bradshaw, *the Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, revised ed. (London: SPCK, 2002),

sections of these texts, while not 'liturgical books' in the sense that later complete texts of more narrowly focused purpose are understood, and in terms of their own significance 'a continuing enigma' for those who study them,[18] are nevertheless an important piece of the jigsaw of early liturgical history and significant precursors of the eventual appearance of liturgical texts which record what is actually to be said. In this the *Apostolic Constitutions*, given by its compilers associations with Clement of Rome and including the *Apostolic Tradition,* perhaps of Roman origin, effectively the last text of its kind before the emergence of liturgical books of the type which, in the Latin west, and in Rome particularly, arise from the compilation of *libelli*.[19] Nevertheless, as Studer asserts, 'as documentary evidence for the liturgy of the first four centuries, it is of considerable importance', not least because of the eucharistic material it contains.[20] While this material in Book 8 must be read primarily as evidence of the liturgical development of the Church of Antioch, the superimposed or actual Roman associations and the fact of the translation of parts of the *Apostolic Constitutions* into other languages suggest its wider influence.

The eucharistic liturgy in Book 8 contains an institution narrative, here in Grisbrooke`s translation:

> For in the night he was betrayed, he took bread in his holy and undefiled hands and, looking up to you, his God and Father, he broke [it] and gave [it] to his disciples, saying: This is the mystery of the New Covenant; take of it, [and] eat; this is my body [which is] broken for many, for the forgiveness of sins. In the same way also [he took] the cup, mixing it of wine and water, and sanctifying [it] he gave it to them, saying: Drink of it, all [of you]; this is my blood [which is] shed for many for the remission of sins; do this for my memorial. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim my death until I come.[21]

'Mystery' here is the Greek *mysterion*, and notwithstanding its Syrian source, this text has been proposed as a solution for what might be called a continuing

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pp. 73-97.
[18] Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, title of Chapter 4, p. 73.
[19] Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 36-38.
[20] Studer, 'Liturgical Documents', p. 205.
[21] *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.12, 35-37: Grisbrooke, *Liturgical Portions*, p. 38.

enigma of the Roman eucharistic prayer (that part of it traditionally called 'the canon of the Mass'): the inclusion in it from an early date of the phrase *mysterium fidei,* there in relation to the cup but to the bread in *Apostolic Constitutions* 8. This matter will be discussed in the next chapter.[22] It is noted here to show that this text of eastern provenance may still be of significance to developments in the Latin west.

In this text the mystery is both visible object *and* action: the bread broken and given, which 'is' his body. It is present and visible, and yet its true significance lies in hidden depths. This hidden truth is what makes it 'for the forgiveness of sins.' This reveals the richness of the language of mystery; not superfluous but multi-layered, a characteristic of use in later *western* texts. It is evidence that mystery language came to be seen as positively useful to the Christian religion as a means of conveying the tension between the visible and invisible dimensions of God's sacramental action in the world.

Further examples of mystery language, all 'eastern' in provenance are relevant to the picture in Latin Christianity in that the equivalents of some important uses are later found in western liturgical texts. In the *Sacramentary of Sarapion*, a fourth-century text which is probably the earliest evidence of the eucharistic liturgy of Egypt, although there has been debate about its proper description: is it in the strict sense a Church Order, a Pontifical, or a Sacramentary? Barrett-Lennard follows Brightman in regarding it as a book of prayers for the celebrant, a *libellus*,[23] a genre that would soon emerge in the west. In terms of the type of text it is, it makes for interesting comparison, since in it direct mystery language is used in both baptismal and eucharistic contexts, as it is in the western *libelli* which are the basis for the western 'sacramentaries', beginning with the Sacramentary of Verona or *Veronense* (the 'Leonine' Sacramentary).

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[22] See Chapter 8.

[23] *Sacramentary of Sarapion* 28, in R.J.S. Barrett-Lennard, *The Sacramentary of Sarapion of Thmuis*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Studies 25 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1993), p. 5 and note 3. For the Greek text of *Serapion*: *Prex Eucharistica: Textus e Variis Liturgiis Antiquioribus Selecti*, ed. A. Hänggi & I. Pahl, Spicilegium Friburgense 12 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1968), pp. 128-133.

In the context of initiation, at the laying-on of hands of catechumens the text in *Sarapion* reads:

> Bless this people with a blessing of knowledge and godliness and with a blessing of your mysteries, through your only begotten Jesus Christ...[24]

At the laying-on of hands of the laity:

> May the bodies of the people be blessed for self-control and purity. May their souls be blessed for learning and knowledge and the mysteries.[25]

In both examples the 'mysteries' are associated with 'knowledge', expressed in the second example as 'learning'. The direct meaning here is the content of revelation, as shown more clearly in the Prayer of Offering at the eucharist:

> Give us the holy Spirit that we may be able to declare and explain your indescribable mysteries (Gk: *mysteria*).[26]

This is the climax of a passage in which is addressed the God who reveals 'the glories concerning [the Son]', who is 'known by [his] begotten Word' and with the Word '*seen* by and *revealed* to the saints', and yet who is to be praised as the '*invisible* Father.'[27] The use in translation of the term 'explain' in relation to mystery is of interest: does it really mean 'explain' in the sense of 'reveal all about' or is it simply an amplification of the desire to 'declare'? The earlier reference to divine invisibility restates the very beginning of the Prayer of Offering, where the 'unsearchable, inexpressible and incomprehensible' God is praised.[28] A tension is established between the God who remains invisible and yet who is known in the Son, the Word and in this sense 'seen'. The 'mysteries' of the invisible God are 'indescribable' and yet may be 'declared and explained' in the 'glories concerning the Son, the Word'. 'Mystery' is the concept on which this tension turns: it indicates that the incarnation of the Word is the means by

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[24] *Sarapion* 28: Barrett-Lennard, p. 15.
[25] *Sarapion* 29: Barrett-Lennard, p. 18.
[26] *Sarapion* 1: Barrett-Lennard, p. 25.
[27] *Sarapion* 1: Barrett-Lennard, pp. 24-5.
[28] *Sarapion* 1: Barrett-Lennard, p. 23.

which what remains invisible and indescribable can nevertheless, and paradoxically, be 'seen' and 'known', neither of which should be taken to indicate resolution or exhaustion. It is not 'seeing' purely in the physical sense, nor 'knowing' or definition in the purely empirical sense, but in the spiritual sense of real, transforming encounter through Christ with the 'that-ness' of the mystery of God. 'Mystery' is the concept which indicates how what is being said is to be understood. The eucharist is the context for this encounter, but not in terms of a narrow focus on the elements: the *mysterion* is both the guarantee and the reality of the encounter.

The 'mysteries' which can be encountered are understood to be 'present'. At the laying-on of hands of the people after distribution of the broken bread to the clergy *Sarapion* has a prayer which begins 'O God of mercies and *the mysteries that are present.*'[29] This need not necessarily be only a direct reference to the Eucharistic elements, but a wider allusion to the encountered 'mysteries' of the Prayer of Offering, now 'present' and efficacious in the eucharist. The transforming quality of the mysteries so encountered is indicated by the request for the 'progress (*prokope*) and improvement' of the people.[30] The transformative character of the *mysterion* is further indicated and underscored in two initiation texts:

At the sanctification of waters:

> Let your ineffable Word be in them [the waters] and transform their energy and prepare the waters, being filled with your grace to be productive in order that the mystery which is now being celebrated may not be found to be without effect in those who are being regenerated, but may fill them with all divine grace as they go down and are baptized.[31]

In the prayer for those being baptized:

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[29] Gk. *ta mysteria*: *Sarapion* 3: Barrett-Lennard, p. 29 and note 2. My emphasis.
[30] *Sarapion* 3: Barrett-Lennard, p. 29 and note 4.
[31] *Sarapion* 7: Barrett-Lennard, p. 33.

> We beseech you, God of truth, on behalf of this your servant and we pray that you may deem him worthy of the divine mystery and of your ineffable regeneration.[32]

The mystery 'being celebrated' is, again, of wider meaning than simply referring to the rite: what is being celebrated is the complete, inexhaustible *mysterion* of the invisible God, and as is explicitly stated, it has 'effect in those who are being regenerated': transforming encounter is the focus of what is understood to be happening. The elements, what would many centuries later in the west be called the accidents of the rite, whether bread and wine or water, are not themselves the mysteries, only part of the means visibly and audibly, visually and linguistically, by which the mysteries are known to be present and efficacious. The word *mysterion* is itself a linguistic pointer to this 'unseen' (because of God) and 'seen' (with the eyes of the heart and of the soul), 'unknown' (i.e. unexplained, undefined) and yet 'known' (in the transformation of humanity).

In *Sarapion* the 'mysteries' are mediate of blessing. They partner 'learning and knowledge', for which the soul needs to be blessed, again implying recognition of a vital relationship and creative tension between the seen and the unseen. This tension is underlined by the apparent contradiction of prayer which can ask that 'indescribable' mysteries may yet be 'declared and explained'. There is a conviction that the mysteries are 'present', with an ambiguity, perhaps deliberate, which suggests a more sophisticated notion of presence than a vague 'Jesus in the eucharist' while not seeking excessive definition. *Sarapion* is important because it parallels some of the concepts which later appear in western liturgical texts. Some of the adjectives of magnitude which accompany *mysterium* are of the same order: for example the 'indescribable mysteries' of *Sarapion* and the *inennaruile mysterium*[33] and mysteries *praesens* and *ineffabile* in the *Veronense*.[34] These similarities of instinct and of liturgical theology in texts from different families suggest that a shared culture lasted longer than might otherwise be thought.

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[32] *Sarapion* 8: Barrett-Lennard, p. 34.
[33] This example is in the Rotulus of Ravenna: see table in Chapter 7.
[34] Both in the *Veronense*: see table in Chapter 7.

Fourth-century sources also produce some examples of direct labelling of the eucharist as mystery. The *Anaphora of Basil of Caesarea* from the second half of the fourth century, probably from Antioch but possibly used in Egypt,[35] declares that

> [Jesus] left us this great mystery of godliness: for when he was about to hand himself over to death for the life of the world, he took bread...[36]

The *mysterion* of godliness (in the Greek literally 'piety') is a direct reference to the institution narrative it introduces. The eucharist itself is that in which is enfolded the seen and unseen. It is not difficult to see how that which discloses the *mysterion* can itself be called *mysterion*: he who is the revelation of the mystery, in giving thanks on the eve of his passion, *gives* the mystery to the Church. In this sense the liturgy itself is mystery; it is received; it is seen to be gift. In Latin writing the presence of the term *sacramentum* often assists in conveying this idea: Jesus (or his incarnation, or passion, or resurrection) is the *sacramentum* of the *mysterium*. The same notion is present here, with the difference that *mysterion* alone has to convey it since there is no Greek equivalent of *sacramentum*. Unlike in *Sarapion*, here the mystery does seem to be located particularly and primarily in the gifts that are subject to the words of institution, and this too is reflected many times in western prayers, for example in post communion orations which refer to what has just been received or that with which the participants have been fed, although in both western and eastern texts the mystery is not confined to this, but also has associations which evoke the limitless, transforming drama of salvation. The fourth-century Liturgy of St Mark in its reconstructed form,[37] while it connects *mysterion* directly with the eucharist, does so in the context of the vision of heaven and in confidence that in it participants are indeed nourished and transformed:

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[35] *Prayers of the Eucharist; Early and Reformed,* ed. R.C.D. Jasper and G.J. Cuming, second edition (New York: OUP, 1980), pp. 34-37 (p. 34).
[36] *Anaphora of Basil*, text in *Prex Eucharistica*, pp. 347-57 (pp. 350-51); *Prayers of the Eucharist*, p. 35.
[37] Liturgy of St Mark, Anaphora, *Prex Eucharistica*, pp. 101-19; *Prayers of the Eucharist* pp. 47-55. While some parts of the edited text are missing from the Coptic version of c. 451, Jasper and Cuming argue that 'it is possible to reconstruct an almost complete anaphora of an even earlier date by piecing together early Greek and Coptic fragments' (p. 47), which makes possible a late fourth- or early fifth-century date for the reconstruction.

> You reformed and renewed [humanity] through this awesome and life-giving and heavenly mystery.[38]

There is, then, strong evidence for the assertion that in liturgical use mystery language was becoming acceptable. As Jungmann claims, this can be seen as part of a wider inheritance and acceptance of the influence of wider cultural influences such as pagan secular and religious forms in Christian art, architecture and liturgical praxis.[39] A specific instance of liturgical language is the fact that *Serapion* uses a style typical of pre-Christian prayers in which, Jungmann notes, 'a long series of the Deity's attributes are strung together, especially those consisting of negations of things proper this world; unexplainable one, incomprehensible one, the infinite, ineffable one.'[40] It is easy to see how mystery terminology formed an obvious part of such an inheritance, since adjectives of this type appear in conjunction with *mysterium* in the post fourth-century sacramentaries.

Secondly, the texts show that this development was not just true of a particular area or liturgical family, but found expression all over the Christian world in different liturgical languages. Thus mystery language is itself evidence for influential knowledge of other liturgical 'families' by particular communities, whatever the precise mechanics of that influence. The fact that such communication occurred and influenced the pace and nature of liturgical evolution is, in turn, evidence for a shared intellectual culture and an extension into the exclusively Christian era of the assumptions already proposed with respect to the debate between Christianity and pagan religion. The debate having been won, the shared culture was now informing the development of the

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[38] *Prex Eucharistica*, pp. 102-3; *Prayers of the Eucharist* p. 48. It is possible that this section of the text is of later date since, as Jasper and Cuming point out (p. 47), it is omitted in the Coptic translation (the Anaphora of St Cyril, *Prex Eucharistica*, pp. 135-39). The 'fragments' (see note 40 above) do not include it either, but this does not of itself prove a later date, so we include it here on the assumption that it is of earlier origin. It appears in the earliest complete MS of *St Mark*, but this is of twelfth-century date: the interpolation is unlikely to have occurred as late as this, since its vocabulary and style are in keeping with the other texts studied in this section.

[39] Jungmann, *Early Liturgy*, pp. 122-33.

[40] Ibid., pp. 125-26.

Christian liturgy. *Sarapion* has an Alexandrian provenance, which may connect with the fact that Clement of Alexandria was one of the most expert at debating with pagan religion within the shared culture.

Thirdly, the use of mystery language chiefly in the context of initiation and eucharist is *superficially* in accord with the catechetical writings of Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Jerusalem. They use it extensively in this context, and the liturgy is central to the mystagogical method of cathechesis. However, in liturgical texts mystery in Greek and Latin form is already in the fourth century seen to be taking off in new directions which are not confined to initiation and eucharist: parallels with the mystery cults become less obvious as the terminology comes to be applied to a vista which has the economy of salvation in Christ at its centre, and it is this towards which liturgical uses of mystery language point in increasing degree. Only in terms of mystery can the vision be spoken of, because it lies beyond human measurement, definition and control. The liturgy is the means by which the vista is opened up, but as in a piece of visual art, it is always 'more than it is'. It must remain 'more than it is' if it is to be recognized as authentically of God, but not inaccessible or lacking effect. Crucially, then, more can be said about the employment of 'mystery' in these examples than their simple association with initiation and eucharist. These wider implications relate to the origins and usage of mystery in pre-Christian, biblical and philosophical contexts and herald the emergence of a greater sophistication in western liturgical language in the service of a wider vision. These liturgical examples serve to underline the usefulness of the liturgical evidence in drawing conclusions about the wider intellectual and cultural picture in the fourth century, which they confirm to have been a turning-point in liturgical evolution.

## *Laissez-faire* to *Libellus*?
## *Mysterium* and the Evolution of Text

A crucial development in connection with the deepening and widening of vision is the fact that improvisation was supplanted by fixed, written texts. A written liturgical language is brought to birth, and in the second half of the first millennium the results of this can be seen in both eastern and western liturgical

texts, the west lagging behind at first – hence no fourth-century examples. Because the text became written and therefore preserved, it is bound to have functioned in a different way. There is a wider concern here than simply an event in the development of liturgical texts. It is an aspect of the transition from largely oral to written tradition, and a feature of the history of writing and the production of texts in the western Church. Thus Eric Palazzo:

> The advent of liturgical books cannot be understood without taking into account the cultural mutation effected in the West by the emergence of the book in general. The passage from the *volumen*, the scroll, to the *codex*, the book as we know it, is indeed one of the major cultural phenomena of the first millennium; it had a considerable impact on the conditions of the oral culture then prevalent, especially in the liturgical domain.[41]

The process by which what would today be recognized as liturgical *books* came into being was neither brief nor straightforward. As Palazzo asserts, 'Liturgical books were not born overnight.'[42] The improvisation which characterized early liturgy before the fourth century was not ended in a single act of ecclesiastical legislation or decree. Rather a gradually increasing desire to monitor the content of the improvisation made the production of texts more or less inevitable as concern for doctrinal orthodoxy came to apply to what was said in the liturgy. A desire to check suggests the suspicion of error, and makes possible its discovery. An example of such a concern and consequent action is that of Augustine in the early fifth century,[43] to whom the relationship between text, reader and hearer was of vital importance. There is the well-known incident related in the *Confessions* of his happening upon Ambrose reading silently to himself instead of aloud.[44] Alberto Manguel suggests that for Augustine, reading aloud

> was not only considered normal; it was considered necessary for the full comprehension of a text. Augustine believed that reading needed to be present; that within the confines

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[41] Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, p. 37. A wider study of the changing nature of Christian texts, their reception and their use is Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); and of texts more generally Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Viking, 1996) and *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. G. Cavallo & R. Chartier, tr. L.G. Cochrane (Oxford: Polity, 1999).
[42] Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, p. 36.
[43] Ibid., pp. 36-7, citing Bouley, *Freedom to Formula.*
[44] Augustine, *Confessions* VI.iii.3; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber, 1967), pp. 82-3.

> of a page the *scripta*, the written words, had to become *verba*, spoken words, in order to spring into being…the reader had to breathe life into a text, to fill the created space with living language.[45]

Elich has argued for a middle stage between improvisation and adherence to a text that even when written texts are known to have existed, they may not indicate an absence of improvisation, at least not at first. He gives the example of Sidonius Apollinaris, whose ability to improvise was hailed by Gregory of Tours. Elich comments:

> Yet, Sidonius, though apparently he can do as well without a written text, is accustomed to take to the altar a *libellus* with which he celebrates solemnities. He did not necessarily read what was in his fascicule; it may simply have been used as a fixed point for his improvisation.[46]

This is an important observation, since the *libelli* are the earliest form of written western liturgical text intended for practical use: effectively booklets (literally 'little books') containing the required formulae mainly for the eucharist but sometimes also for other rites. The history and nature of the extant examples has been much studied, for example by Pierre-Marie Gy, who argues that 'from the outset one must underline the basic importance of *libelli* as a category in the liturgy and elsewhere, while at the same time warning against the distinction too neatly made between *liber* and *libellus*.'[47] Gy's definition of a *libellus* is indicative of the properties and limitations of the genre. The four elements are 'best considered as not too separate from each other', and comprise

1. The *libellus* consists of a booklet or a small number of booklets (no more than three or four).
2. At the beginning these booklets or booklet were independent.
3. The *libellus* is not bound.

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[45] Alberto Manguel, 'How those plastic stones speak: the renewed struggle between the codex and the scroll', *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 July 1997, 8-9 (p. 8).
[46] Tom Elich, 'Using Liturgical Texts in the Middle Ages', in *Fountain of Life*, NPM Studies in Church Music and Liturgy (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), 69-83 (pp. 69-70), referring to Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* II, 22.
[47] Pierre-Marie Gy, 'The Different Forms of Liturgical "Libelli"', in *Fountain of Life*, 25-34 (p. 25).

4. From the liturgical point of view, the *libellus* does not include all the functions of a given ministry, for example, that of a bishop, or the whole of the liturgical year, but only a particular action or specific feast.[48]

The *libelli* formed the basis for the compilation of later sacramentaries like the *Veronense*, but even when the sacramentary had become the principal form of liturgical text, *libelli* still existed, as *extracts from* sacramentaries as opposed to pre-existing constitutive elements of them.[49]

In the emergence and early use of the *libelli,* a question is raised about the transmission of the text of a *libellus*, in that if the account in Gregory of Tours represents a common practice (allowing for *bad* improvisers, who may have stayed, or have been encouraged to stay, closer to the text and use it more as a script than was necessary in the case of a reputed expert like Sidonius), and that text in the *libelli* was thus intended at first as a guide, might it not have been later modified, perhaps many times, as a result of the at least partial element of improvisation that at first it informed? This is important since extant *libelli* texts, for instance in the *Veronense*, survive in later continuous manuscript form,[50] and so the extant text may represent not the first draft but the result of a process of interaction between texts and improvisers. This would imply precisely the process Manguel attributes to Augustine: a living relationship between *scripta* and *verba*, to the extent that the *verba* bring about the further evolution of the *scripta*. In liturgical terms, this is an important aspect of the evolution of texts, and is not irrelevant to modern processes of liturgical revision, where although texts once fixed are expected to be used exactly, they undergo changes which arise from experience of and reflection on their use. This process is much more controlled in the modern era, whereas in the middle of the first millennium it had what to the liturgical authorities of today might seem a dangerous freedom, but it is precisely this freedom which supports the argument for a greater

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[48] Gy, 'Libelli', p. 26.

[49] Cassian Folsom, 'The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite', in *Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. Chupungco, 245-314 (p. 246): examples are the *Missal of Kiev* (9th century, based on 6th-7th century Roman prototype, and the *Votive Sacramentary of Alcuin* (8th – 9th century) (p. 246 note 3).

[50] Although Folsom says of the *Veronense* that 'our first sacramentary is really not a sacramentary at all, but a collection of *libelli*, each of which had originally been used independently of the other': 'Liturgical Books', pp. 245-46. For our purposes the fact of the compilation will suffice.

consciousness today of the 'more than it is' in the celebration of the liturgy typical of this period. In this intermediate stage between improvisation and fixed text which Elich indicates, yes, there is a text, but it does not yet act as the unerring, fixed script for the celebrant, who is free to modify, extend and extemporize as the needs of the context suggest and the limits of doctrinal orthodoxy and of his syntactical abilities allow. The space between the text and the celebrant is thus implicitly characterized by a greater sense of openness to divine guidance made possible by the genre and the way in which it was used – a *libellus* is 'not bound',[51] and neither indeed is the word of God 'bound' or 'fettered'[52] by too strict an adherence to the letter of the text. In the *libelli* can be seen the tension between what is seen and heard, and what is unseen and unheard but nonetheless present in the character of the interaction of text and celebrant. To allude to von Balthasar, it could be described at least as representative or symbolic of the meeting point of divine and human freedom, and at most as the reality of that encounter. As Thomas Dalzell interprets it, in the unfolding of his *Herrlichkeit* and *Theodramatik* von Balthasar conceives of 'the economy of salvation in terms of the performance of a play for the benefit of human freedom. This play…is thought to have an eternal presupposition in an original drama, that of God's trinitarian freedom.' Dalzell shows that Balthasar speaks of 'finite freedom's taking part in the eventfulness of that *Urdrama*', which is a 'mystery of participation in infinite freedom',[53] and he understands 'the gracing of [finite] freedom to amount to its transformation'.[54] The created space between text and utterance, *scripta* and *verba*, in the use of the *libelli* can be understood as a dimension of this reality: the *scripta,* in becoming *verba*, proclaim the transformation of the finite freedom of the text (symbolic of the finite freedom of those who produce texts: human beings) as *scripta* into the sign and reality of divine freedom as *verba.* This can only occur in what Dalzell calls 'the mystery of participation': the text is read, interpreted, prayed, and in its performance – its dramatic expression – it is known to be 'more than it is' because what is thereby

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[51] The third of Gy's definitions, 'Libelli', p. 246.
[52] Cf. II Timothy 2.9: 'the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered' (RSV). 'Bound' is a more literal translation.
[53] Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, vol. 105, 2nd edition (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 18.
[54] Ibid., p. 287.

participated *in* is the dynamic, transformative *mysterium* of divine love, whether or not the word is used. This is liturgy at its most sophisticated, it can be argued, because it declares in its form and use (literally *leitourgia*, 'the work of the people') the interacting freedoms to which we have referred and in the reality of which interaction, thereby, the substance of an ever-new reality is disclosed: the renewing and redeeming of humanity.

Even when liturgical texts do appear, then, they have not yet been *completely* incorporated in the defined structures of an ecclesial community because they are not yet mandatory in the sense of literally to be recited. In this sense the *scripta-verba* relationship is itself expressive of *mysterium* whether or not the word is used. When the text becomes fixed in the sense of being more or less exactly what is said, the *scripta-verba* relationship is diminished because more controlled, and more is required of the language of mystery and especially what concerns us here, the use of the word itself. But even when more is required of the language of the required text, there is no complete exclusion of the manner of encounter suggested by the *libelli,* because although the text is inherently the product of finite freedom, it is still expressive of freedom, and so still communicative of divine freedom and the possibility of transformative encounter with it. The richness, flexibility, even ambiguity of a fixed liturgical language is what makes it what it is, or rather, 'more than it is'. Thus Rowan Williams, preaching on II Tim. 2.9 on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer, considered the nature of liturgical language:

> Liturgy is not a matter of writing in straight lines…as the late Helen Gardner remarked, liturgy is epic as well as drama; its movement is not inexorably towards a single, all-determining climax, but also – precisely – a circling back, a recognition of things not yet said or finished with, a story with all kinds of hidden rhythms pulling in diverse directions. And a liturgical language like Cranmer's hovers over meanings like a bird that never quite nests for good and all – or, to sharpen the image, like a bird of prey that never stoops for a kill.[55]

Moreover, because 'the word of God is not bound',

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[55] Rowan Williams, Sermon at the service to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer, *Prayer Book Society Journal* 12 (Trinity 2006), 6-8 (p. 6)

God speaks, and the world is made; God speaks and the world is remade by the Word Incarnate. And our human speaking struggles to keep up. We need, not human words that will decisively capture what the Word of God has done and is doing, but words that will show us how much time we have to take in fathoming this reality, helping us turn and move and see, from what may be infinitesimally different perspectives, the patterns of light and shadow in a world where the Word's light has been made manifest.[56]

In the finitude, albeit in freedom, of liturgical language there is made possible transforming encounter with the infinite, and that such language should recall and remind of this possibility. Mystery language is one way that this is done, and in the texts to which we will shortly turn, it is done with sophistication; and yet we must admit that the process by which *libelli* became fixed texts to be followed exactly, in that very outcome represent an increase of definition and control. It is ironic in this regard that what seems like a profusion of mystery language in the fixed texts, which ought to indicate a confidence in its possibilities and indeed does so in large measure, nevertheless occurs at the cost of the disappearance of improvisation and an effective tightening of discipline. While it can be said with some force that the profusion of mystery language takes over the positive function of improvisation in conveying the infinitude at the heart of the liturgy, there remains the fact of a cultural shift which has other manifestations in the increasing sophistication of civil government, and eventually, the quite conscious employment of liturgical texts as a form of consolidating secular power in the time of Charlemagne. As an appendix to this essay will be found a 'worked example' of how liturgy collaborates with this process in the context of ordination rites.

We are seeing a critical turning-point in the development of western liturgy, more important even than the eventual emergence of a *particular* fixed text in its final version like, for example, the Roman eucharistic prayer. More important, because so crucial to the way in which the relationship between text and recipients works. What happens is not merely a series of changes to fixed texts which produce more fixed texts: instead, in the transition from

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[56] Ibid.

improvisation to text it is the creation of the conditions which make that process possible, the very beginning of what Aidan Kavanagh understands, albeit negatively, as the 'textuality' of the west,[57] the foundation of every process of liturgical reform and revision since that time.

As we saw at the beginning of this section, Palazzo takes a positive view of the wider context of the development of the book. In the light of the intervening discussion a principal difficulty with this is his assumption that the transition was *therefore also wholly positive* in its effect on the liturgical text, in that 'the book offers an important advantage over oral transmission, by fixing in a tangible and durable manner through its texts the memory of a culture, of a way of worship, of the liturgy.' This is not necessarily an advantage in a living tradition: a fixed text can so easily become only momentarily representative of the creativity of its original context, and very soon cease to be indicative of the divine-human freedom in its dissonance from a *later* intellectual or cultural context in which it has become fixed in the sense of immoveable. Thus what Palazzo enthusiastically calls 'an increasing codification of uses between the fifth and sixth centuries' has a reverse side: more should be made, indeed, of his admission that 'one must always remember that they attest to only a minuscule part of the antique oral treasury from which the most beautiful pieces have been chosen (in general attributed to prestigious authors) and assembled into a stable corpus.'[58] So much is assumed here, not least about quality - there are bad writers in every age – that this is an inadequate acknowledgement of the limiting consequences of tantalization. Most alarm is sensed at the very word 'codification'. On the one hand it is precisely this that causes spontaneity and imagination to be diminished. On the other perhaps it needed to be in such disciplines as the law. Given the function of liturgy at the interface of human and divine freedom, however, it can so easily become fossilization, as by implication the Second Vatican Council realized about the *Missale Romanum* in which many texts of this era were preserved. This is not at all to say that there should be *no*

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[57] Aidan Kavanagh, 'Textuality and Deritualization: the Case of Western Liturgical Usage', *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1993), 70-77: 'how have western Christians…moved away from using liturgical words as performative utterances to subordinating the entire liturgy, both words and actions, to printed texts meant for recitation?' (p. 70).

[58] Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, p. 37.

liturgical text, and that what might be thought of as real freedom should be allowed to reign, as has happened in some Christian traditions with no fixed texts or even structures – it is simply to propose that the *implications* of such a cultural shift must be realized. There is freedom in using a text if there is also freedom to reject, retain or change it by informed means.

The problem is that 'codification' requires so much of the text, almost too much, since the very 'fixing' can be interpreted alternatively as 'limiting'. In the liturgical sphere, a degree of creative energy is surrendered to the text to the extent that more is *required* of the text if the 'more than it is' that in oral and semi-oral transmission remained at risk of whim and incompetence, but *also* at positive and exciting risk of creative power and imaginative tradition, is to be conveyed. In this sense, it is a licence for the explosion of liturgical texts and variants in order to meet this demand, and it is in the language of mystery that the demand is importantly met in the pre-millennial west and an important line held. Ironically it is a binding of previous freedoms, and yet, paradoxically, is also a Baumstarkian moment that unleashes 'greater complexity' in the multiplicity of text it heralds – freedom in another guise. In the very binding there is, then, unbinding, but also, it must be admitted, the inevitability of binding again: of the simplifying, limiting and confining to which the burgeoning richness of the language will eventually yield, leaving among the new structures, shapes and even languages marooned survivors of the concerns and convictions of another age. Yet liturgical language at its best can weather the cultural and intellectual storms of revision, rejection and replacement and in its very survival remind the Christian community of important insights of past stages in its developing tradition. *Mysterium* is one such. Here, then, is another dimension of the shift we have been discussing, another paradox, in that even a fixed text can speak of freedom and divine initiative, and can indeed weather the storms: *mysterium* indicates a conceptual matrix that does precisely this. We move now to the close examination of some of the texts that emerged from this process.

# CHAPTER 7

## *MYSTERIUM* IN SELECTED WESTERN LITURGICAL TEXTS

The texts considered in this chapter are examples selected from a very large body of material, chosen in order to provide a sampling of three fixed texts to test the conclusions drawn and predictions made so far, and to see what is further revealed in themselves about what is understood by *mysterium*. An exhaustive analysis of all the texts and their variants in this period is beyond the scope of the present study: it is hoped that what is indicated here will suggest and encourage further work on a rich mass of material. This chapter is intended to show what is possible with this genre when used as a source for such a discussion, as much as to reveal details specific to particular examples within the genre. We shall also return to the *mysterium-sacramentum* dialogue to see if in a later period it proves as useful and intriguing as in the earlier context discussed in Chapter 5.

In what follows it is not intended to deal in any detail with matters of date, origin and manuscript history except in so far as these inform the discussion, but in each case an indication will be given of the most common opinion and where an account of the current state of scholarship may easily be found. In studying the use of *mysterium* in this way we are in part following the methodology of Ellebracht's earlier study of the vocabulary of the prayers in the *Missale Romanum*, many of which originate in the period of the sacramentaries, as seen in Bruylants' indispensable analysis.[1] Ellebracht draws attention to words which she believes to have a 'technical' sense, among them *mysterium* and *sacramentum*.[2] However, she interprets them almost wholly in relation to the eucharist: this is understandable given their context in the missal, but we aim to show that while the eucharist is also the liturgical context of most of the prayers studied here, their implications often also go significantly beyond this single obvious association, in whatever terms it is put, particularly when seen, as here,

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[1] Bruylants, *Les Oraisons*.
[2] M.P. Ellebracht, *Remarks on the Vocabulary of the Ancient Orations in the Missale Romanum*, 2nd edition, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva, Fasc. 22 (Nijmegen-Utrecht: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1966), pp. 67-75.

as a phenomenon arising out of a wider process of thought. Therefore we do not seek to isolate examples on which Ellebracht also comments, given the limitations of her approach which in any case 'does not seek to plumb the depths of the full theological content and to examine all the facets of this many-sided word', but is engaged only in a 'modest attempt to set down the philological facts regarding *mysterium* which appear in the orations.'[3] Although detailed, Ellebracht does not seek to relate her analysis to the context in which the prayers were composed or to the ways in which liturgical language functions. We prefer to begin, then, with the prayers in their original context, rather than that in which they had ended up at the time of Ellebracht's work, since it is this which most fully informs the meaning of the vocabulary in the terms of our overall argument. Ellebracht's conclusions provide no particular surprises – if anything her perspective is limited, perhaps by the concerns of her time:

> *mysterium* in the orations has a strong ritual content. With the Pauline concept of *mysterion* as its base, it is here applied, by limitation rather than by extension of meaning, specifically to the sacramental action of the Eucharist...only once is there question of its meaning 'revealed truth' and once there is the possibility that it refers to 'liturgical mystery' as a whole.

We aim to show that in original context limitation was far from the purposes intended by the use of *mysterium*, and we have already seen that it is neither accurate nor sufficient to say that 'the word *sacramentum* is almost synonymous with *mysterium*'.[4]

## I. The Sacramentary of Verona (The 'Leonine' Sacramentary)

Extant in an early seventh-century manuscript (Verona Bibl. Capit., cod. 85; 139ff.) and drawing on Roman compositions of the sixth century, and once thought to be the work of Pope Leo I, hence the popular attribution, the Sacramentary of Verona[5] or *Veronense* is the earliest surviving western liturgical

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[3] Ibid., p. 67.
[4] Ibid., p. 72.
[5] *Sacramentarium Veronense*, ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, series maior, fontes 1 (Rome: Herder 1956); D.M. Hope, *The Leonine Sacramentary: A Reassessment of its Nature and Purpose,* Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: OUP 1971); C. Vogel,

text that permits a detailed picture of the development of a rich mystery language. It is a collection of mass formularies (originally *libelli*) arranged by month. Although lacking the months January to March, and thus any material for Lent or Easter, Ascension and Pentecost do appear in the April selection, the surviving formulae contain over eighty examples of the word *mysterium* and cognates.

**TABLE: *Mysterium* in the *Sacramentary of Verona***

References are to the Mohlberg edition. The table is based on Mohlberg's index, but extracted, set out, clarified and enhanced by the present author in such a way as to assist the present task: it is important to see the overall impression of the use of *mysterium* as well as the detail.

'C' indicates a collect-type prayer (the opening collect, the secret prayer or a post-communion prayer).
'P' indicates a preface for the eucharistic prayer.
'O' indicates the single use of mysterium in an ordination prayer, for the consecration of a bishop.
The table preserves the orthography of Mohlberg in respect of *u* and *v*.

| **Formula** | **Page ref.** | **Month** | **Form** | **Occasion** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **mysterium** | | | | |
| quod est nobis in praesenti uita mysterium | 83.20 | July | C | Daily |
| sit nobis reparatio... caeleste mysterium | 75.3 | July | C | Daily |
| cuius gratiae circa nos hoc singulare mysterium est ut | 143.4/5 | July | P | Drought |

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*Introduction aux Sources de l'Histoire du Culte Chrétien au Moyen Âge*, Biblioteca Studi Medievali 1 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1966), pp. 31-42; K. Gamber, *Codices Liturgici Latini Antiquiores*, 2nd edition, Spicilegii Friburgensis Subsidia 1 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 1968), no. 601, pp. 294-96; Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, pp. 38-42; C. Folsom, 'The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite', in *Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. Chupungco, 245-314 (pp. 245-48) and references therein.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| in trinitate...constare mysterium | 48.7 | July | P | Peter & Paul |
| mysteria haec conferant | 134.9 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| prosint | 117.22 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| | 133.20 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |

**mysterium, mysteria:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| aeterna | 115.10 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| beata | 79.17 | July | C | Daily |
| | 153.1 | Nov. | C | Clement & Felicity |
| | 153.11 | Nov. | C | Clement & Felicity |
| caeleste | 11.29 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 27.24/25 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| | 62.1 | July | C | Daily |
| | 75.3 | July | C | Daily |
| | 100.14/15 | Aug. | C | Agapetus |
| | 123.30 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| | 127.11/12 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| | 136.29 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| | 142.15/16 | Oct. | C | Drought |
| | 162.15 | Dec. | C | Christmas etc. |
| diuinum | 12.6 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 19.17 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 23.29 | May | C | Ascension |
| | 79.17 | July | C | Daily |
| | 106.23 | Sept. | P | Ded. Basilic. St Mich. |
| | 155.23 | Nov. | C | Andrew |
| frequentata | 13.5/6 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 133.20 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| gloriosa | 115.25 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| hodiernum | 27.12 | May. | C | Pentecost |
| ineffabile | 33.12 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| magna | 31.27 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| mirum | 33.11/12 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| praesens | 143.23/24 | Oct. | C | Drought |
| sacrosanctum | 22.12/13 | May | C | Ascension |
| | 44.16 | June | C | Peter and Paul |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| sacrum | 9.3 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 39.15 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 48.27/28 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 49.18 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 55.2 | July | C | The 7 Brothers |
| | 76.21 | July | C | Daily |
| | 110.11 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| | 111.28 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| | 130.14/15 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| | 130.27 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| | 133.3 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| salutare | 48.13 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 81.27 | July | C | Daily |
| | 88.22 | Aug. | C | Stephen |
| | 161.24 | Dec. | P | Christmas |
| m. quod exitit mundo salutare | 160.27 | Dec. | P | Christmas |
| sancta | 95.13 | Aug. | C | Laurence |
| | 134.31/32 | Sept. | C | Christmas |
| singulare | 143.4/5 | Oct. | P | Drought |
| sumpta | 117.22 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| tantum | 24.15 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| | 84.27 | July | C | Daily |
| uisibilia | 22.8/9 | May | C | Ascension |
| uotiua | 107.21 | Sept. | C | Ded. Basilic. S. Mich. |
| | 154.28 | Nov. | C | Chrysog. & Gregory |
| m. perfecti baptismatis | 31.21/22 | June | P | John the Baptist |
| deus cuius mysteriis | 26.28 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| quinquaginta dierum | 24.25 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| quadriformis euangelii | 48.7 | June | P | Peter and Paul |
| gratiae | 143.4/5 | Oct. | P | Drought |
| mensae tuae | 153.11 | Nov. | C | Clement & Felicity |
| huius muneris | 158.7/8 | Dec. | P | Christmas |
| b. ap. Petri et Pauli | 48.22 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| nostrae salutis | 166.23/24 | Dec. | C | Ember |

**mysterii, mysteriorum:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| actio | 75.3/4 | July | C | Daily |
| | 101.15/16 | Aug. | P | Adauctus & Felix |
| celebritas | 118.25 | Sept. | P | Ember |
| consortes | 84.27 | July | C | Daily |
| cultus | 81.27/28 | July | C | Daily |
| dona | 76.21 | July | C | Daily |
| effectus | 75.3/4 | July | C | Daily |
| | 84.16 | July | C | Daily |
| finis | 23.29 | May | P | Ascension |
| instituta | 111.28 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| intellectus | 81.27/28 | July | C | Daily |
| participatio | 61.13 | July | C | Daily |
| | 110.1/2 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| | 133.3 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| plenitudo | 27.12 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| portio | 88.22 | Aug. | C | Stephen |
| sollemnitas | 143.24 | Oct. | C | Drought |
| summa | 119.30 | Sept. | O | Ordination |
| ueritas | 161.24 | Dec. | C | Christmas |
| uirtus | 134.31 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| mysterium adsequamur | 160.26/28 | Dec. | C | Christmas |
| consecranti | 31.22 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| in nostrae salutis ...transire mysterium | 166.23/24 | Dec. | C | Ember |

**mysterio:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| consecrasti | 48.22 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| contineri | 24.25 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| immolatur et offertur | 33.12/13 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| pascimur et potamur | 162.14/15 | Dec. | C | Christmas |
| reficis | 114.4 | Sept. | C | Ember |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| quos...refecisti | 62.1 | July | C | Daily |
| repleti | 11.29 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| sanctificati | 48.13 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| in huius muneris mysterio continetur | 158.8 (cf. 24.25) | Dec. | C | Christmas |
| mysteriis aptari | 13.20 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| congruamus | 109.22 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| corda sacris dicata mysteriis | 110.10/11 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| famulamur | 18.29 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| inherere | 92.26 | Aug. | C | Sixt., Feliciss., Agap. |
| interesse | 92.9 | Aug. | C | Sixt., Feliciss., Agap. |
| seruire | 75.12 | July | C | Daily |
| | 123.30 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| seruientes | 81.4 | July | C | Daily |
| | 127.12 | Sept. | C | Episc. Anniv. |
| | 165.2 | Dec. | C | Holy Innocents |
| mysteria tua celebrare | 79.17 | July | C | Daily |
| | 95.13 | Aug. | C | Laurence |
| | 124.5/6 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| exsequentes | 66.26 | July | C | Daily |
| experiamur | 95.13/14 | Aug. | C | Laurence |
| frequentare | 19.17/18 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 44.16 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 133.20 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| largiris | 12.6 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| libantes | 153.11 | Nov. | C | Clement & Felicity |
| percepimus | 115.25 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| perfice | 154.28 | Nov. | C | Chrysog. & Gregory |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| subsequamur | 19.17/18 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| | 44.16 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| sumpsimus Mich. | 107.21 | Sept. | C | Ded. Basilic. S. |
| | 155.23 | Nov. | C | Andrew |
| tractare | 63.16 | July | C | Daily |
| per haec beata mysteria illis gloriam contulisti, nobis indulgentiam largiris | 153.1 | Nov. | C | Clement & Felicity |

**mysteriis:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| agimus | 28.20 | May | C | Pentecost |
| celebrando suscepimus | 22.9 | May | C | Ascension |
| celebrata sollemnitas | 100.15 | Aug. | C | Agapetus |
| collata dona | 24.15 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| his (mysteriis) digni reddamur | 12.6/7 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| emundemur | 18.29/30 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| expiemur | 49.18 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| expiare | 136.29 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| expiati | 130.27 | Sept. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| exsequendis | 55.2 | July | C | The 7 Brothers |
| quibus...facis esse consortes | 115.25/26 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| inbuisti | 27.24/25 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| inbuerunt | 39.15 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| | 48.27/28 | June | C | Peter and Paul |
| incitata (plebs) | 31.27 | June | C | John the Baptist |
| informare | 115.10 | Sept. | C | Ember |
| instituta sunt (loca) Mich. | 106.23 | Sept. | C | Ded. Basilic. S. |
| nos munda | 142.16 | Oct. | C | Drought |
| quibus iustificas | 165.2/3 | Dec. | C | Holy Innocents |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| mundamur et pascimur | 26.28 | May | C | Vigil of Pentecost |
| placatus operare | 63.1/2 | July | C | Daily |
| profitemur | 130.15 | Sep. | C | Episc. anniv. |
| recreasti | 71.21 | July | C | Daily |
| reparati | 9.3 | Apr. | C | a feast of martyrs |
| mysteriis tuis uenerantur adsumptis | 167.20 | Dec. | C | Ember |

The varied uses and attributes of *mysterium* in the Veronense are immediately apparent from the above, and could easily form the subject of a more extended treatment than is possible here, as the list can be examined by quantity, by theological association, and by linkage with particular seasons and feasts in the liturgical year. Aspects of the *mysterium* vocabulary in the *Veronense* have been examined briefly by Lucchesi as part of a study of the phrase *mysterium fidei*,[6] to which separate subject we devote Chapter 8, and more extensively by Coless in the unpublished doctoral dissertation referred to in earlier chapters.[7] Since then there has been no major study of these specific texts.

Lucchesi identifies eleven ways in which *mysterium* is used:

1. A divine command.
2. The divine plan of salvation.
3. A saving act of God, e.g. the Incarnation.
4. Revelation, the whole of revealed truth.
5. Service of God.
6. Symbolism.
7. Celebration of a solemn feast.

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[6] D. Giovanni Lucchesi, *Mysterium Fidei: Il Testo della Consecrazione Eucaristica nel Canone Romano*, Biblioteca Cardinale Gaetano Cicognani 4 (Faenza: Stab. Grafico Fratelli Lega, 1959), pp. 83-84.

[7] See Chapters 4 and 5: G. Coless, 'Mysterium-Sacramentum'; also shorter published studies, for example '*Mysterium-Sacramentum*: Some Paschal Texts in the *Sacramentarium Veronenese*', *American Benedictine Review,* 27:1 (1976) 85-104; 'Theological Levels of the *Sacramentarium Veronense*', *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975), 356-59.

8. Rite of eucharistic celebration where the external reality signifies an inner work.
9. External and efficacious sign of grace.
10. The rite of Holy Communion [presumably including its reception]
11. The body and blood of Jesus veiled under the species of bread and wine.[8]

Lucchesi offers relatively little by way of commentary on these, except to say that the largest number of individual examples refer in some way directly to the eucharist.[9] An interesting example of which he does take particular notice is one in which *mysterium* is associated with *arcanum*:

> Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui pascalis sollemnitatis arcanum hodierni mysterii plenitudine perfecisti.[10]

He suggests that this is an example of a 'primitive' meaning, in that mystery seems to be associated with the revealing (or strictly 'completion', 'achievement') of a 'secret' (*arcanum*),[11] but such use is rare. Even so, it is suggestive of a much earlier way of speaking about such things that, in their context, an adherent of the mystery cults would perhaps have recognised. In this it is perhaps evidence of Baumstark's conclusion that the more ancient uses tend to occur at the more solemn seasons, although Baumstark had in mind survivals in the Roman liturgy of his own time.[12]

Gabriel Coless' 1967 study of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the *Veronense* claims to move beyond the philological tradition within liturgiology in which both Mohlberg and earlier De Ghellinck can be said to stand,[13] and yet ultimately fails to break out of liturgiology in order to embrace liturgical theology, also falling into the trap of seeking 'exactitude of meaning' when the possibility of this should not necessarily be assumed and which the evidence other sources shows to be a most unlikely result. While impressive in its intricacy

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[8] Lucchesi, *Mysterium Fidei*, p. 84.
[9] Ibid., p. 83.
[10] Vigil of Pentecost: Mohlberg, *Veronense*, no. 210.
[11] Lucchesi, *Mysterium Fidei*, pp. 83-4.
[12] Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, pp. 27-30.
[13] Coless, 'Mysterium-Sacramentum', pp. vi-vii.

and deserving of gratitude for the attention it draws to the vocabulary, ultimately the effect is to overwhelm with a mass of detail with relatively little attempt to speculate on the significance of what is found in the light of the cultural contexts and processes of liturgical evolution we have discussed, nor in relation to modern theological writing within and outside the discipline of liturgical studies, all of which we have shown to be relevant to the present task. Coless treats the *mysterium-sacramentum* relationship as the focus: this is productive, as we have seen, but it is the priority of *mysterium* which here most needs to be noticed. Forty years on, then, what can a fresh approach reveal?

**Commentary**

1. In accordance with the nature of the compilation, with the exception of an ordination prayer all examples occur in some form in the context of the eucharist. Mystery is frequently a describer of the eucharist, explicit or implicit, particularly when the use occurs in an opening collect, a secret prayer or a post-communion. There are many other uses, but the eucharistic ones bear interpretation beyond this association alone, as they convey a sense of the manner in which mystery is believed to function in the divine economy, its nature and its degree. It would be incorrect, because over-simplistic, to dismiss all these examples as no more than synonymous with 'eucharist'. Rather, as nuanced terms they serve to place eucharist in context and enrich its meaning and significance for the community in which it is celebrated. Consequently they can also increase our understanding of the theology of the liturgy in this period and its relationship with liturgical and theological development before and after.

2. Some of the meanings can refer directly to the eucharist or an aspect of it as *mysterium* because they have *another* meaning which *can* include the eucharist even if it does not in a particular instance, for example a divine command, a symbol, sign of grace, or a celebration of a solemn feast. *Mysterium* can have conceptual and metaphorical meanings as in 'a mystery is a sign of grace' and 'the eucharist is a mystery' (my examples). Where used metaphorically, the meaning refers to the technical sense of mystery, not to a general idea of something unknown: *mysterium* is a theological as well as a more general term,

and part of the complexity that results from attempts to interpret it in theological texts can be attributed to the fact that it may sometimes simply be used in its general, as it were 'secular' sense, and may not always automatically have a specifically 'theological' meaning. On the other hand, even the 'general' senses acquire theological meaning on account of their context: applying the word to an obviously theological term such as 'incarnation' immediately brings it into a theological context which must have theological meaning. Therefore all the uses in the texts studied here must be regarded as capable of theological interpretation on account of their context. Overall, *mysterium* is seen to be very flexible in its use in liturgical vocabulary; while the majority of examples apply to the eucharist, it is also used in other ways.

3. The epithets that occur most often in association with *mysterium* are *sacrum* (11 times), *caeleste* (10), and *diuinum* (6), to which may be added the less common but synonymous or emphatic *sancta, sacrosanctum, beata.* Mystery is an attribute of God and a means by which the holiness of God and the life of heaven are mediated and encountered in the liturgy and in the life of humanity. God is the source of mystery; mystery conveys blessing. By placing these associations at the heart of the life of the Church, its worship, the sacramental reality of the relationship between God and creation is emphasised, but without over-defining the manner in which this is so. None of the other words associated with *mysterium* do this either. Rather, they assist this primary sense of the divine initiative in worship and life.

4. This sense of mystery as divine initiative in the life of the Church is emphasised by epithets of nature and degree: *aeterna, gloriosa, ineffabile, inenarruile, magna, mirum, singulare, tantum.* Many of the terms reinforcing *mysterium* are commonly used of God and divine activity; instances in other, earlier texts were identified in the previous chapter. They frequently convey, or at least imply, reticence in the description of what is *ineffabile, inenarrauile*, thus reinforcing the point that this is not a mystery to be 'solved', but without rendering it impossible to encounter; its capacity to draw in is untouched.

5. The sense of *mysterium* as part of a language of encounter with the divine in worship which has a real bearing on future life and salvation is illustrated by such terms as *participatio*, used on three occasions:

> Uiuificet nos, quaesumus, domine, participatio tui sancta mysterii, et pariter nobis expationem tribuat et munimen: per. [July, Daily use]
>
> Intende, quaesumus, domine, sacrificium singulare; ut huius participatione mysterii, quae speranda credimus, expectata sumamus: per. [Sept., Ember Mass]
>
> Deus, auctor sincerae deuotionis et pacis, da, quaesumus, ut et maiestatem tuam conuenienter hoc munere ueneremur, et sacri participatione mysterii fideliter sensibus uniamus: per. [Sept., Episcopal anniversary]

The diverse occasions on which this form is used indicate that a universal truth is being conveyed, and not one associated only with a particular occasion in the liturgical year; in the context of the eucharist, and by implication more generally, the Church participates in the divine mysteries. *Participatio* implies more than simple sharing or witnessing. For Cicero a *particeps* is a comrade-in-arms: *huius belli particeps et socius et adjutor esse cogor*;[14] while an eighth-century use of the word at Lucca means a 'joint owner'.[15] Something of these classical and later meanings can be seen here in that participation implies an exchange worthy of those who are friends, the animation of a relationship in which gifts are given at a cost, received and used well. It implies co-responsibility, but also frailty, for the individual participant comes to the altar of God flawed, seeking healing and restoration. Participation implies change and result: in the examples enlivening, unity and protection from suffering are given as consequences of the *participatio.* These are consequences not only of participation in the eucharist, immensely significant though that is, but participation in the *mystery* of the eucharist. It is a place of encounter with God in which what is experienced with the senses is insufficient to describe what is happening, because what is happening cannot ultimately be described, although its effects may be known.

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[14] *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 9.10, 5 (Lewis & Short, s.v.).
[15] *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus*, ed. J.F. Niermeyer & C. van der Kieft (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 768. In classical Latin the word is sometimes *partiarius*.

6. Alongside use as a direct descriptor for the eucharist, *mysterium* is closely associated with the theme of salvation in these texts. The principal examples are:

> Sanctificati, domine, salutari mysterio quaesumus, ut pro nobis eorum non desit oratio, quorum nos donasti patrocinio gubernari: per. [June, Peter and Paul]

> Tribue, domine, quaesumus, ut mysterii salutaris et intellectu proficiamus et cultu: per. [July, Daily use]

> Deus, qui nos unigeniti tui clementer incarnatione redemisti, da nobis patrocinia tuorum continuata sanctorum, quibus capere ualeamus salutaris mysterii partionem: per. [Aug., Stephen]

> Uere dignum: [ ] et mysterium, quod extitit mundo salutare, principalis recordatione muneris adsequamur: per. [Preface, Dec., Christmas]

> Uere dignum: quoniam uerae magnum, quod sine exemplo et singulare, quod sine humana ratiocinatione mirabile tuae pietatis editum sacramentum, adque ideo sicut primis fidelibus extitit in sui credulitate praetiosum, ita nunc excusabilem conscientiam non reliquit, quae salutaris mysterii ueritatem toto etiam mundo testificante non sequitur. [ ] [Preface, Dec., Christmas]

> Aecclesiae tuae, domine, munera placatus adsume, quae et misericors offerenda tribuisti, et in nostrae salutis potenter efficis transire mysterium: per. [Dec., Ember]

These examples reveal a concern to place the 'mystery (or mysteries) of salvation' in the liturgical context, and convey a sense of the liturgical celebration as a vehicle for encounter with the reality of the work of Christ, the mystery of whom is for the salvation of the world. Once again, mystery is regarded as dynamic, expressive of a point of intersection with the divine. The very unknowability of God is the key to fruitful encounter with him. Only in mystery is God truly known. Also implied is the centrality of the Eucharist in the facilitation of the encounter: here the mystery is made present. Another text in this collection accordingly begins *Deus, qui remedia salutis humanae in praesentis mysterii sollemnitate posuisti* [Oct., Temp. Sicc.]. While on a basic level this means the mystery currently being celebrated, that is the Eucharistic liturgy during which this prayer is used, if it is interpreted in a more poetic way

the use of the word *praesens*, in its similarity to *praesentia*, suggests the reality of the mystery itself, and the possibility of objective encounter with the substance of the mystery without resolving or diminishing it.

7. Also called mysteries are such diverse aspects of Christian belief as the four gospels (*mysterium quadriformis euangelii*), Eastertide (*mysterium quinquaginta dierum*, possibly understanding *mysterium* here as synonymous with the risen Christ), and the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul (*Deus, qui hunc diem beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli mysterio consecrasti*). This is further evidence for the flexible uses to which the term is put, and yet all the uses point to a single truth, that of the unknown God revealed in Jesus Christ.

8. The prefaces are a good single group of texts which perform the same function in the liturgy to isolate for particular attention. The Roman Missal of 1570, in which the Roman liturgy reached essentially its final form before the reforms of the 1960s, contains by comparison a very small number of prefaces, of which none contain the word *mysterium*. By contrast, the *Veronense* has many prefaces, and sometimes several alternatives for a single feast. An extant although admittedly confined western liturgy still in use which has this characteristic is the Mozarabic Rite, but the present Roman liturgy even in its revised form with many more prefaces than the missal of 1570 fails to reflect such a diversity. Of the many in the *Veronense*, nine contain *mysterium,* although within them Mohlberg identifies thirteen separate associations (identified by 'P' in the table above). Of these, three occur at Christmas, three in masses for a time of drought, two in masses for the feast of SS Peter and Paul, and one each for the dedication of the basilica of St Michael, the feast of St John the Baptist, an Ember mass, the feast of SS Adauctus and Felix, and the Ascension. *Mysterium* is placed in a wide variety of liturgical contexts in a relatively small group of examples, and not necessarily in direct attribution to the subject of the celebration. There is also variety to be seen in the qualifiers used: *mysterium* is *singulare*, *celebritas* and *diuinum*. It is also said to be *circa nos* and the subject of an *actio* (i.e. the Eucharist), underlining the sense of the mystery which, although unfathomable, is neither spatially nor spiritually conceived as at a remove but which surrounds in particular time and in eternity. At Ascension mystery is spoken of in the

context of the completion of the saving work of the Easter Christ: *in hac die, quo Iesus Christus filius tuus dominus noster diuini consummato fine mysterii dispositionis antique munus expleuit.* This illustrates the tension between the nature of liturgical time and the fact that what is being celebrated is already true and effective, just as the Advent Christ is at the same time he who has come, will come and is present now. Mystery transcends time and yet holds it in a creative tension with eternity.

## II. The *Rotulus* of Ravenna

The second group of examples of the use of mystery-language is in another form of liturgical document but with similar content. The *Rotulus* of Ravenna (Milano, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, S.P., Cassaf. 1) is a strip of vellum and thus effectively a scroll, the writing of which is placed in the second half of the eighth century.[16] It includes forty collects probably for use in the Advent season, perhaps in the context of the office rather than eucharist. One of the prayers appears in the Christmas material in the *Veronense*. Indeed according to Vogel the *Rotulus* is one of 'nombreux parallèles aux formules léoniennes' from the area of Italy and north of the Alps.[17] Mohlberg edited the *Rotulus* in the same volume as his edition of the *Veronense* and identified ten uses of *mysterium*. These appear in the following table with an additional occurrence apparently missed by him.

### TABLE: *mysterium* in the *Rotulus* of Ravenna

References are to the numbering in the Mohlberg edition.

**mysterium:**

| | |
|---|---|
| mysteria...caelebrentur | 177.9/10 |

**mysterium, mysteria:**

| | |
|---|---|
| crescentia | 177.9/10 |
| inenarrauile | 175.12/13 |

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[16] Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, p. 78 and note 206; Gamber, *Codices*, no. 660, pp. 317-18; K. Gamber, *Codices Liturgici Latini Antiquiores/Supplementum*, ed. B. Baroffio et al. (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 1988), no. 660, p. 77. Vogel comments that the *Rotulus* is the only surviving example of a 'nombre respectable' of liturgical books which had existed in Ravenna before the 6th century: Vogel, *Sources,* pp. 27-28 and note 83.

[17] Vogel, *Sources*, p. 35.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| cuius incarnationis | 175.13 | |
| magnae incarnationis | 174.33 | |
| tantae incarnationis | 173.6/7 | |
| dominicae natiuitatis | 177.9 | [missed by Mohlberg] |
| **mysterii, mysteriorum:** | | |
| colamus | 173.7 | |
| frequentamus | 173.7/8 | |
| ad...mysterio perueniant | 174.33/34 | |
| ante cuius...mysterium exaltauerunt montes | 175.12/13 | |

If these prayers were used for the office, the occurrences of *mysterium* in them show that liturgically the term was used widely outside the context of the eucharist. Three of the occasions given in the table refer to the mystery of the incarnation (*mysterium incarnationis*), which would fit with the proposal of Advent as the context of use of the *Rotulus* prayers. As with the *Veronense*, there is a desire to set the concept of mystery in the place of encounter with the divine and to suggest that it is in worship that the mysteries of salvation acquire an enhanced reality for the believer. It is also thereby that the incarnation is not decipherable by human reasoning, nor did it occur at human instigation, but is part of the revelation in Jesus Christ of the hidden purposes of God that is the *mysterion* of the New Testament. This idea occurs also in the *Veronense*:

> quoniam uerae magnum [the incarnation], quod sine exemplo est singulare, quod sine humana ratiocinatione mirabile tuae pietatis editum sacramentum.[18]

*Sacramentum* is used here in place of *mysterium*, which appears later in the same formula in connection with salvation (*salutaris mysterium*). Compared with the *Rotulus* examples, it may be that the *Veronense* author simply uses both in order to avoid repetition of the same term, but as we have argued, they are not so straightforwardly synonymous; occurrences of both in the same formula create an opportunity to see how they differ. In this example *Veronense* uses *mysterium*

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[18] Preface, Dec., Christmas: Mohlberg 161:20-28, my emphasis.

to refer to the matter of salvation, and *sacramentum* to the means by which God achieves it for humanity. It is the *sacramentum* of the incarnation which reveals and makes accessible the *mysterium* of salvation. This is no obsolete idea: it is entirely in harmony with the understanding of the present *Cathechism of the Catholic Church*, which states that 'in later usage [that is presumably after the fourth century when the combination of the terms had become common] the term *sacramentum* emphasizes the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation which was indicated by the term *mysterium*. In this sense, Christ himself is the mystery of salvation.'[19] In the same document the church is spoken of analogously as the 'sacrament of salvation'[20] on account of the fact that 'the saving work of [Christ's] holy and sanctifying humanity [the result of the incarnation] is the sacrament of salvation...revealed and active in the Church's sacraments...The Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies.'[21] This preserves the *Veronense* meaning in that it is the church which is the sacrament, not salvation itself, which would be more appropriately described as a mystery, but in wishing to focus it in *the* sacraments, it betrays a later, narrower understanding of sacrament which is not present in the texts studied here. Nevertheless in both contexts the sacrament mediates the mystery, and this agrees with the trend seen in the texts examined in Chapter 5, which combine *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the same phrase or sentence. On the matter of the incarnation in the context of this vocabulary, we can agree with de Lubac:

> C'est ainsi que le *sacramentum incarnationis dominicae* sera plutôt le mystère du Verbe incarné en tant qu'il est le signe ou le sacrement de la divinité, tandis que le *mysterium incarnationis* sera plutôt ce même mystère en tant qu'il est lui-même mystérieux et qu'il se trouve signifié par ses *sacramenta* dan l'Écriture.[22]

The *Rotulus* examples which associate *mysterium* directly with the incarnation might seem to suggest that where just one term is used, *mysterium* could also refer to the means by which the effect is achieved. It may nevertheless be argued that in these instances it is used in reference to the essence of the

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[19] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 774.
[20] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 776, quoting *Lumen Gentium* 9.2, 48.2 and *Gaudium et Spes* 45.1.
[21] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 774.
[22] De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 57.

incarnation, its hidden reality in the divine plan, rather than to its effect on the Church. Such a reading also preserves the *Veronense* meaning, and underlines the sense of *mysterium* as of the essence of the divine nature. Accordingly, in the *Rotulus* examples the means by which the 'mystery of the incarnation' is mediated is not relevant to the phrase in question. For instance:

> ...ut tantae incarnationis mysterium humiles famuli et fidei integritate colamus, et deuoto semper obsequio fraequentamus: per. [173: 3-8]

> Domine aeternae, dei filius, ante cuius inenarriuile incarnationis mysterium exultauerunt montes et iocundati sunt colles... [175: 12-17]

In both these formulae, the mystery of the incarnation is the object of worship, whether of the faithful or of the 'mountains and hills'. What is worshipped is the ineffable truth of the incarnation, not its effect, hence the use of *mysterium*.

## III. The Gelasian Sacramentary

'The Gelasian Sacramentary' or 'Old Gelasian' is the name usually given to a seventh-century text in an eighth-century Vatican manuscript (Vatican Cod. Regin. 316).[23] It must not be confused, with a group of eighth-century texts surviving in several manuscripts which, though Roman in type, are more properly called 'Frankish Gelasians' on account of their provenance in Gallic monastic communities, although the so-called 'Old Gelasian' is known to have also been used in Gaul as well as in Rome. It is the earliest Roman book in which the material is arranged according to the liturgical year rather than to the monthly scheme adopted in the *Veronense.* The Old Gelasian is genuinely a book, a *codex*, and so represents a further stage in the evolution of liturgical texts of which the *Veronense* and the *Rotulus* are earlier stages. Its organisation reflects this, and like the *Veronense* it too is an important source of many prayers in the *Missale Romanum*.[24] In his 1967 thesis Coless hoped to examine the *mysterium*-

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[23] *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aecclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli*, ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, series maior, fontes 4 (Rome: Herder, 1960); Vogel, *Sources*, pp. 48-57; Gamber, *Codices*, no. 610, pp. 301-303; Gamber, *Supplementum*, no. 610, pp. 73-74; Palazzo, *Liturgical Books*, pp. 42-48; Folsom, 'Liturgical Books', pp. 248-51.

[24] See Bruylants, *Les Oraisons*, passim.

*sacramentum* relationship in it, but did not have the space to do so: here is offered some comment on the use of *mysterium* in particular, with some remarks on instances of both terms in close proximity.

For the purpose of the present study, *mysterium* citations in formulae for use in the seasons of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week and Easter will be considered: these include examples from periods absent in the *Veronense* and *Rotulus*.

**TABLE: *mysterium* in the Gelasian Sacramentary: Christmas to Easter**

References are to the Mohlberg edition.
There being no analytical index, this table has been compiled from an examination of Mohlberg's edited text.

**mysterium, mysteria:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| cuiuis lucis m. in terra cognouimus | 5 | Christmas Eve (night) | Collect |
| m. cuius nos participes esse uoluisti | 67 | Epiphany (day mass) | Post-communion |
| per huius celebritatis m. aeternitatis tuae lumen cunctis gentibus suscitasti | 68 | Epiphany (day mass) | Prayer over people |
| quod est nobis in praesenti uita m. fiat aeternitatis auxilium | 102 | Quinquagesima (Sat.) | Post-communion |
| prosequere...ieiuniorum sacra m. | 245 | Lent (week 4 Fri.) | Collect |
| populis qui sacra m. contigerunt | 248 | Lent (week 4 Fri.) | Prayer over people |
| caeleste m. quo diabolus cum sua pompa distruetur | 283 | Lent (week 3 Mon.) | Scrutiny text ('denuntiatio') |
| omnia festi paschalis introire m. | 349 | Holy Week (Thurs., reconcil. of penitents) | Collect |
| recolentes m. quibus eos tuis adoptasti regalibus institutis | 508 | Easter season | Hanc igitur |
| paschale/pascale | 235 | Lent | Collect |
| | 336 | Holy Week (Mon.) | Collect |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 468 | Easter octave | Collect |
| | 471 | Easter octave | Preface |
| | 514 | Easter season | Post-communion |
| paschalia | 486 | Easter octave | Secret |
| sanctum | 514 | Easter season | Post-communion |
| sancta | 265 | Lent (week 5 Wed.) | Secret |
| | 328 | Lent | Exhortation to catechumens |
| sacra | 245 | Lent (week 4 Fri.) | Collect |
| | 248 | Lent (week 4 Fri.) | Prayer over people |
| | 336 | Holy Week (Mon.) | Secret |
| beata | 131 | Quadragesima (Sat.) | Secret |
| | 202 | Lent (week 3 Mon.) | Secret |
| caeleste | 283 | Lent (week 3 Mon.) | Scrutiny text ('denuntiatio') |
| gloriosa | 213 | Lent (week 3 Thu.) | Post-communion |
| sumpta | 261 | Lent (week 5 Mon.) | Post-communion |
| celebranda | 380 | Holy Week (Chrism) | Hanc igitur |
| percipienda | 194 | Lent 3 (scrutiny mass) | Secret |
| diuinum | 14 | Christmas Eve (morning) | Preface |
| nostrae salutis | 165 | Lent 2 | Secret |
| trinitatis | 9 | Christmas Eve (night) | Post-communion |
| natiuitatis | 2 | Christmas Eve (None) | Collect (office) |
| regni tui | 65 | Epiphany (day mass) | Preface |
| corporis et sanguis sui | 380 | Holy Week (Chrism) | Hanc igitur |
| dominicae orationis | 328 | Lent (to catechumens) | Exhort. on Lord's Prayer |
| fidei catholicae una | 328 | Lent (to catechumens) | Exhort. on Lord's Prayer |
| frequentare | 170 | Lent (week 2 Mon.) | Secret |
| recensentes | 468 | Easter octave | Collect |
| recolentes | 508 | Easter season | Hanc igitur |

**mysterii, mysteriorum:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| mysterii sit medicina | 276 | Lent (week 5 Fri.) | Post-communion |
| tanti | 276 | Lent (week 5 Fri) | Post-communion |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| celebritate m. | 344 | Holy Week (Thurs.) | Collect |
| praesentiae corporalis m. | 502 | Easter octave | Preface |

**mysterio:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| renouationem condicionis humanae, que m. continet | 78 | Easter octave | ?Post-communion |
| per hanc munera, qui domini Iesu Christi arcanae natiuitatis m. gerimus | 50 | Christmas octave | Secret |
| caelesti m. et pascimur et potamur | 22 | Christmas day | Post-communion |
| diuino | 132 | Quadragesima (Sat.) | Post-communion |
| passionis | 346 | Holy Week (Thurs.) | Secret |
| | 391 | Holy Wk. (Thurs. at vesp.) | Secret |
| baptismatis | 442 | Easter Vigil (readings) | Collect after reading |

**mysteriis:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| natiuitatis hodiernae m. apta perueniant | 7 | Christmas Eve (night) | Secret |
| tuis...operare m. | 158 | Ordination mass | Secret |
| paschalibus m. initiata | 456 | Mass of Easter Night | Secret |
| sacris m. innouemur et moribus | 461 | Mass of Easter Night | Post-communion |
| sanctis edocti m. | 254 | Lent 5 (scrutiny mass) | Collect |
| adsumptis | 56 | Mass 'ad prohibendum ab idolis' | Post-communion |
| diuinis | 126 | Quadragesima (Fri.) | Secret |
| tantes | 248 | Lent (week 4 Mon.) | Secret |
| caelestibus | 250 | Lent (week 4 Sat.) | Collect |
| sacris | 282 | Lent (week 5 Sat.) | Prayer over people |

## Commentary

1. Many of the uses of *mysterium* in this text are linguistically similar to those in the *Veronense*, which confirms that a rich liturgical vocabulary of mystery in

western texts was certainly well-established by the seventh century, and possibly earlier if material in the *Veronense* was originally composed in the sixth or possibly fifth centuries. While the texts so far examined have a Roman character, the Gallican influences on the Old Gelasian, although it is of Roman origin, and the fact that is known to have been used in Gaul point to such a vocabulary not being restricted to a particular 'local' use, and may indicate a means by which its possibilities were communicated and adopted although the history of western liturgy in the middle ages could be described as the history of the eventual triumph of one 'local' use, the Roman, relatively speaking over almost all the others.

2. As with the *Veronense*, while in the Old Gelasian *mysterium* frequently refers to the eucharist, the consecrated elements and their reception, typically in secret and post-communion prayers, there are also many other ways in which mystery language is employed. Indeed the wider use of mystery to show the interillumination between eucharist and the economy of salvation is further underlined by the evidence of Lenten and Paschal examples. If this is true of this text, it is surely likely that uses of the same kind were present in the parts of the *Veronense* presumed lost. *Mysterium* is not confined to a particular season.

3. A similar range of epithets emphasising the divine origin of the *mysterium* appears in these texts: *sacra, sancta, beata, caeleste, diuinum.*

4. The epithets of nature and degree are also similar: *gloriosa, tantum.*

5. The sense of encounter with the divine in worship is continued, and if anything is richer. A collect for Christmas Eve has *cuius lucis mysterium in terra cognouimus,* which connects with the idea of heaven touching earth in the incarnation. A post-communion for Epiphany refers to *mysterium cuius nos participes esse uoluisti.* It is the will of God that the Church *participates* in the mystery. The mystery is described as '[our] food and drink' (*caelesti mysterium et pascimur et potamur*) in a post-communion for Christmas Day, which may be both a direct reference to the Eucharist just celebrated *and* a suggestion that the

Church is fed by the mystery of the incarnation which the eucharist proclaims sacramentally.

6. The Lenten material makes use of *mysterium* in the context of penitence and initiation, with the implication that the sacramental rites associated with these are mediators of the single mystery of God in Christ. At the scrutiny of the candidates on the Monday of the third week of Lent, the following text appears in that part of the scrutiny known as the *denuntiatio*:

> caeleste mysterium quo diabolus cum sua pompa distruetur.[25]

This is a direct reference to the examination of the candidates at their forthcoming baptism, when they will be asked if they renounce the 'devil and his pomps'. Here, it is the heavenly mystery which does the destroying: the candidates cannot bear the task alone, but must rely on the strength of God. In a scrutiny mass for the preceding day, the third Sunday of Lent, the secret contains the phrase *mysteria percipienda:* the faithful must strive to perceive in the mystery (here most obviously in the elements of the Eucharist, although a less specific interpretation is possible) the source of their salvation. The latter is explicitly mentioned on the second Sunday of Lent in the secret: *mysterium nostrae salutis*. After all, as a post-communion for the Friday of the fifth week of Lent has it, the prayer is that *mysterii sit medicina.* Encounter with the mystery has healing as object and effect, a use seen already in the Veronense. The catechetic use of mystery language is also apparent in an exhortation on the Lord's Prayer, addressed to catechumens, in which both the prayer itself (*mysterium dominicae orationis*) and the Catholic faith (*mysterium fidei catholicae una*) are described as 'mysteries', further evidence for the diversity and richness of the term.

7. The Holy Week examples introduce the idea of the *mysterium paschale,* here in anticipation of the coming celebration of the resurrection. On Thursday there is an emphasis on preparation through penitence and forgiveness, with a collect at a mass for the reconciliation of penitents speaking of *omnia festi paschalis introire mysteria.* Here it is the mysteries (pl.) of the whole experience of the

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[25] Mohlberg edition, 283.

feast which are in view, with the implication that they cannot be celebrated without the necessary state of grace. Before the celebration of the resurrection may begin, however, the death of the Lord must be recalled, and so on Thursday also appear two references to the *mysterium passionis.*

8. Easter itself brings more use of *mysteria paschalia* and *mysterium paschale* in the octave and in the subsequent season, and has additional uses which reflect the many-faceted understanding of *mysterium* in its liturgical context, although all referring ultimately to the single *mysterium* which is encountered in the Easter celebration. Prominent among these is the reference to *mysterium baptismatis* in a collect associated with a reading at the paschal vigil, reflecting the initiatory aspect of the occasion, and later picked up in the secret for the mass of Easter night in the phrase *paschalibus mysteriis initiata*, which finally links in the context of mystery the two ideas of initiation and the paschal work of Christ. The wider sense of the saving work of Christ in his death and resurrection is conveyed in the octave of Easter, in what may be a post-communion, by *renouationem condicionis humanae, que mysterium continet.* The work achieved by Christ, although real in effect, remains a mystery, although one into which the Church can enter.

A further area of interest in the Old Gelasian concerns the relative meanings of *mysterium* and *sacramentum.* We have already seen how they are used deftly and distinctly in the *Veronense* and the *Rotulus* of Ravenna as a vocabulary of the activity of God in the Church. The following table lists examples of formulae from the Old Gelasian where both words occur.

**TABLE: *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the Gelasian Sacramentary**

References to Mohlberg edition.

1. Da...ieiuniorum magnificae sacramenti et dignae...semper tractare mysteria.
(125, Quadragesima Fri., Collect)

2. Sacramentis...auxiliis...tuae redemptionis effectum et mysteriis capiamus et moribus: per.
(161, Ordination mass, Post-communion)

3. Paschalia sacramenta...mysteriis quibus renati sunt.
(177, Lent week 2, Mon., Prayer over people)

4. Hos...quos reficis sacramentis...redemptionis effectum et mysteriis capiamus et moribus.
(218, Lent week 3, Fri., Post-communion)

5. Capere paschalia sacramenta...mysteriis quibus renati sunt...his operibus.
(343, Lent week 6, Tues., Post-communion)

6. percepti noui sacramenti mysterium.
(373, Mass of reconciliation of penitents, Holy Week Thurs., Post-communion)

7. idem.
(393, Holy Week Thurs., Mass at vespers, post-communion)

8. Magnum igitur mysterium et noctis huius mirabile sacramentum dignis necesse est laudibus cumulari.
(426, Holy Week, Easter vigil, Blessing of Easter Candle)

9. Sacramentorum tuorum operaris / tantis misteriis exeqentis / huius eiusdemque elimenti mysterio finis esset uiciis.
(445, Holy Week, Easter Vigil, Consecration of the Font)

10. ineffabile sacramentum / quos regenerationis mysterii dignatus es innouare.
(485, Easter octave, Collect)

11. paschalia sacramenta / mysteriis quibus renati sunt.
(513, Easter season, Preface)

## Commentary

In these examples the use of *sacramentum* seems to make possible an even richer employment of *mysterium*. Just as sacrament can be said to mediate mystery, so the one term opens up the full possibilities of the other.

Three ideas appear more than once. The 'paschal sacraments', by which is meant the rites celebrated at Easter (including those of initiation), are three times said to effect 'rebirth in the mysteries'. The phrase is used twice in Lent: in a prayer over the people and in a post-communion. Here the Eucharist is seen in

terms of a preparation for the celebration to come. The third occurrence is in a preface for the Easter season, where the sense is of the paschal celebration which continues. In all three the 'mystery' is clearly the deeper truth to which the celebration of the sacrament gives access. The believer is reborn in the mysteries by the sacraments of Easter. The fact that this idea is used in both Lent and Eastertide and in three different liturgical elements of the Eucharist is further evidence for flexibility, and also suggests a desire to underscore the point by repeating a phrase at different points in the community's journey though Lent and its celebration of the resurrection. It may also, incidentally, suggest that the same person composed both the Lenten and Eastertide material in the Gelasian sacramentary.

The second repeated idea is that of the sacraments giving access to the mysteries which themselves have a redemptive effect. This appears in 2 post-communions, for an Ordination mass and during the third week of Lent. By way of 'the mysteries', here meaning the essence of the sacraments, and by manner of life, the 'effect', perhaps 'reality' of redemption may be grasped or assumed. Again, 'mysteries' are not simply synonymous with 'paschal sacraments', but the use of the word points to the objective reality conveyed in them.

The third idea is even clearer. In two post-communions for use on Thursday in Holy Week, the day on which the institution of the Eucharist is recalled, the phrase *percepti noui sacramenti mysterium* is used. This alludes to the institution itself, the discernment and experience of divine activity it engenders, and the fact that this whole process is *mysterium.* The latter is the controlling concept. While as we have seen it is possible to refer to the 'sacrament of the mystery', such is the power of the term that 'the mystery of the sacrament' need not imply a synonymous interpretation, but describes the operation of the sacrament, the way in which it works, as having its source in the hidden purposes of God.

Two further examples merit some comment; both occur at the Easter Vigil. At the blessing of the Easter Candle the prayer (no. 8 above) speaks of the necessity of literally 'heaping up' praise on the 'great mystery' and 'wonderful sacrament' of this night. In this case the epithets suggest that the double use of

*mysterium* and *sacramentum* probably owes more to style than a desire to nuance the sentence. Nevertheless it is thought acceptable to apply both words to the night itself, conveying a sense of the enormity of the occasion, the most important liturgical celebration of the year. The many rites are parts of the single mystery which is celebrated through sacramental action. The night and all that is experienced in it points to the inner mystery of Christ rising gloriously from the dead, the object of the praise with which the night is to be filled.

The second example from the liturgy of Easter occurs at the blessing of the font (no. 9 above), a text which came to be included in the Roman Missal of Pius V, and in modified form in that of Paul VI. In this it reflects Baumstark's rule of thumb that the more ancient uses survive at the more solemn seasons, and indeed the rich sacramental vocabulary is a feature of such survivals. It states that the effect of the sacraments is achieved through God's power, and that we are unworthy to perform 'such mysteries'. A synonymous interpretation could be placed on this too, but a more layered commentary could see 'such mysteries' as a qualifying reference to the sacraments, pointing to their hidden, objective truth rather than to what is performed. It would not work the other way round: sacraments can be mysteries, but mysteries cannot be sacraments. The momentum is in one direction only, as mystery always remains a descriptor of the divine source of anything a sacrament can be.

These examples show a sophisticated use of the two terms which, by deft handling of language, nuance, and echoing of previous and future occasions through repeated phrases, bring to life the liturgical cycle of Lent, Holy Week and Easter. This cycle is shown to be a theological unity rather than a series of separate occasions, held together by the concepts of renewal and rebirth in the mystery of salvation. It is surely significant that mystery language is used to powerful effect in the Easter liturgy at two high points in the rite which focus on the fundamental paschal symbols of the candle and the font.

The language used in these texts is carefully chosen, and anything but arbitrary. Nor is it chosen for rhetorical or performative effect alone, although this consideration is and ought to be a part of any liturgical composition. Rather it reflects a highly developed liturgical theology in which the concept of mystery

has a central place, distinct from that of sacrament but often acting in fruitful partnership with it.

## *Mysterium* in Liturgical Texts

The main general conclusion to be drawn from the study of the uses of *mysterium* in these distinct texts is the sheer range and possibility. It is as if there is a reluctance to pin down the very term which denotes the instinctive reluctance to remove the initiative from God. It is a language of awe, but also of confidence in the transforming truth of what must remain unseen if it is not to be compromised by human attempts to over-explain or define. It is as if *mysterium* is used where no other word will do to convey this understanding. Any reluctance to use the word on account of potential confusion with pagan religion is entirely absent, and so is underlined the triumph of Christianity in the west: *mysterium* is in some sense a celebration of that triumph. The Christian *mysterium* has overcome the secret mysteries of the gods, and Augustine's assertion is shown to be true: 'there is no other mystery of God, except Christ' (*Non est enim aliud Dei mysterium nisi Christus*), which alludes to Revelation 10.7, 'in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.' Augustine concludes this having earlier referred to the *sacramentum* which was hidden (*idem sacramentum occultam erat*): the incarnation of Christ, which now 'has come', just as Christ the judge will come in the last days. The incarnation *is* the *sacramentum,* the visible manifestation, of Christ who *is* the only *mysterium* of God.[26] In Augustine's understanding the incarnation of the Word is the *sacramentum* of the *mysterium*, incidentally a clear instance of the distinguishing of the terms.

If there is one mystery, how can *mysterium* be used in so many ways, which might seem to diminish any sense of this? The answer lies in the fact that all the liturgical examples of *mysterium,* whatever their immediate and specific sense, can be seen as reflecting the conclusion so forcefully expressed by Augustine; whatever their specific use, all nevertheless point to the *one* mystery

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[26] *Epistola* 187, *De Praesentia Dei*, 11, 34 (PL 33, 846).

and can only be understood in relation to it, of which they are constant reminders. To use the word *mysterium* is to not so much to reveal as to *evoke* the mystery revealed in Christ and proclaimed in the scriptures: to apply *mysterium* richly to specific ideas, events and things is to use the possibilities of language to enhance the centrality of this single truth. *Mysterium* is a unifying term which links the pluriform aspects of the one Mystery, the Word made flesh. In this they differ in how this connection is made, from the direct reference - *mysterium incarnationis* – to the allusion. 'There is no other mystery', and yet its unity is revealed in many ways which are confidently celebrated in the liturgy.

*Mysterium* as manifold evocation of the single mystery occurs in liturgical formulae which have been fixed as written texts. Because this requires more of the text, so *mysterium* is one of the ways in which the requirement is met. As text the evocation of the one mystery happens visually, orally, and audibly. It is seen in the text, it is spoken, and it is heard. Seen, it functions like a detail in a painting: there is a certain level of meaning within itself (the lexical definition of the word) that might theoretically fit a number of contexts, and there is the meaning that is only fully understood in relation to the context, its place in relation to the rest of the picture, to whose overall message the detail contributes and makes 'more than it is'. Thus while *mysterium* is a detail of the text on the one level, on the other it contributes to a deeper meaning which the text as a whole communicates, a meaning which is 'more than it is'. The word spoken and heard is not spoken in isolation, but in the context of a liturgical formula which itself acquires meaning from the context of the liturgical celebration, in which wider context it is heard. Liturgy is on one level a series of words and actions, but in celebrating the single mystery of Christ the Word, it is 'more than it is': liturgical language facilitates and evokes the limitless implications of the incarnation. *Mysterium* is a particularly important indicator of this wider process: it signifies and points to what lies beyond the text and the action, but which is encountered in them. In the western texts that have been studied in this chapter, *mysterium* is shown to be of central importance. In its versatility it is 'not bound' to narrow definition, but evokes the word of God which is 'not bound', which itself proclaims the Word in whose incarnation earth is bound to heaven, who is bound on the cross but freed from the bonds of death, and in whose *mysterium*

*passionis* is the loosing of the fetters of human sin. *Mysterium* indicates the liberation of humanity in Christ.

This chapter has sought to analyse in detail the uses of *mysterium* in the texts selected. There are two further issues which refer to the eucharistic prayer specifically in the period in question: the title sometimes given to that section of it containing the institution narrative, and the inclusion in that narrative of the phrase *mysterium fidei*; to these we now turn.

# CHAPTER 8

## *MYSTERIUM* AND THE *POST-SANCTUS* EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

As well as the examples of formulae used during the celebration of the eucharist, including eucharistic prefaces, which were the subject of the previous chapter, the *post-sanctus* section of the emerging eucharistic prayers of the west requires special attention, in particular that section of the Roman Eucharistic Prayer which came to be known as the 'Canon of the Mass' and within it the institution narrative.

### *Mysterium* and 'Sacred Formula'

The concern of the early church to keep the details of the Eucharistic words of Jesus from those not baptized is the object of the classic study of Joachim Jeremias, who argues for the importance of 'the protection of the sacred formula.'[1] Jeremias claims that this explains the omission of an account of the Last Supper in the Gospel of John, and suggests that early Christianity inherited an esoteric element from mystery religions and from the secrecy of the meals of the Essenes in the Palestine of the New Testament period. He finds evidence in the New Testament itself that is further indication of esoteric concerns, including the presence of the word *mysterion* in the book of Revelation (17.5, 7), in the teaching of Jesus, and further indications in Apocalyptic Judaism.[2] In early (including Pauline) Christianity he finds many cryptic sayings but 'no question of an elaborate arcane discipline in the way of the mystery religions.' Jeremias identifies efforts from an early stage to protect the eucharistic words from profanation and mis-construction, noting that in the oldest tradition Goguel and Loisy 'detect a tendency to a veiled manner of speaking,' such that 'the essential word, "this is my body", is strictly unintelligible to the uninitiated reader'. In the Pauline-Lukan tradition the word over the wine may represent 'an effort to guard

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[1] J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966), p. 125. We have noted earlier that the universal practice of the *disciplina arcani* is now not universally accepted among scholars, among them Day, 'Adherence'.

[2] Jeremias, pp. 125-30.

the Lord's Supper against misinterpretation, or to rule out possible misrepresentations (e.g. drinking blood).'[3] Luke's habit in Acts of referring to the Supper, including here the communal meals of apostles, 'exclusively in allusions and ambiguous phrases', for example 'the breaking of bread' (Acts 2.42), leads Jeremias to conclude that 'the intention is that the non-Christian should not understand the references.'[4] He follows Goguel and Goosens in believing that there is similar evidence in the Letter to the Hebrews, in that in 6.1 and following the eucharist is not mentioned in the list of subjects for beginners in the faith, probably because it was reserved for the 'mature'.[5] Similar concerns are then found in the *Didache*, in the letter of Pliny to Trajan, in Justin Martyr, in the *Apostolic Tradition* and in an inscription of Abercius dating from the end of the second century. In this text the eucharist is 'completely expressed in symbolic-mysterious language':

> And everywhere (faith) set before me for food a fish [Christ] from the fountain, mighty and stainless, which a pure virgin [Mary] had caught, and gave this to friends to eat always, having good wine and giving the mixed cup with bread.[6]

This might just as easily be oblique poetic language rather than a deliberate attempt at obfuscation for reasons of security, but Jeremias is anxious to say that while a desire to protect the details of the Eucharist on account of its sacredness undoubtedly emerges and develops, this is emphatically not the same as the more fully developed arcane discipline of the mystery religions or the Essenes, perhaps betraying Jeremias' cautious stance on the relationship between the Hellenistic mysteries and Christianity. His conclusion is important for the liturgical implications:

> A corresponding change in the liturgical practice went hand in hand with these developments in the transmission of the eucharistic words. This begins with the separation of the Eucharist from the meal proper in order to exclude the unbaptized from

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[3] Ibid., p. 130 and notes 1, 2.
[4] Ibid., pp. 133-34.
[5] Ibid., p. 134.
[6] Ibid., p. 136. Text and another trans. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 2, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1889), pp. 496-97.

> the Eucharist, and quickly leads to the reservation of even the meal proper to the baptized alone.[7]

Bradshaw, however, in a recent study has argued that the meal survived longer in some places than has hitherto been thought.[8]

Is the practice in some liturgical milieux of calling the Canon the *mysterium* directly related to this original concern, given that after the fourth century the *disciplina arcani* gradually disappears?[9] Augustine refers to a *prex mystica* in the *De Trinitate*,[10] but although he is talking about the transformation of bread and wine, in context these words seem to have a more abstract meaning in the sense of 'by mystic prayer', rather than pointing to a definite *title*. Later examples found in liturgical texts, however, definitely apply this title, either directly or indirectly, to the 'sacred formula'. Duchesne implies precisely this in noting that 'in the ancient Gallican books the account of the institution of the Eucharist is always omitted, or is merely indicated by the first words of it. The celebrant must have known it by heart.'[11] Duchesne does not attempt further explanation of the omission, and does not consider the possibility that the 'knowing by heart' was on account of a continuing attitude of protection and reverence attaching to the eucharistic words of Jesus several centuries after the early evidence noted by Jeremias, and is linked to the principle of improvisation.[12] The emergence of texts could then be evidence for the disappearance of the *disciplina arcani*, however patchily it had in reality been observed, but when fixed texts appear, Gallican and Mozarabic examples call this part of the prayer the *mysterium* or *secreta* even though the text of it is given. The terms are apparently used interchangeably since where there is a prayer at the end of the canon it is called either *post mysterium* (e.g. the vigil of Christmas) or *post secreta* (e.g. Christmas day), for instance in the early eighth-century

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[7] Jeremias, p. 136.
[8] P.F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, Alcuin Club Collections 80 (London: SPCK, 2004).
[9] But see the objections of Day, 'Adherence', p. 266.
[10] Augustine, *De Trinitate* 3.4.10 (PL 82: 874), noticed by E. Mazza, *The Origins of the Roman Rite* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 240 and n. 2.
[11] L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: its Origin and Evolution*, 5th edition (London: SPCK 1923), p. 215; this view supported by Archdale A. King, *Liturgies of the Past* (London: Longmans, 1959), pp. 174-75.
[12] See Chapter 6.

*Missale Gothicum* from eastern Gaul, possibly Autun.[13] Florus of Lyons, too, refers to it as such in his *De Expositione Missae*.[14] It may also be significant that the words of institution in the Mozarabic Rite are among the few non-varying texts in that liturgy. This last fact, their actual omission in some texts and the use of *mysterium* or *secreta* may at least indicate a definite desire to heighten the sense of the sacredness of the words and point to their centrality in the rite; whether this has an organic relationship with an earlier emphasis on secrecy it is impossible to tell, although such a conclusion is tempting. Pfatteicher believes that 'the Institution Narrative in the eucharistic prayer [is] so called because in such rites as the Spanish and French this section of the prayer was said silently by the priest',[15] but a theological as well as a practical explanation seems as likely; it may be more significant in that the practice is likely to reflect the prevailing theology. Silence may play a part in this, particularly once the whole prayer comes to be recited silently (the 'silent canon'). There may have been a continuing desire to preserve and hide from profanation, certainly suggested by *secreta,* but an alternative interpretation could instead see in this a desire to heighten the emphasis on what is perceived to be the work of God in the sacrament; the tension between seen and unseen. This is a different stance to the 'protection' theory, but equally valid, and indicative of the continuing centrality and primacy of *mysterium* in sacramental understanding and practice. The prayer is not anywhere called the *sacramentum*. On the matter of the omission altogether of the words of institution in some texts, it is interesting to note how eventually, far from concealing or omitting them, missals, including modern ones, have often been written and printed with these words in *larger* type than

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[13] See for example *Missale Gothicum*, ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, series maior, Fontes V (Rome: Herder, 1961); Gamber, *Codices*, pp. 161-62; and *Prayers of the Eucharist*, p. 107. Walter Frere noticed that in both Spanish and Frankish 'Gallican' rites the *post-sanctus* or *qui pridie* is called the *mysterium* or *secreta*, and the section immediately following the *post-secreta*, *post-pridie* or *post-mysterium*: Frere, *The Anaphora or Great Eucharistic Prayer* (London: Church Historical Society & SPCK, 1938), pp. 106, 108. Frere was clearly very interested in this terminology, as shown by the manuscript notes accompanying his copy of J.M. Neale & G.H. Forbes, *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church* (Burntisland: Pitsligo Press, 1855), in the library of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield.

[14] Florus typically introduces each section of his commentary on the Canon with the words *sequitur in mysterio*, literally 'next in the mystery', e.g. *De Expositione Missae* 58 (PL 119: 51A).

[15] P.H. Pfatteicher, *A Dictionary of Liturgical Terms* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), p. 85; thus also G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd edition (London: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 552.

the surrounding text and with more highly decorated initial letters: another way of emphasizing their importance but clearly far from reticence and protection.

## *Mysterium Fidei* in the Institution Narrative[16]

The words of institution in their eventual fixed form are as follows:

> Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas, et elevatis oculis in caelum ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem, tibi gratias agens, benedixit, fregit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite, et manducate ex hoc omnes. Hoc est enim corpus meum.
>
> Simili modo postquam cenatum est, accipiens et hunc praeclarum calicem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas: item tibi gratias agens, benedixit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite, et bibite ex eo omnes. Hoc est enim calix sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti: *mysterium fidei*: qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum. Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.[17]

On the insertion of the words *mysterium fidei* St Thomas Aquinas gives an explanation which might be regarded as the high point of medieval exegesis of this part of the liturgy. St Thomas holds that the 'substance of the form' includes not merely *Hoc est enim calix sanguinis mei*, but all the words which follow:

> by the first words, *This is the chalice of My blood,* the change of the wine into blood is denoted…but by the words which come after is shown the power of the blood shed in the Passion, which power works in this sacrament (III.78.3).

The three purposes of the sacramental power of the blood of the Passion are, according to St Thomas,

> first and principally for securing our eternal heritage, according to Heb. 10.19…and in order to denote this, we say, *of the New and Eternal Testament.* Secondly, for justifying

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[16] This section was presented in an earlier form as a paper '*Mysterium Fidei*: an Interpolation Revisited' at Congress XX of Societas Liturgica, Dresden, August 2005.

[17] See B. Botte & C. Mohrmann, *L'Ordinaire de la Messe. Texte critique, traduction et études*, Études Liturgiques 2 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf & Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1953), pp. 80-1 and notes, my emphasis; also Botte, 'Mysterium fidei', *Bible et vie chrétienne* 80 (1968), 29-34.

> by grace, which is by faith according to Rom. 3.25, 26...and on this account we add, *The Mystery of Faith.* Thirdly, for removing sins which are the impediments to both of these things, according to Heb. 9.14...on this account, we say, *which shall be shed for you and for many unto the forgiveness of sins* (III.78.3).

Furthermore St Thomas answers the objection:

> [Obj. 5] Some have fallen into error in thinking that Christ's body and blood are only mystically present in this sacrament. Therefore it is out of place to add 'the mystery of faith'

with this reply:

> [Reply to Obj. 5] The word *mystery* is inserted, not in order to exclude reality, but to show that the reality is hidden, because Christ's blood is in the sacrament in a hidden manner, and his passion was dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament (III.78.3).[18]

This last response contains a remarkable language of hiddenness and foreshadowing which to some extent gives the lie to later caricatures of Thomist sacramental rigidity.[19] Thomas' explanation of the words of institution and the place of *mysterium fidei* within them are in accordance with his overall sacramental scheme. The insertion of *mysterium fidei* is much earlier in origin, and therefore in reality represents the theological mind-set of the pre-millennial west. Thomas shows his distance from that world by clearly assuming the synonymity of *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in the following exchange in the same article, referring to the words *mysterium fidei*:

> [Obj. 6] it was said above, that as Baptism is the sacrament of faith, so is the Eucharist the sacrament of charity. Consequently, in this form the word *charity* ought rather to be used than *faith*.
>
> [Reply Obj. 6] It is called the *Sacrament of Faith*, as being an object of faith: because by faith alone do we hold the presence of Christ's blood in this sacrament (III.78.3). [20]

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[18] *Summa Theologica,* trans. the English Dominicans, 3 vols (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), vol. 2, pp. 2474-76.
[19] St Thomas was certainly interested in mystery language: D.J. O'Connor, 'The Concept of "Mystery" in Aquinas' Exegesis', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 26 (1969), pp. 261-82.
[20] *Summa*, ii, pp. 2474-76.

This is relatively unsophisticated, and shows the distance travelled from what we argue to be the rich interplay between the two words in the earlier period. Therefore, St Thomas' explanation is not sufficient on either historical or theological grounds except in terms of its immediate context and the sacramental theology which flowed from that: it is not Thomas' purpose, for example, to explain how the words got there in the first place, an answer to which might itself have a theological significance that cannot be swept under the twelfth-century sacramental carpet. The same caution would need to be exercised with other explanations contemporary with Thomas, for example a letter of Pope Innocent III to John, Archbishop of Lyons, who had asked about *mysterium fidei*. Like St Thomas' reply to objection 5, Innocent's answer is in terms of refuting any figurative interpretation of the eucharist which *mysterium fidei* may seem to invite. It is therefore a good example of how a text originating in a much earlier intellectual context and surviving in the rite is interpreted according to the concerns of the time.[21] For a complete view, then, we must look back to the melting-pot of the formation and evolution of western liturgy. Such are the questions and uncertainties which arise from this that the puzzle of *mysterium fidei* has proved an enduring one for liturgical scholars.

To put matters in context, the phrase *mysterium fidei* is not confined to this place: it occurs, for example, 158 times in 104 separate works in PL,[22] extending from the time of Ambrose into the high Middle Ages. The works in which it appears are theological, liturgical, biblical and historical, but only a few deal specifically with the words as they appear in the Canon of the Mass, for example the *De expositione missae* of Florus of Lyons, to which we later refer.

The liturgical significance of *mysterium fidei,* for Jungmann 'the enigmatic words so frequently discussed',[23] and for Denis-Boulet the subject of

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[21] PL 214, 1118D-1123A, esp. 1120C.
[22] *Patriologia Latina Database* (Pro-Quest, 1996-2006): http://pld.chadwyck.com/ [6.11.2006].
[23] J.A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite* (E.T. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1951), 2 vols, ii, p. 199.

'many commentaries carrying little conviction',[24] in this position has become something of a classical conundrum of liturgical history.[25] The interpolation is part of the textual history of the Roman eucharistic prayer: for example it appears in the earliest text of the *Gelasianum* (MS Vatican Reg. Lat. 316) and in the *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, from which Brinktrine, supported by Botte, concludes that *mysterium fidei* is a Gallican interpolation.[26] In terms of the dates of the sources we have, this places the appearance of *mysterium fidei* in the first half of the eighth century. How and why the phrase appears is the central question, but we must also ask what implications the presence of the phrase has in theological terms. The thirteenth-century response of St Thomas is a much later example, but there are conclusions to be drawn in respect of pre-millennial liturgy too.

It seems quite possible that, given the propensity of later readers of manuscripts for marginal glossing, it could simply be that a text of the institution narrative was annotated 'mysterium fidei' at a very early date, and that this general theological, perhaps devotional remark about the perceived climax of the Eucharist somehow became incorporated in later texts.[27] Brinktrine cites an example in the *Sacramentarium Rossianum*;[28] as it is an eleventh-century manuscript, this is probably the correction of a mistake since the words had for

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[24] N.M. Denis-Boulet, 'Mysterium Fidei', in 'The Canon or Eucharistic Prayer', *The Church at Prayer: The Eucharist*, ed. A.G. Martimort, E.T. of the 3rd Belgian Edition (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), 156-57 (p. 157).

[25] R. Cabié, for example, simply notes the uncertainty: *The Eucharist*, The Church at Prayer vol. 2, ed. A.G. Martimort et al. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), p. 200 n. 53.

[26] J. Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 44 (1930), 493-500 (p. 494); B. Botte, *Le Canon de la Messe Romaine*, Textes et Études Liturgiques 2 (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1935), p. 62. Botte believes the *Expositio* to be the earliest inclusion of all, but of course the earliest apparent *extant* instance does not necessarily mean there had not been a still earlier one which has not survived.

[27] An example of such a marginal remark is in a twelfth-century manuscript containing a life of St Alban: the comment 'mira res' has been written alongside the main text. It is not difficult to imagine a later copyist inserting it into the main text as a fitting amplification. Such a practice was common in the later middle ages. B. Gordon-Taylor, 'The Hagiography of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibalus in the Twelfth Century', unpublished M.A. dissertation (University of Durham, 1991), p. 21.

[28] Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', pp. 493-94; *Sacramentarium Rossianum Cod. Ross. Lat. 204*, ed. J. Brinktrine, Römische Quartalschrift, Supplementheft 25 (Freiburg: Herder, 1930), pp. 49 (comment), 75 (text). Vogel sees sacramentaries of this type as examples of what Bourque called 'compilation mania' which lasted until the twelfth century, which heightens the possibility of carelessness: C. Vogel, *Introduction aux Sources de l'Histoire du Culte Chrétien au Moyen Âge* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1966), p. 84, referring to E. Bourque, *Études sur les sacramentaires romains*, II (Québec, 1952), 2, pp. 492-99. Jungmann, *The Mass*, ii, p. 200 n. 33 identifies three later sources from which *mysterium fidei* is missing.

long been part of the formula by then, but this does not preclude the possibility at a much earlier, formative stage of a marginal remark perhaps intended as a comment on the whole institution narrative or possibly on the consecration of the chalice alone, which might later have been inserted in the actual text, thus producing the association of the words with the cup only which remained.

Because they are an interpolation the words are not in the New Testament account of the last supper, but scholarship has often sought a scriptural justification for their inclusion. Botte and Mohrmann refer the reader to I Tim. 3.9 as a scriptural source of *mysterium fidei*, i.e. *mysterion tes pisteos.*[29] For them it is an interpolation 'à comprendre dans le sens paulinien: l'Eucharistie est *le* mystère de la foi, c'est-à-dire qu'elle contient et révèle toute l'économie du salut.'[30] Florus of Lyons, too, makes a direct link with I Timothy.[31] Ratcliff accepts this reading as a Pauline phrase inserted for doctrinal purposes in that 'it illuminates and heightens, in phraseology understood to be Pauline, the meaning of the *calix* domini, the eucharistic cup.'[32] Denis-Boulet is more cautious in that this is 'the only scriptural text that at all resembles these words', and suggests that 'they can be understood in a very broad sense: they have to do with the economy of salvation through Christ's redemptive sacrifice.'[33] None of these remarks would seem to explain why the phrase is associated with the chalice only, although Botte and Mohrmann are undoubtedly right that the Eucharist is the *locus* of revelation of the whole economy of salvation: it is just that this is not as clear from the text as they assert if *mysterium fidei* is in this position. Jungmann dismisses both the Pauline theory[34] and a possible link with a phrase in the Syrian text the *Apostolic Constitutions* to which Botte and Mohrmann,

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[29] Botte & Mohrmann, *L'Ordinaire*, p. 80, note i. The text in I Timothy is applied to the ministry of deacons.
[30] Botte & Mohrmann, *L'Ordinaire*, p. 81, note 3.
[31] Florus, *De Expositione Missae* 62 (PL 119: 54B).
[32] E.C. Ratcliff, 'The Institution Narrative of the Roman "Canon Missae": Its Beginnings and Early Background', in his *Liturgical Studies*, ed. A.H. Couratin & D.H. Tripp (London: SPCK, 1976), p. 60 (originally published in *Studia Patristica* 2 (1957), 64-82). No comment is made on *mysterium fidei* by R.F. Buxton, *Eucharist and Institution Narrative: A study in the Roman and Anglican traditions of the Consecration of the Eucharist from the Eighth to the Twentieth Centuries*, Alcuin Club Collections 58 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon/London: SPCK, 1976).
[33] Denis-Boulet, 'Mysterium Fidei', p. 157.
[34] Jungmann, *The Mass*, vol. 2, p. 200, note 38.

Ratcliff and others make reference.[35] The suggestion that the presence of *mysterium fidei* is owed to *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.12.36 is on account of the phrase in its institution narrative τὸ μυστήριον τῆς χαινῆς διαθήχης (Latin *mysterium novi testamenti*).[36] Brinktrine prefers the I Timothy association and its possible link with the ministry of the deacon in the Eucharist, but his reviewer Casel thought Hamm's support of *Apostolic Constitutions* 8 more significant.[37] The *Apostolic Constitutions* association is indeed tempting on account of the similarity of the phrase quoted with the Roman *mysterium fidei novi testamenti*, but in *Apostolic Constitutions* the words are associated with the bread, not the cup. Conscious borrowing by the later tradition cannot be proved, and the addition of *fidei* would seem to change the sense entirely. Jungmann rejects the idea that the Roman phrase ought to be read as *novi (et aeterni) testamenti mysterium (fidei)*, which would give 'the mystery of the new testament.[38] For Jungmann, *mysterium fidei* 'is an independent expansion, superadded to the whole self-sufficient complex that precedes.' Crichton builds on this in commenting on the revisions of the 1960s, and suggests a renewed attraction of mystery language in the mid-twentieth century:

> The removal of the words *mysterium fidei* from the words over the cup occasioned...a considerable outcry, though needlessly. It was certainly not a confession of faith in the Real Presence. If it had been, it ought to have appeared in the words over the bread too, and in any case it was not until the twelfth or thirteenth centuries that the word 'mystery' was used of the Real Presence. Before that it meant the whole mystery of salvation or of the eucharist. That the words are an interpolation is certain, they seem to have come in somewhere during the sixth century, though how they got there is a matter of scholarly speculation.[39]

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[35] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 200; Mohrmann & Botte, *L'Ordinaire*, p. 80, note i; Ratcliff, 'Institution Narrative', p. 60, note 29.

[36] Edition M. Metzger, Sources Chrétiennes 320, 329, 336 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985, 1986, 1987). English trans. of the institution narrative: *The Liturgical Portions of the Apostolic Constitutions*, ed. & trans. W. Jardine Grisbrooke, Alcuin/Grow Liturgical Study 13-14 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990), p. 38.

[37] H. Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper*, Supplementary Essay by R.D. Richardson, Fascicle 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 510-11; Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', pp. 496-98; O. Casel, *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 10 (1930), p. 311, being review of F. Hamm, *Die liturgischen Einsetzungsberichte im Sinne vergleichender Liturgieforschung untersucht*, Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen hg. von Mohlberg Rücker Heft 23 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1928).

[38] Jungmann, *The Mass*, vol. 2, p. 200 and notes 35-37.

[39] J.D. Crichton, *Christian Celebration: the Mass* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), p. 90.

There is much to commend Crichton's balanced view, and it does suggest why a high medieval interpretation such as that of St Thomas is not enough.

A practical explanation, still possible for some scholars, that the words were originally spoken by the deacon to draw the attention of the congregation to the completion of the formula for the consecration, is still more unlikely for Jungmann and is dismissed by him as 'poetry, not history'.[40] He is correct in the sense that strictly speaking, the words do not in fact occur at the conclusion, since they are followed by *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*, clearly intended to be part of the formula in respect of the cup. The matter of the deacon speaking the words is another issue. Mazza, while omitting any specific reference to *mysterium fidei*, suggests in connection with genuflection during the institution narrative:

> It is not possible to introduce into the words of the anaphora an ejaculatory prayer addressed to the sacrament or an exhortation to the faithful urging them to adore. Given the equal status of verbal language and gestural language, it should likewise not be possible to introduce a genuflection to the sacrament into the actions of the anaphora.[41]

Mazza is referring to the decision to retain the genuflections (themselves a later medieval addition) in the reform of the rite in the 1960s,[42] but he implies that any interpolation, spoken or performed, during the dominical words, is of itself not admissible.[43] To say that it is not *possible*, however, suggests that such a view of these words was consistently held from the beginning, when the evidence is clearly to the contrary. Therefore the *possibility* of *mysterium fidei* as in origin a

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[40] Jungmann, *The Mass*, vol. 2, p. 199 and note 31. Denis-Boulet, 'Mysterium Fidei', p. 157, however supports the 'spoken by the deacon' theory to the extent that 'these words do not seem, originally, to have been said by the celebrant but rather to have been an acclamation by the deacon or the people', but he gives no evidence for this conviction. One rather suspects it is a convenient way of explaining why, as he immediately goes on to state, in the then-new post-Conciliar *Novus Ordo* 'it is as well that [these words] have been put at the end of the Institution account, to introduce the anamnesis of the people.' We are still not told why they are necessary in this place, although it if they are to be anywhere it is admittedly better that they are removed from the midst of the institution narrative.

[41] E. Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite* (New York: Pueblo, 1986), p. 10.

[42] Mazza, *Eucharistic Prayers*, pp. 9-10.

[43] Also the view of C. Vagaggini, *The Canon of the Mass and Liturgical Reform* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), p. 104.

diaconal exhortation must remain. The theory of a connection between these words and I Tim. 3.9 has been seen by some as supporting the 'diaconal' theory, since that text concerns the ministry of the deacon, for example Botte, who thinks it possible that the deacon actually spoke the words *mysterium fidei*.[44] Brinktrine takes matters further by seeing the association of the deacon with the chalice in western liturgical rites, especially the Roman, as significant: the deacon elevates the chalice, while the Bishop handles the bread.[45] Therefore:

> Hält man sich diese enge Verbindung zwischen dem Diakon und dem eucharistischen Kelch vor Angen, so wird es nicht mehr auffallen, wenn man das "mysterium fidei" in I Tim. 3.8 [*sic*] auf den Kelch bezog.[46]

This argument is bound up with the significance of the consecration of the chalice, of which more will be said below; as to the association of *mysterium fidei* with the ministry of the deacon, the scriptural argument has the weaknesses that use of the same words does not of itself prove anything, since the phrase is used elsewhere in other contexts, and that the I Timothy text is not specifically concerned with the Eucharist but with the character of the deacon in a more general sense. Therefore the theory must remain simply one among several.[47]

Jungmann prefers to concentrate on the theological implications, and here he makes a connection with Christian antiquity, for which *mysterium fidei* would be seen as 'a reference to the grace-laden *sacramentum* in which the entire (objective) faith, the whole divine order of salvation is comprised. The chalice of the New Testament is the life-giving symbol of truth, the sanctuary of our belief,' further commenting that 'the natural Englishing, "mystery of (the) faith" unfortunately suggests only the intellectual side and so seems to interrupt the

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[44] Botte, *Le Canon*, p. 62; this was also suggested by A. de Waal, 'Archaeologische Erörterungen zu einigen Stücken im Kanon der hl. Messe, 3. Die Worte, "mysterium fidei"', *Der Katholik* 76 (1896), 392-95.

[45] See for example E.G.C.F. Atchley, *Ordo Romanus Primus* (London: De La More Press, 1905), p. 139: 'levat [archidiaconus] cum offertorio calicem per ansas, et tenens exaltat illum luxta pontificem.'

[46] Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', pp. 496-97.

[47] For M. Schneiders, 'the Roman liturgy did not know any acclamation in the *canon* other than …the introductory dialogue, the *Sanctus* and the final *Amen*.', 'Acclamations in the eucharistic prayer', in *Omnes Circumadstantes*, ed. C. Caspers & M. Schneiders (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1990), 78-100 (p. 90).

train of thought.'[48] Nocent suggests that 'this mystery of faith is not primarily the Eucharist, but the Covenant, which brings the institution of the Eucharist, the reenactment of the unique sacrifice of the Covenant, fulfilled on the Cross.'[49] Nocent is commenting on the text as it appears in the *Novus Ordo* of the Roman Mass, as an introduction to an acclamation after the dominical words in their entirety,[50] but he may have in mind the theory rejected by Jungmann which has the sense of the Latin as *novi testamenti...mysterium.*

Be this as it may, some have focused precisely on the significance of the cup in relation to these words. Nor is there any certainty here. Richardson, in an essay supplementary to Lietzmann's *Mass and Lord's Supper*, states that

> Most distinctively Roman, and in complete contrast with the place accorded...to the bread, is the pre-eminent stress laid by the liturgical narrative [of the Roman Canon] upon the cup.

The words associated with the cup are extended through other biblical, liturgical and patristic influences. Brinktrine argues that *mysterium fidei* was associated with the Eucharist in scriptural exegesis of all periods ('alten und neueren Exegeten'), and that 'in Kreisen, die das paulinische Wort direkt vom eucharistischen Kelche verstanden, dürfte unser Zusatz entstanden sein,' a thesis supported in his view by eastern associations between I Tim. 9 and the chalice.[51] Odo Casel, however, in a review of Brinktrine's article disagrees with the I Timothy connection on the grounds that in I Tim. 3.9 the word *mysterium* has another sense altogether ('das Wort einen ganz andern Sinn hat').[52] Lietzmann points to the sacrificial character of the blood of the Passion and patristic comment on it. Thus Cyprian speaks of the Eucharist as 'the offering to God in the Church...of the true and full sacrifice which is his Passion' (*Ep.* 43), but centres this understanding 'upon the cup and its contents as indicative of Christ's blood-shedding'. Both Cyprian and Tertullian are concerned about the redness of

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[48] Jungmann, *The Mass*, vol. 2, p. 201 and note 41.
[49] A. Nocent, *A Rereading of the Renewed Liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), p. 29.
[50] Thus: 'Let us proclaim the mystery of faith...'
[51] Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', pp. 498-99. See also his earlier 'Die Kelchkonsekration in der römischen Messe', *Theologie und Glaube* 9 (1919), 424-29 (pp. 426-29).
[52] O. Casel, review of Brinktrine, 'Mysterium Fidei', in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 10 (1930), p. 311.

the wine used; for Tertullian the red wine is a *figura* of Christ's blood, and the bread is a *figura* of Christ's body 'although obviously far less realistically for him than the wine'. Lietzmann through the eyes of Richardson argues for a non-Pauline scriptural interpretation of the Roman words of institution as a whole: behind them, he believes, lies ultimately the sense of Mark 14.22-24, a sacrificial significance of the Last Supper in view of 'the ancient connexion of blood with the ratifying of a covenant.'[53] While this might give general reasons for the lengthier words over the chalice, it does not suggest the purpose of *mysterium fidei* specifically, unless we apply Lietzmann's argument for the significance of the blood of the Passion to a proposition that it is the effects of the Passion, sacramentally encountered in the wine of the Eucharist, that are the *mysterium fidei*. However, this would be to claim for the wine on the grounds of a more realistic visible sign a significance that must also be true of the bread if we take seriously the opening phrase of this part of the eucharistic prayer, *qui pridie cum pateretur*, which clearly has the Passion in view and acts as an enclosure for the whole institution narrative.

We may also wonder about possible connections between instances where the complete institution narrative and its introductory matter is referred as *mysterium*, and *mysterium fidei* in this position. In the Mozarabic tradition which favours the *secretum* or *mysterium* description the words of institution do not contain *mysterium fidei*, an absence maintained in the most recent, reformed Mozarabic liturgy; neither are the acclamations of the *Novus Ordo* used.[54] The Gallican tradition, however, does have instances of the two together, at least by implication. The prayer after words of institution is called either the *post mysterium* or the *post secreta* in many Gallican texts, implying the title applied to the *preceding* formula. The words of institution themselves are not given, only introduced by the opening formula *qui pridie* or a variant. The omission of the text may have been because recital by heart was assumed and expected, in which case it would be impossible to tell what exact words were used. Nevertheless, several scholars argue that the insertion of *mysterium fidei* was a particularly,

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[53] Lietzmann/Richardson, *Mass and Lord's Supper*, pp. 511-514 and notes.
[54] See *Missale Hispano-Mozarabicum: Ordo Missae-Liber Offerentium* (Toledo: Conferencia Episcopal Española, Arzobispado de Toledo, 1991), p. 73.

although not exclusively, Gallican feature,[55] so there are strong grounds for saying that the *post mysterium* or *post secretum* in the title of the prayer after the institution narrative mirrored the *mysterium fidei* in the words just recited. Gallican mass texts vary, apparently indiscriminately, in their use of these titles, so the argument can never be watertight, but even where *post secretum* is used there is of course a suggestion of something hidden or undisclosed. The suggestion that *post secretum* is evidence of a 'silent canon' need not exclude an additional linguistic resonance with *mysterium*, 'silent' or otherwise. The use of both titles has been explained by Thibaut and others as emphasizing the consecratory nature of the immediately preceding formula. Thibaut believes *post secreta, post pridie* and *post mysterium* to be

> rubriques très significatives, la dernière surtout, qui témoignent bien que les paroles de l'institution du sacrement étaient tenues pour essentielles et seules consécratoires.[56]

As an alternative to the diaconal proclamation, Botte also suggests that the inclusion of *mysterium fidei* is intended to underline the sufficiency of the amended dominical words to effect the consecration[57] but while plausible it is ultimately as speculative as other proposed solutions. Indeed an earlier and similar view noticed by Jungmann is dismissed by him as 'without foundation.'[58]

Concentration on a 'consecratory formula' among scholars may indicate post-Thomist instincts to read back into liturgical history a particular, closely-

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[55] For example J.-B. Thibaut, *L'Ancienne Liturgie Gallicane: son origine et sa formation en Provence au Ve et VIe siècles* (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1929), p. 61; King, *Liturgies of the Past*, p. 175. The presence of *mysterium fidei* in the quotation from the words of institution in the *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae* would seem to establish the phrase firmly in the Gallican context: see Chapter 9.

[56] Thibaut, *L'Ancienne Liturgie Gallicane*, p. 61. Thibaut's conclusion is based on the *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*: 'consecratum fuit mysterium eucaristie *pridie quam pateretur* dominus ipso dicente. Hic est calix sanguinis mei mysterium fidei' (*Expositio*, ed. Ratcliff, p. 10; Thibaut, pp. 60, 61); King, *Liturgies of the Past*, p. 175, makes a distinction between *post secreta*, indicating silent recital, and *post mysterium*, which 'indicates that the words of institution were held to effect the consecration.'

[57] Botte, *Le Canon*, p. 62: 'une parenthèse destinée à affirmer que la consécration s'opère par les paroles de l'institution.'

[58] Jungmann, *The Mass*, ii, p. 199 n. 31, referring to K.J. Merk, *Der Konsekrationstext der römischen Messe* (Rottenburg, 1915), pp. 5-25. Merk thought the intention was also specifically to exclude the epiclesis as having anything to do with the consecration. Jungmann is similarly dismissive of Schermann's suggestion that *mysterium fidei* was once unique to baptismal masses: Jungmann, *The Mass*, ii, p. 199 note 31; Th. Schermann, 'Liturgische Neuerungen', *Festgabe Alois Knöpfler zur Vollendung des 70. Lebensjahres*, ed. H.M. Gietl (Freiburg: 1917), pp. 276-89.

defined understanding of Eucharistic consecration; this may also apply to those who have argued in favour of the specific importance of the consecration of the chalice. An alternative explanation in the light of the arguments of the present study is that what is emphasized by this language within and around the words of institution is the agency of God which *cannot* be precisely defined: the language, and indeed the omission of some of it on the manuscript page, indicates that here is the place of all places when God is most allowed to be God, where human definition is least to intrude. In this respect, there is a place for 'silent canon' too: human agency is reduced to a whisper, and the greatest energy is invested in the faith which trusts that what God will do in the *mysterium*, God will do. The language of *mysterium* is, as has been seen in the sacramentaries, a completely normal feature of western liturgy in this period, and so in this sense to find a concentration of mystery language in and around the institution narrative and its titles should not be thought unusual. Secrecy or concealment of the formula are not the point; rather the language *draws attention* to the divine initiative, paradoxically 'hidden' and 'placed in the order of signs', to recall de la Taille. Such language is more puzzling in later contexts, when mystery language elsewhere in the liturgy has been vastly reduced except where texts have been selected which happen to originate in the period before the year 1000.[59]

It is possible that the insertion of *mysterium fidei* in the dominical words prompted the use of *post mysterium* where this appears, by virtue of simple association and abbreviation, in the same way that *qui pridie* is used in the texts to indicate the whole of the institution narrative. This would only be true of the non-Mozarabic rites, since in those texts *mysterium fidei* does not appear at all, although it may be that the use of the title *mysterium* was borrowed from the Frankish tradition without modification to the words of institution. Alternatively, rather the opposite could be the case: if the words *mysterium fidei* are indeed a particularly Gallican 'trait', did the term *post mysterium* arise because these words were already in the institution narrative, in the sense that *post pridie* clearly takes its origin from the *qui pridie* of the foregoing text? Only much

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[59] It would be instructive to know more of the criteria for selection from such a mass of existing material, as opposed to fresh composition: were antiquity and supposed papal authorship among them?

greater certainty about dates, textual history and inter-regional influence could properly answer these questions, but they deserve at least to be asked.

The general conclusion to be drawn is that whatever the original explanation, and indeed there may be more than one, it came to seem natural, normal and appropriate to place *mysterium* at the heart of what came to be regarded as the most solemn moment of the eucharistic liturgy. In terms of our overall proposition, it implies that here especially the hidden work of God only appreciable through the eyes of faith is to be emphasized, and that this implication, consciously or otherwise, has remained in the text throughout the history of the eucharistic liturgy in the west at least from the very beginning of the middle ages down to the present. The revisers of the 1960s thought fit to retain it and reposition it so as to underline the equal status of the bread and the cup, not diminishing the implication of the original form but thus enhancing it and drawing new attention to it: this has its own implications about the unity of the whole eucharistic prayer, in that it may seem to diminish it.

In the previous two chapters we have focused closely on texts. In the next chapter we will attend to an example of the historical and intellectual context of such texts in relation to *mysterium*, that of the Carolingian Empire and in particular the thought of Alcuin, Amalarius, the adoptionist controversy, those at the centre of debate about the eucharist, Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus, and the significance of approaches to visual art. This we do in order to show that textual detail cannot be detached from its surrounding culture nor be viewed simply as text.

# CHAPTER 9

## ALCUIN, AMALARIUS, ADOPTIONISM AND ART: *MYSTERIUM* IN THE CAROLINGIAN ERA

Two of the most significant writers associated with the liturgy in the era of the sacramentaries are Alcuin of York (c.735-804) and Amalarius of Metz (c.775-c.850), although their specific roles, interests and reputations are very different. Alcuin is known as much for his great influence in the court of Charlemagne and on Charlemagne personally as for his liturgical work, although the two are connected in the very important area of the adoption of Roman liturgy in the Carolingian Empire as part of a programme of wide-ranging ecclesiastical reforms.[1] On account of this Alcuin has been accorded a place among the great figures of the emergence of Europe. Amalarius, on the other hand, has acquired a rather suspect reputation as the author of allegorical works on the liturgy which have been held to exceed the boundaries of both theology and sense.[2] Alcuin has maintained his position, but recent work has suggested Amalarius to be worth more than a second glance.[3] The reason for their appearance here is the demonstration and exemplification of the connections between the liturgies of the pre-millennial centuries and contemporaneous theological writings. Alcuin and Amalarius are of the right period and geographical area for the rites in view, and present some interesting opportunities for the comparison of two different styles of liturgical writing. Both made use of mystery language in their work. What relationship does this have with that in the liturgies we have examined, and what conclusions may be drawn for the use and meaning of mystery in the liturgy and to show how this is reflected in intellectual context?

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[1] Rosamund McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789-895*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History 1 (London: 1977). Liturgy is seen as a force for education and unity (p. 154).

[2] Modern critics of Amalarius include A. Wilmart, 'Expositio Missae', *DACL*, vol 5, 1014-27 (esp. cols. 1018, 1024); Douglas L. Mosey, 'Allegorical Liturgical Interpretation in the West from 800 AD to 1200 AD', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Toronto (St Michael's College), 1985, pp. 1-3, 109-12 gives an overview of anti-Amalarian opinion in modern writers. McKitterick, *Frankish Church*, p. 149, is a sceptic, but see note 3 below.

[3] C.A. Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz: Interpolations in Salisbury Cathedral Library MS 154*, Henry Bradshaw Society Subsidia II (London: Henry Bradshaw Society/Boydell, 2001), pp. 1-12, esp. pp. 1-9 on context and reputation, with further references, and argument against McKitterick, *Frankish Church*, p. 149.

## The Theological Setting: Adoptionism

The theological setting for the work of both authors has two overlapping elements. The first is the Adoptionist controversy of the late eighth century, which particularly concerned Alcuin who was involved in the refutation of Adoptionist ideas.[4] With its origin in the writings of Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel this matter was for a time the focus of the not-inconsiderable intellectual resources of the Carolingian court with Alcuin at their head. It was entirely appropriate that he should lead the theological charge since he had an established, especial concern for the credal and patristic background to the theology of the incarnation.[5] Hence it is not surprising, for example, that Alcuin's 'long commentary on John transmitted something of its major source, Augustine's *Tractatus in Ioannem*, a work that had also supplied much ammunition against Elipandus and Felix.'[6] As Jones points out, both Alcuin and Amalarius wished to establish and disseminate the correct Christological formulae, a concern not unique to them: 'in almost every imaginable context - but most of all when treating Christ's passion or other aspects of his humanity - contemporary authors took pains to get their Christology right and to invoke the correct formulas.'[7] In the light of this, it would seem reasonable to infer that reference to the liturgy was an obvious means by which this could be done, and to suppose that theological writing ought to suggest some awareness of this.

The liturgy itself can be said to have been both an influence and more directly a tool in the shaping of the theological orthodoxy of the period, since it had a critical interplay with the establishment of correct Christological doctrine. In the latter it is tempting to conclude that the theologians of the eighth and ninth centuries were simply pursuing a single notion of right belief already present in, for example, the rejection of Nestorianism by Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth. Cyril had asserted that:

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[4] See J.C. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul 785-820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), *passim*.
[5] See Jones, *Lost Work*, p. 145 and nn. 57, 58 for further references to the controversy and Alcuin's role in it.
[6] Ibid., p. 146 and n. 62.
[7] Ibid., p.146.

> If anyone separates the *hupostaseis* in the one Christ after the union, joining together only by a conjunction according to dignity, that is, by authority or power, and not rather by a combination which is according to a real union, let him be anathema.[8]

However, the situation in the period in question was rather different. For reasons directly linked to the state-sponsored diffusion of the Roman liturgy in the Carolingian empire it can be argued that there was a more-or-less acceptable diversity of thought on the eucharist, and by implication on Christology, at least until it became apparent that the imposition of a single liturgical use ought to entail a consistent theological position, although there may have been some flexibility even after this. To explain this thesis, it is necessary to bring to the fore two writers whose work has in the past been held to represent a 'controversy' (perhaps because this is more exciting), but which may in fact have been more of what became an extended dialogue prompted by the liturgical reforms of the Carolingians.

**Eucharistic 'controversy'?**

Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus, monks of the abbey of Corbie, have often been cast in the role of opponents in their writing on the eucharist and the manner of the presence of Christ in it.[9] It is certainly true that they each produced a work on the subject, both entitled *De corpore et sanguini Domini*,[10] and that whereas Paschasius emphasizes the corporeal presence of Christ, Ratramnus presents a symbolic interpretation. However, it is becoming accepted that to

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[8] Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistolae,* 17, 3. (PG 77: 419C XXX); E.T. *Letters 1-50*, tr. J.I. McEnerney (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1987), p. 90.

[9] Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament According to the Theologians c. 1080-c.1220* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 21. Among those who assume controversy are W.R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo, 1989), pp. 106-09; D. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992), p. 210; E. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. R. Daly (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 82-88.

[10] Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini, cum appendice Epistola ad Fredugardum*, ed. B. Paulus, Corpus Christianum, Continuatio Mediaevalis 16 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969) [also in *CLCLT-4* and later editions]; Ratramnus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini: Texte original et notice bibliographique*, ed. J.N. Bakhuisen van den Brink (Amsterdam: Verhandeligen der koninklijke Nederlandse Akadamie Wetenshappen, 1974).

classify this as a controversy would be wide of the mark.[11] A rather different situation is suggested firstly by the fact that a considerable period separates them. Paschasius wrote the original version of his work fourteen years before Ratramnus produced his. Secondly, the occasion of the latter was not in direct, self-motivated response to the former work but at the instigation of the emperor Charles the Bald. While Charles had admittedly a revised version of the earlier work, it was clearly in order to be better informed of the issues and their possible interpretation that he sought a second opinion.[12] Colish is therefore incorrect in asserting that Paschasius and Ratramnus were *instructed* to take opposing sides in a sort of artificial controversy, and that Charles' action effectively 'overturned' the conclusions of the Council of Quierzy in 838, but right in her identification of the emperor's apparently non-partisan involvement.[13] The aim was not to arrive at a 'right' answer because a 'wrong' answer had previously been given. Instead, it was part of a wider desire to enquire on the matter of Christ's presence in the eucharist. Amalarius' view of a three-fold presence, arising from a three-fold fraction of the host in the eucharist, was condemned by Florus of Lyons at Quierzy in 838, but this may itself have been the trigger for the emperor's commission to Ratramnus[14] and, conceivably, a request for a revision of Paschasius as well.

While the *De corpore* of Paschasius Radbertus relies heavily on the thought of Hilary and Ambrose, he is nevertheless 'the first theologian to present a comprehensive theology of the sacrament [and] his approach goes far beyond any previous explanation of the role of the sacrament in Christian life.'[15] The basic tenets of his position are that the body of Christ present in the eucharist is the same as that born of Mary,[16] and that a 'natural' unity of Christ in the eucharist and the body and soul of the believer is brought about, leading to salvation, which aim and function is the guiding principle. He thus 'insists on a

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[11] See for example E. Saxon, *The Eucharist in Romanesque France* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), pp. 25-26.
[12] Macy, *Theologies*, pp. 21-2, following J.P. Bouhot, *Ratramne de Corbie: Histoire littéraire et controverses doctrinales* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1976), pp. 77-99, 117-38.
[13] M.L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400-1400* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 73-4.
[14] Macy, *Theologies*, p. 22; Bouhot, *Ratramne*, pp. 85-8; Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, pp. 89-97.
[15] Macy, *Theologies*, p. 27.
[16] Paschasius, *De corpore,* 1.7.

strict identity between the sacramental body of Christ and the historical body of Christ':[17]

> We must believe that after the consecration [the bread and wine] are nothing else at all but the flesh and blood of Christ [and] in no way distinct from that which was born of Mary and suffered on the cross and rose from the tomb.[18]

The literalist suggestions of Paschasius' thought led Gottschalk to accuse him of a capharnaist position.[19] Kilmartin concludes that his vision narrowed on account of a wider process in this period whereby the patristic Greek notion of 'participation in the image in the prototype' was challenged and ultimately replaced by an understanding of 'the image…signaling a reality to which it can be related only externally'. This he attributes to 'a practical positivism or…materialism', characteristic of the ninth century when for a society in the process of change, 'the one stronghold often turns out to be what is accessible, what can be concretely grasped'.[20] Although Kilmartin does not express it in these terms, this implies that a strong notion of mystery as denoting that which is 'more than it is' and an instinctive reticence about the detail of divine initiative was also on the wane as more concrete concepts were sought. If Kilmartin is right, this gives an interesting sociological slant to the discussion, and in the case study in the Appendix it is suggested how the nature of civil and political society influenced this intellectual transition in liturgical theology. For Paschasius, the result was thus a narrowing of vision, so that his 'perspective [of senses perceiving the image, faith knowing the reality] has lost the possibility of seeing the reality of the image as *a reality of a particular kind.*'[21] As Crockett concludes, in debates of this kind there is to be seen an incipient dissolution of the characteristic ancient unity of symbol and reality, so that the symbolic is no longer a means of participation in the reality, but is 'on the way to becoming a mere sign or pointer that is separated from the reality that it signifies.'[22] This places mystery in the firing line of this process, and exposes it to the possibility

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[17] Crockett, *Eucharist*, pp. 107-8.
[18] Paschasius, *De corpore*, 1.2; Crockett, *Eucharist*, p. 108.
[19] Macy, *Theologies*, pp. 28.
[20] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, p. 79.
[21] Ibid., p. 84, his emphasis.
[22] Crockett, *Eucharist*, p. 106.

of a similar fate of becoming a mere 'pointer' rather than an expression of, to borrow Kilmartin's phrase, 'a reality of a particular kind'. *Mysterium*, as we have seen, had for long had *sacramentum* very often as its own 'pointer' (as 'the sacrament of the mystery'), and so this delicate relationship and its possibilities was also bound to be affected. This suggests the beginning of a decline in the rich, finely balanced, multi-layered language of mystery that had emerged at the close of the period of liturgical improvisation: as we have argued, even though many of the texts survived for centuries in later compilations, their true significance had been eclipsed by the changing nature of sacramental theology.

Ratramnus did not produce a complete theology, but as the circumstances of its commissioning suggest, it was intended as a response to two particular questions: was the body and blood received *in mysterio* or *in veritate*, and was the body received the same as that born of Mary?[23] The first of these questions is in effect asking for an interpretation of the meaning of mystery in the liturgy and whether this is an appropriate and necessary way of speaking about the presence of Christ in and the salvific effect of the eucharist. In answer to the question, Ratramnus distinguishes reality *in figura* from reality *in veritate* (that is, visible). He holds that the Eucharist is *in figura*, that there is a hidden reality discerned by faith.[24] This suggests only a synonymous relationship in Ratramnus between *figura* and *mysterium*. Macy surprisingly seems to accept this without any further query: 'Thus it is in mystery, i.e. through the use of bread and wine, that we apprehend the life-giving Saviour';[25] *through the use* seems a poor and over-functional gloss on 'in mystery' since it suggests a utilitarian significance rather than the objective but hidden truth in the sacrament that Ratramnus presumably means. Macy implies a finite meaning, whereas the history of the use of the word suggests that it points to distance yet to be travelled because it is wrapped up in divine unknowability, rather than to the 'end' of the matter. *Figura* often had a significance independent of *mysterium,* although some have unquestioningly equated it with *mysterium.* Bruce Harbert focuses interestingly on the use of

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[23] Power, *Eucharistic Mystery,* p. 209; Macy, *Theologies*, p. 28. Power draws attention to the fact that *in mysterio* in reference to eucharistic presence was still significant in twelfth-century monastic theology.
[24] Macy, *Theologies*, pp. 28-9.
[25] Macy, *Theologies*, p. 29.

*figura* by Ratramnus, and usefully rehearses his definition of *figura* as a veiled manner of speaking about something, like 'I am the living bread', by which he presumably means as in metaphor. 'Figures say one thing and mean another', while truth 'is the direct expression of a reality.' Unfortunately, he concludes that this means that 'some words that Ratramnus uses as equivalents of *figura* are *sacramentum, mysterium* and *memoria*',[26] which throwaway assertion cannot stand either as a representation of Ratramnus' thought or of the relationship between these words in western theology and liturgy. Kilmartin concludes that both Paschasius and Ratramnus fail to appreciate an understanding of a dynamic character of the eucharistic mystery in early Greek theology, and in tackling the issue of the unity of *figura* and *res*, and in effectively asking 'how can something be the reality if it is only an image of the reality…they have not truly grasped the content of the ancient understanding of religious images', so that 'one looks in vain for a significant appreciation of the Greek idea of the commemorative actual presence of the once-for-all redemptive work of Christ or the notion of somatic real presence conceived from the perspective of prototype-image thinking.'[27] This implies that terms related in meaning but not identical indeed demanded careful and imaginative handling in full awareness of the implications of the intellectual context, as shown by the discussion of *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, which are seen here to be part of a wider genre of mystery language. Not in doubt is the status of *figura* as a term that is within that genre, and the conclusion to be drawn is that Ratramnus' understanding of the eucharist makes full use of the genre. Liturgical texts also do this, and richly, but it would be incorrect to assume thereby that *mysterium, figura* and associated words and phrases point to an exclusively 'symbolic' interpretation of the Eucharist. Even when the matter of presence had truly become, post-Berengar, a matter of robust debate and dispute, as Power points out there was still some unity to be found, for example in the twelfth-century monastic use of *in mysterio*:

> Though the truth and manner of Christ's presence dominated theological debate and drew most attention in later centuries, we would misapprehend these debates were we

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[26] Bruce Harbert, 'Sacramental Language', *New Blackfriars* 77 (1996), 40-52 (p. 40).
[27] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, pp. 82-83, for whom the problem is that *anamnesis* is not understood in its patristic sense but reduced to allegory to 'fill the void' (p. 83).

> not to see them within the framework of the participation in the mystery of the passion that writers took to be the end and purpose of the eucharistic sacrament.[28]

Power claims that this is the background common to writers both earlier *and* later: Paschasius, Ratramnus, Lanfranc, Baldwin of Ford, and even to be seen in Thomas Aquinas.[29]

If it is accepted that mystery language in theological writing did not cease to be used with the end of the first millennium, however, it is still the case that its *liturgical* use became less common as texts were revised and local uses merged, and this suggests a change in the way mystery was understood, albeit a gradual one. A common sense of participation in the mystery of the passion does not of itself indicate that there had been no change in what was understood by mystery as a concept, nor indeed in what was understood by participation in it: it would be difficult to reconcile a position of 'no change' with the argument of Kilmartin and others that even before the year 1000 patristic notions of participation and symbol had been largely supplanted by the more realist theories outlined above. The decline in mystery language in liturgical texts suggests it had become more detached from liturgical language even if still used in sacramental theological writing. Just as it had become more and more useful after the fourth century as liturgical language, so it seems to have became less so after the year 1000, and it is tempting to conclude that this was connected to the changing currents of thought in which the liturgy was celebrated. In the later Middle Ages, mystery was certainly still spoken of, but now in the service of the different, essentially monodirectional kind of sacramental theology that triumphed, and which saw it as a less useful liturgical term because differently understood, the liturgical uses which remained from the earlier period perhaps being thought to be merely compatible with this new context rather than consciously and significantly expressive and indicative of it, as they had been in the arguably more creative and confident atmosphere of co-existence and dialogue of an earlier time. To

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[28] Power, *Eucharistic Mystery*, p. 210.
[29] Ibid.; A. Härdelin, 'Pâques et rédemption: Étude de théologie monastique du XIIe siècle', *Collectanea Cisterciana* 43 (1981), 3-19; O'Connor, 'Concept of "Mystery" in Aquinas' Exegesis'.

enlarge upon this idea and test it is one direction further research might usefully take.

While the Paschasius-Ratramnus interaction suggests a climate of enquiry rather than controversy, Macy holds that it and Quierzy taken together may point to an increasing awareness of diversity in Eucharistic theology, and perhaps even 'a more conscious sense of incompatibility' when seen against a background of further evidence which suggests concern in this area. A letter from Rabanus Maurus to Heribald of Auxerre in 855 is an outright condemnation of the corporeal interpretation of Paschasius on the part of Gottschalk, and displays a contrary concern that a more symbolic approach might undermine the sense of the true Eucharistic presence of Christ in the sacrament.[30] Importantly for the present study, furthermore, Macy, following Geiselmann and to some extent McKitterick, points to the pivotal role of the liturgy in these developments. Geiselmann relates differences of opinion on the Eucharist to differences of emphasis in the Gallican and Roman forms of the liturgy, and in particular the contrast between the 'Ambrosian' approach of the former - that a change of species occurs - and the 'Augustinian' of the latter, by which salvation was available to the believer through the symbols of bread and wine. Set against the less specific argument of McKitterick that the liturgy was not only a force for education and unity but also 'one of the most crucial elements in the shaping of Frankish society', one can begin to see how a desire for greater unity of doctrine may have arisen and been thought appropriate to an increasingly unified political and ecclesiastical setting in which the origins of the nation states of modern Europe can be discerned.[31] On a wider basis the importance of mystery language in the liturgy is underlined, in that it supports the views expressed above about the role of the liturgy in influencing the direction of theology, and how this is interwoven with the societal role of the liturgy. Liturgical texts are a rich source for this discussion, and the importance and consequences of language in worship as conveying theology is illustrated.

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[30] Macy, *Theologies*, pp. 22-4.

[31] Macy, *Theologies*, p. 24; J.R. Geiselmann, *Der Eucharistielehre der Vorscholastik*, Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte XV/1-3 (Paderborn, 1926), pp. 3-55; McKitterick, *Frankish Church*, p. 154. It should be pointed out that by 'change of species', the later scholastic view is not meant and is anachronistic in this context.

It has been suggested that *mysterium* in the context of the eucharist may indicate a more 'symbolic' approach to the matter of presence, and that this is more typical of the Roman liturgy of the period as introduced in the Carolingian empire in preference to Gallican forms. A comparison of the two will establish whether the use of *mysterium* can properly be described as indicative of a 'symbolic' interpretation of the Eucharist; whether such a use is in fact confined to the Roman liturgy; throw some further light on the meaning of *figura*; and inform our knowledge of the theological debate on the eucharist that is represented in the works discussed in this chapter.

## The *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae* ('Pseudo-Germanus')

The *Expositio* is a short commentary on the liturgy, now usually accepted to be of later date than its original attribution to Germanus of Paris (d. 576), dated by its editor to the early ninth century and originating in the area of Tours.[32] For a relatively brief document it contains an interesting range of uses of *mysterium*, evidence for its richness and flexibility and that this was not confined to liturgical texts and writings of Roman origin or influence. These are not restricted to a direct reference to the Eucharist or the eucharistic elements. As a liturgical document it is an important piece of evidence for the form and content of the Gallican liturgy. The evidence falls into two groups, those not directly associated with the eucharist, and instances of a direct and deliberate connection.

### *illa mysteria*

[I.19d ] Sirius autem ornatur [aut] auro uel gemmis quia dominus Moysi in tabernaculo fieri uelamina iussit ex auro (et) iacin[c]to et purpura cocco que bis tincto et bysso retorta.[33] quia omnia illa mysteria in christi praecesserunt stigmata.[34]

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[32] *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, ed. E.C. Ratcliff, Henry Bradshaw Society 98 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1971). The references which follow are to this edition.
[33] Cf. Exodus 26.31. The Vulgate text reads: 'Facies et velum de hyacintho, et purpura, coccoque bis tincto, et bysso retorta, opere plumario et pulchra varietate contextum', thus 'You shall make a veil of blue and purple, and scarlet stuff and fine twisted linen; in skilled work shall it be made, with cherubim.' (RSV).
[34] *Expositio*, p. 12.

While *mysteria* indicates details of the old covenant, it is the mysteries of the crucified Christ that have replaced them, as the final clause suggests, perhaps with the eucharist in mind, by association with Christ's sacrifice. There may also be a deliberate irony intended by the mention of the curtain of the temple, torn in two at the death of Jesus.[35] The writer is not reluctant to use *mysteria* to talk of superseded rites, since the true *mysteria* are now those of Christ. This recalls the fourth-century linguistic shift whereby the mysteries of pagan religion were confidently seen to be vanquished by the true mysteries of Christianity. This shift and the use of such comparisons in association with it can be seen from this passage to have entered by the time of the *Expositio* the intellectual consciousness of western liturgical theology.

***in mysterio trinitatis***

[I.28a ] [the singing of the *trecanum*] ita pater in filio in mysterio trinitatis conplecitur.[36]

This is an attractive reference to the mystery of the Trinity, which 'surrounds' or 'embraces' (*conplecitur*) the Father in the Son in the context of the singing of a chant called the *trecanum*.[37] This recalls the 'envelope' illustration with regard to *mysterium*, and perfectly conveys the sense that *mysterium* points to what is real and active, not inaccessible. Because the Trinity is *mysterium*, its unfathomable reality can be encountered, and yet nothing is 'resolved' or 'clarified': the essence remains with God *in mysterio*. Again, this is something to be celebrated, as implied by its inclusion in a text to be sung. This neatly joins the symbolic value of what is presumably a threefold chant with the mystery of the threefold Trinity. Here it is not the chant which is the mystery, but the divine attribute, an important distinction. The chant is the audible symbol which points to the mystery. Therefore this is an example of music as a vehicle for a mystery, suggesting that mysteries cannot in themselves be called 'symbolic', but need sensible symbols to animate them because they have a more specific role in bearing hidden truth. Mystery is not therefore a 'throwaway' word to be used synonymously with other terms.

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[35] E.g. Mark 15.38.
[36] *Expositio*, p. 16.
[37] Ibid., I.28a (p.16).

***secreta mysteria***

[II.15] [about the chasuble] Ideo sine manicis est quia sacerdus potius benedicit quam ministrat. ideo unita est circumsecus. non scissa nec aperta quia multa sunt scripturae sacrae secreta misteria.[38]

The chasuble is woven all the way round (*unita*) 'with neither split nor opening', because 'many are the secret mysteries of holy scripture': a reference identifying the chasuble as representative of the seamless robe of Christ. Here is another imaginative use of *mysterium*: to refer to scriptural imagery and enable its relation to contemporary liturgical usage. *Mysterium* makes possible a richer language of allegory and symbol. In scriptural terms the author takes it beyond the strict New Testament sense of Christ as the revelation of the mystery of God, and makes it serve as the background for the whole scheme of imagery with which Christ is associated in scripture.

***mysterium eucharistiae***

[I.18] sanguis uero christi ideo specialiter offertur in calice. quia in tale uasculum consecratum fuit mysterium eucaristie *pridie quam pateretur* dominus ipso dicente. *Hic est calix sanguinis mei mysterium fidei qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.*[39]

***misterium eucharistiae***

[I.19a] Patena autem uocatur ubi consecratur oblatio quia misterium eucaristie in commemoratione offertur passionis domine.[40]

The first of these two examples of *misterium eucaristie* (sic) appears with reference to the chalice: 'in such a vessel will the mystery of the eucharist be consecrated' (*in tale uasculum consecratum fuit mysterium eucaristie*). There is a direct link between *mysterium* and consecration: *mysterium* normally refers to that which has been or will have been consecrated, not to the unconsecrated elements *as* unconsecrated. There is an emphasis on the reality of the sacrament (*sanguis vero christi, dominus ipso dicente*), which will be underlined more

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[38] Ibid., p. 23.
[39] Ibid., p.10.
[40] Ibid., p. 10

dramatically in the story of the unbelieving monk, borrowed from the *Vitae Patrum* and discussed in connection with Example 3 below. Probably to indicate which part of the liturgy is meant, the phrase *qui pridie cum pateretur*, the beginning of the Roman insitution narrative, is included. A further reference to the eucharist is of course the quotation of the text of the narrative: *Hic est calix sanguinis mei mysterium fidei qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*. This contains the problematic *mysterium fidei*, discussed in Chapter 8. While the purpose and meaning of the phrase is uncertain it is suggestive as a use of language at this point in the liturgy, and incidentally confirms that *mysterium fidei* was present in the narrative at the time the *Expositio* was written.

The *second* example concerns the paten on which the eucharistic bread is placed: an interesting reversal of the order in which the vessels are used: the chalice has been discussed first. Then: 'The paten, as it is called, is where the offering is consecrated, that is, where the mystery of the eucharist is offered in commemoration of the passion of the Lord' (*Patena autem uocatur ubi consecratur oblatio quia misterium eucaristie in commemoratione offertur passionis domine*). There are several ideas in this short sentence. The eucharist is an 'offering', and more specifically the 'mystery of the eucharist' is an offering, and also a commemoration, specifically of the passion. It is as if the anonymous author wishes to make clear that the offering is specifically the *mystery* of the eucharist: *mysterium* is the idea, the hinge, on which the others turn. The eucharist cannot but be a mystery, and the offering will not commemorate the passion unless it is a mystery. There remains a hiddenness that can only be found in divine action: the hiddenness is the guarantee of the effectiveness of the sacrament and an indication of the finitude of whatever symbolic value is to be seen in bread, wine and the vessels by which they are contained. In *mysterium* the visible and tangible boundaries become subsumed.

In commenting on the function of the paten, the meaning of this sentence turns on the relationship between *mysterium* and 'the commemoration of the passion of the Lord'. For this author the 'offering' is the *mysterium*, in commmemoration of passion: offering and passion are not directly associated. This is not a grammatical error or a careless phrase: *oblatio* is used in respect of

the bread on the paten and is identified with *offertur* in respect of the *mysterium.* The *mysterium* is therefore the key concept on which the others depend. It is only through the *mystery* of the eucharist that the passion is commemorated. There is no direct suggestion of a theology of sacrificial repetition or even re-presentation here, nor are they implied, but neither are they necessarily excluded. That such language could be used and be found acceptable is an indication of the much freer sacramental discourse possible in this period. A theology of mystery lies at the centre of this: because God is always more than can be expressed, the effects and benefits of the eucharist flow from this positive divine attribute.

***tantis mysteriis***

I.24a Confractio uero et commixtio corporis domini tantis mysteriis declarata antiquitus sanctis patribus fuit ut dum sacerdos oblationem confrangeret uidebatur quasi angelus dei menbra fulgentis pueri cultro concaedere et sanguinem eius in calicem excipiendo colligere ut ueratius crederent uerbum dicente domino carnem eius esse cibum et sanguinem esse potum.[41]

According to Ratcliff this passage refers to a story attributed to Arsenius the Great in the *Vitae Patrum*. It concerns a monk who believes that in the eucharist is consumed not *naturaliter corpus Christi panem*, but merely *figuram eius.* He is corrected by a vision of a small boy on the altar who has his skin slit open by an angel with a knife as the priest performs the manual acts of the mass. The monk then declares his miraculously corrected eucharistic belief:

Credo, domine, quia panis qui in altari ponitur, corpus tuum est, et calix tuus est sanguis. Et statim facta est pars in illa in manu eius panis, secundum mysterium, et sumpsit illud in ore, gratias agens Deo.[42]

It is important to note here the contrast between *figura* and *mysterium.* It is *mysterium* which refers to the true body, *figura* only to its 'figure' in the bread and wine. This may seem odd given that something described as a mystery might be assumed to be the less definite, and yet the sense here is that 'mystery' has the greater claim to refer to that which is true, real and accessible. A 'figure' is not

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[41] Ibid., p. 14.
[42] Ibid, pp. 14-15 n. 1. Arsenius text PL 73: 978, 979.

enough; the reality of Christ in the eucharist is only adequately, albeit paradoxically, conveyed in terms of *mysterium*. This is also good contemporary evidence for the debate between the symbolic and realist interpretations of the eucharist. Although the author of the *Expositio* seems in favour of one of them, both views existed alongside one another. Mystery language plays a part less in defining one against the other than in providing a way of talking about the nature of their interplay.

***misterium benedictionis***

> [I.26b] pro hoc ergo ante Communionem Benedictio traditur ut in uas benedictum benedictionis misterium ingrediatur.[43]

Here mystery can be 'entered' in the Eucharist – the blessing of the cup (*uas benedictum*) is the specific means identified here. This further underlines the interpretation of mystery in the *Expositio* as an indentifier of engagement with the reality of the sacrament, which reality *is* the mystery.

**Alcuin: *Mysterium* and Scriptural Commentary**

Stephen Allott has alleged that Alcuin's 'scriptural and theological writings were mainly derivative; his was not an original mind, and it was a time for salvaging the heritage of the past, not for new thought.'[44] A single work by Alcuin, however, the *Commentaria in sancti Iohannis Euangelium ep. ad Gislam et Rodtrudam*,[45] the most substantial of his works of scriptural exegesis, contains much evidence of a rich use of mystery language that begs the conclusion that Allott is wrong. The word itself appears nearly fifty times, and many of Alcuin's uses of it mirror those in the liturgical texts of the period. It is significant that they should do so since Alcuin is a notable figure in the history of the liturgy, and played a key role in the introduction of the Roman liturgy into the Carolingian Empire. The *Hadrianum,* commonly known as the 'Gregorian Sacramentary' but more accurately part of a family of extant 'Gregorian' texts,[46]

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[43] *Expositio*, p. 16.
[44] *Alcuin of York: His Life and Letters* (York: William Sessions, 1974), p. 90.
[45] References are to the *CLCLT-4* electronic edition of the text.
[46] *Le Sacramentaire Grégorien: Ses principales formes d'après les plus anciens manuscrits,* ed. J.

is the document at the centre of this process, although Alcuin's precise role in its revision and supplementary material is a matter of debate. Whether or not he is the author or editor of the supplement to this sacramentary, now more commonly attributed to Benedict of Aniane, or of certain votive masses (of the Trinity and of the Angels, for example) which survived in the Missal of Pius V,[47] his theological writing has a strong liturgical flavour. The evidence of Alcuin is important as an example of the intellectual context in which mystery-language in the liturgy can be said to have existed. The similarity of usage suggests that in this period there was a close connection between the theology conveyed by the liturgy and the theological culture in which it was used, a link that was less well-defined in later periods.

**The Incarnation and Nativity**

Alcuin uses *mysterium* to describe the incarnation and nativity of Christ. Given the anti-Adoptionist background, it is no surprise to find him insisting that the true nature of the incarnation and nativity of Christ is ultimately beyond the grasp of the human senses or intellect: *incarnationis mysterium humanus oculus penetrare non sufficit,*[48] and later, *nativitatis ejus mysterium non apprehendo.*[49] 'Mystery' signifies the enduring presence of hidden truth in the humanly-visible child and man. Despite its visible manifestation, the incarnation does nothing to remove the divine, ultimately unknowable nature of the event. In speaking of the 'mystery of our Redeemer', Alcuin draws a striking parallel between *visibilis corpore* and *invisibilis maiestate.*[50] The physical body may be visible, but the 'majesty' which gives it its significance is not and cannot be. This use of a binary form (*visibilis-invisibilis*) was common in Christological discussion, other examples being *mortalis-immortalis* and *mutabilis-immutabilis*, since it 'went right to the heart of the logical difficulties posed by the

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Deshusses, Tome I: Le sacramentaire, le supplément d'Aniane, Spicilegium Friburgense 16 (Freiberg: Universitätsverlag, 1971).

[47] Ibid., pp. 64-66; also J. Deshusses, 'Le "Supplément" au sacramentaire grégorien: Alcuin ou Saint Benoît d'Aniane?', *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 9.1 (1965), 48-71; 'À la Recherche du Missel d'Alcuin', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 82 (1968), 3-44; and 'Les Messes d'Alcuin', *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 14 (1972), 7-41.

[48] *Commentaria*, 755/15.

[49] Ibid., 755/22.

[50] Ibid., 754/34.

Incarnation...Carolingians absorbed this language too'.[51] It may be further noted here that these or similar terms and the contrasts they invite are also found in liturgical texts, for example the prayer *Deus, incommutablis virtus, et lumen aeternum*, first found in the Paschal Vigil in the *Gelasianum*, where these attributes of God are contrasted with *Ecclesiae tuae mirabile sacramentum*, and the hope expressed that *dejecta erigi* and *invetera renovari*.[52] Such logic-defying, faith-dependent propositions are entirely characteristic of the liturgy of this period and after, and not only in the context of the incarnation. The tension boils down to the logical challenge of the sacramental accessibility of the hidden truths, and it is the need to present this tension as an aspect of faith that leads liturgists and theologians, Alcuin among them, to employ mystery-language.

Discussing the encounter between John the Baptist and Jesus, Alcuin places John in his proper context as one, existing like every human being in relation to the mystery of the Christ to whom he points. While John perceived (*conspexit*) the significance of the mystery of Christ's birth alongside its physical characteristics, and in acknowledging himself as a result to be unworthy to untie the sandal-strap of such a man, he is in Alcuin's view showing that even such an act of humility fails to do justice to the sigificance of Christ. Alcuin expresses this in an attractive phrase: *corrigia vero calceamenti est ligatura mysterii.* The 'true sandal-strap is the ligature of mystery', which by implication cannot be undone by a human hand.[53]

**The Passion and Resurrection**

The passion and the resurrection also feature prominently in Alcuin's use of mystery-langauge in this commentary, and are to some extent viewed in the light of their liturgical commemoration in the life of the Church. Therefore some of the examples reflect Alcuin's liturgical outlook, and all serve to illuminate the use of mystery-language made by contemporary liturgical texts. The death of

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[51] Jones, *Lost Work*, p. 147, n. 66.
[52] *Liber sacramentorum Romanae Aecclesiae ordinis anni circuli* [= 'Gelasian Sacramentary'], ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Rerum ecclasiasticarum documenta, Series Maior, Fontes 4 (Rome: Herder, 1960), p. 70, no. 432. In the *Missale Romanum* it is the collect after the second lection, and remained there until excised by the reform of the Paschal Vigil in the pontificate of Pius XII.
[53] *Commentaria*, 755/21.

Jesus is called *mysterium Dominicae passionis* on two occasions. It is a mystery that is at once *credendo, confitendo* and *imitando*.[54] This shows a rich understanding of a mystery as a dynamic concept, a reality that can be engaged with by human response while remaining in the hiddenness of God. The belief, confession and imitation take place in the liturgy and in life. Like the nativity, the passion is both visible and invisible in its signficance: *mysterium* indicates this. In the second instance, Alcuin reveals the means and the fruit of such an engagement with the hidden truth when he says that it is *per fidem* that the mystery of the passion *sanat omnes iniquitata nostram*.[55] It is through faith that the mystery bears fruit in human lives, healing the wound of iniquity. For Alcuin, mysteries are *capienda*[56] and *exponenda*.[57] It is likely that he has the liturgy in mind as a place where this grasping and setting-forth (surely the meaning of *expono* here) occurs, since *capio* is a common verb in post-communion prayers of his time, referring to the Eucharistic 'mysteries' just received. An example from the *Hadrianum* that occurs there four times is:

> *Ad complendum.* Quaesumus omnipotens deus, ut illius salutaris capiamus effectum, cuius per haec mysteria pignus accepimus. Per.[58]

Of these four appearances of the same formula, three occur in the basic text in masses during Lent, as feast of July and in September respectively, and the fourth in a mass for the fifth Sunday after Epiphany in the so-called 'Aniane' supplement, thought by some to be the work of Alcuin.

The *Hadrianum* was not the first text to use *capio* in this context. The *Gelasianum* features the following examples which show the established liturgical use of *capio* in connection with *mysterium*, and therefore underline the dynamic understanding of mystery in the period of the sacramentaries:

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[54] Ibid., 782/32.
[55] Ibid., 804/31.
[56] Ibid., 780/28.
[57] Ibid., 803/17.
[58] *Sacramentaire Grégorien*, ed. Deshusses, 177 (p. 136); 615 (p. 250); 722 (p. 279); 1110 (p. 385).

> Sacramentis...auxiliis...tuae redemptionis effectum et mysteriis capiamus et moribus. Per.[59]
>
> Capere paschalia sacramenta...mysteriis quibus renati sunt...his operibus.[60]

With reference to Holy Week, Alcuin is explicitly liturgical in referring to the night before the passion, set forth liturgically on the Thursday of Holy Week:

> ultimam ante passionem...in qua eorum pedes lavit, eis que corporis et sanguinis sui tradidit mysteria celebranda.[61]

Here *mysteria* functions as the link between the gospel episode and its later liturgical expression. *Mysteria celebranda* is a phrase often found in mass formulae with direct reference to the eucharist, and so again, Alcuin's liturgical consciousness is at work. The phrase appears earlier in Alcuin's discussion of the Temple, in which *omnia mysteria veteris legis adhaerebant.*[62] While he misses the opportunity to make a clever comment about the 'true mysteries', Alcuin picks the image up again further on in speaking about the new temple which is the church: *mysterium celebranda convenimus templum.*[63] As well as the obvious Eucharistic reference, Alcuin compares the human being with the temple, since the crucified and risen Jesus who once walked in the physical Temple of the old law now, as it were, 'walks' in the human being. Alcuin pushes home his point with a Pauline illustration:

> cum manifeste dicat Apostolus: Vos estis templum Dei vivi, sicut dicit Deus: Inhabitabo in eis, et inter illos ambulabo.[64]

Mystery is the essential term for this analogy, since it bridges the gap between the historical and the ever-present Jesus, connecting it with the eucharistic dispensation brought about by the last supper and the passion.

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[59] Post communion prayer at Ordination mass: *Liber sacramentorum*, ed Mohlberg, p. 161.
[60] Post communion prayer at a mass during Lent: *Liber sacramentorum*, ed. Mohlberg, p. 343.
[61] *Commentaria*, 1004/23.
[62] Ibid., 860/39.
[63] Ibid., 891/54.
[64] Ibid., 891/54; cf. I Cor. 3.16-17.

The remaining essential element in this scheme is the resurrection. Alcuin unequivocally calls it *ipsum resurrectionis suae mysterium*,[65] but more specifically and with more sophistication relates this mystery to its liturgical context and expression in the lives of the faithful:

> Verum si in octava diei circumcisione baptisma, quod in mysterium Dominicae resurrectionis a peccatorum nos morte redemit, intelligis; in inductione in templum et oblatione, oblationem hostiae purificantis figuratum cognoscis, fideles quosque de baptisterio ad altare sanctum ingredi, ac Dominici corporis et sanguinis victima singulari debere consecrari, vino quidem de aqua facto et quidem meracissimo donatus es.[66]

These are the words of one totally familiar with the liturgy, its calendar and its theology. Alcuin associates the term *figuratus* with the eucharistic elements, presumably because he has just used *mysterium* for the resurrection. While related to *mysterium*, since it refers to the form or shape of something with a potential deeper meaning, rather than the finite thing itself, *figura* is perhaps indeed the correct term here since it refers to the *hostiae* before they have been offered. *Mysterium* in the liturgies almost always refers to the consecrated elements, whether in a future perfect sense in a preface or secret prayer (that which will have been or is about to be done, celebrated, consecrated), or retrospectively in a post-communion (that which has been received, tasted, or grasped).

A conclusion specific to Alcuin that can be drawn from the evidence reviewed above is that he does not use sacramental terms in general and mystery language in particular indiscriminately. There are distinct shades of meaning which give theological nuance and richness to the subject of discussion.

**Amalarius: Allegorical Commentary on the Liturgy**

Whereas the method of Alcuin is more dependent on inference and an assumed liturgical background, Amalarius, by commenting directly on the liturgy itself, places the words and actions of worship at the heart of theological debate.

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[65] *Commentaria*, 996/12.
[66] Ibid., 770/21.

Amalarius was involved in another theological issue by virtue of his writings, although he does not seem to have deliberately cast himself in the role of protagonist with the intention of sparking a controversy. The question was that of the presence of Christ in the eucharist. Amalarius was condemned by Florus at the synod of Quierzy in 838 for his symbolic interpretation, as against a more realist, corporeal approach: their differences boil down to the fact that 'for Florus, the Mass is a cultic mystery that celebrates the one mystery of salvation; for Amalar [*sic*], the Mass contains many mysteries.'[67] The matter did not become either as adversarial or as politically charged as the Adoptionist debate, although it has been pointed out that there were negative implications in that 'imperial and ecclesiastical inaction could be seen as overturning the judgement of the council of Quierzy [*sic*].'[68] Nevertheless, it forms part of the intellectual background of Amalarius' extensive liturgical writing, in which *mysterium* features prominently.[69]

The use of *mysterium* in the works of Amalarius may conveniently be studied with reference to the entries in the *index philologicus* provided by Hanssens in his edition.[70] Hanssens' organization of the material itself gives rise to questions as to how far Amalarius was as expert as Alcuin in his employment of mystery language. Hanssens' first example is Amalarius' discussion of the meaning of the words *Hic est calix sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei* in the institution narrative. Amalarius examines this in the context of a letter to Rantgarius, a bishop (perhaps of Soissons), about the dominical words of institution of the Eucharist. The origin and meaning of *mysterium fidei* in this position is discussed at length in Chapter 8. The interpretation of Amalarius is one among many, but for the purposes of this study belongs in the present context. The relevant passage is:

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[67] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, p. 97.
[68] Colish, *Medieval Foundations*, pp. 73-4.
[69] For a summary of Amalarius' and Florus' thought, Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, pp. 92-95, 95-97. For a comparison of Amalarius and Florus, A. Kolping, 'Amalar von Metz und Florus von Lyon: Zeugen eines Wandels im liturgischen Mysterienverständnis in der Karolingerzeit', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 73 (1951), 424-64.
[70] *Amalarii Opera Liturgica,* 3v., ed. J.Hanssens (Rome, 1948-50). There are two further instances either not noticed or not thought important by Hanssens which are included in this discussion.

[4.] Ipse [sanguis] vocatur 'mysterium fidei', quoniam qui credit se redemptum ab eo sanguine, et imitator fit passionis ipsius, ei proficit ad salutem et ad vitam aeternam. Unde ipse Dominus dicit: *Nisi manducaveritis carnem filii hominis, et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobismet ipsis.* [John 6.54] Hoc est, nisi participes fueritis meae passionis, et credideritis me mortuum pro vestra salute, non habebitis vitam in vobis. Mysterium grece, latine secretum; quia fides ista latet in cordibus electorum, propterea vocatur secretum fidei.

> 5. Mysterium fidei fides est, ut Augustinus in epistola ad Bonifacium episcopum: 'Sicut ergo secundum quondam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, sacramentum sanguinis Christi sanguis Christi est; ita sacramentum fidei fides est. Simile modo possumus dicere: 'Hic est calix sanguinis mei novi et aeterni testamenti', ac si dicat: Hic est sanguis meus, qui pro vobis datur, ut // deinceps novum et aeternum testamentum a me accipiantur et teneatur. Sequitur: mysterium fidei, hoc credere debetis, id est hanc fidem habere debetis, ut per illum remissio vobis sit omnium peccatorum.[71]

Although this is a rather long-winded commentary, it reveals several interesting points. The first is that Amalarius equates *mysterium* with *secretum* in this context, not with *sacramentum*, and yet quotes Augustine who has *sacramentum fidei* for the same thing: 'The sacrament of faith is faith, just as the sacrament of the body of Christ is the body of Christ and the sacrament of the blood of Christ is the blood of Christ'. The distinction, if any, that Amalarius is trying to make between *mysterium, secretum* and *sacramentum* is not very clear. On the one hand he follows the more admissible equation of *mysterium* with *secretum*, and yet by implication regards *sacramentum* as synonymous with both. Compared with the rich nuancing of Alcuin, this suggests a rather subordinate standard of linguistic dexterity in Amalarius, with the phrase of Augustine unhelpfully out of context. It is consequently difficult to tease out the theology Amalarius is trying to convey amid his desperation to explain the words in question. However it seems to be that, in his view, the 'mystery' of faith is faith itself. A person must have faith in the blood of the new and eternal testament if the latter is to be to them for the remission of sins. This at least suggests that Amalarius was aware of the *potential* of *mysterium* as indicating hidden truth: faith itself, as a human response, may be said to 'contain' this truth if rightly directed.

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[71] *Liber officialis, Epistula* IV, 'Epistula ad Rantgarium Episcopum [Noviomensis]', *Opera*, II, 390-9, ref. to Augustine, *Epistula* 98, *Ad Bonifacium episcopum*, 9 (PL 33: 364).

Hanssens treats this example as *sui generis*. The rest of his arrangement of the material falls into three separate categories, the first of which is subdivided:

i. Res mystica: in Deo, in vitam Christi, in vita Christiana.

ii. Signum rei mysticae.

iii. Significatio rei mysticae.

There are difficulties with this scheme, in particular when it comes to the distinction between *signum* and *significatio*. In translation there seems to be very little difference, which may suggest a superfluous or artificial division on the part of Hanssens. Even so, while *signum* is simply 'sign', here presumably in the classic sacramental sense of an outward sign of inward grace, or inner truth, *significatio* later comes to mean 'potential significance'.[72] The English word *significacio* (sic), 'allegorical meaning',[73] implies an earlier corresponding Latin sense. These later meanings suggest a process of widening of senses an episode in which can be seen in the texts under review here.

**Res mystica in Deo**

Hanssens' example of a mystery 'in God' comes from Amalarius' commentary the *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, here on the eucharistic preface and specifically the section concerning the *Et ideo cum angelis* ('Therefore with angels...'):

> Quibus [spiritibus bonorum angelorum] ad explenda divina mysteria principantur [principatus].[74]

Here the 'divine mysteries' refer to the hidden nature of God in a quite abstract way. While Amalarius does not say so directly, the implication of *et ideo cum*

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[72] Latham, *Medieval Latin Word-List*, p. 439.
[73] *OED*, *s.v.*
[74] Hanssens, II, 326: 40.

*angelis*, etc., is that the way is open for the participation of the people in these same mysteries in the Eucharist. We therefore have here a straightforward piece of eucharistic theology which employs the concept of mystery to point to the God who is mystery and the means by which this mystery is dynamically encountered through the liturgy.

**Res mystica in vitam Christi**

> Videtur mihi ut ea ora praesentanda sit patena, qua circa mysteria passionis Domini satagebant discipuli vel mulieres. Postquam enim ivit ad mensam, studuerunt circa mysteria passionis.[75]

The first example of a mystery in the life of Christ is that of the passion. In the context of commenting on the practice in *Ordo Romanus II* of presenting the paten after the eucharistic prayer has been recited, Amalarius sees in the paten's arrival and its shape a focus around which, as it were, 'disciples and women' may be 'satisfied', perhaps 'fed', by the mystery of the passion, since, presumably, the consecrated host is now placed upon it. Thus in this eucharistic context, the *mysterium* is the passion *as encountered* in the consecrated bread.

The second example is more complex in its allegorical construction, and occurs in the commentary on the antiphoner, *De ordine antiphonarii* in the chapter concerning Quinquagesima:

> [On quinquagesima antiphons]
>
> [5.]
>
> Per baptismum recolitur dispersus primus homo Adam per quattuor partes mundi ad unum corpus Christi; corpus Christi legitur fabricatum per quadraginta et sex annos. De quo mysterio ex dictis Agustini habemus scriptum in Libello officiali,[76] in loco ubi scribitur de feria quarta quae vocatur caput ieiunii.[77] [ie Ash Wed.] /

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[75] Hanssens, II, 351, 8-11.
[76] See Amalarius, *Liber officialis,* i, c.7, 5-9: Hanssens, I, 49-51; *Thesaurus ex. S. Augustini operibus*, PL 62: 673D-674A.
[77] That is, Ash Wednesday: *caput ieiunii* is literally 'the head of the fast'.

6. A praesenti feria Quarta sunt quadraginta sex dies usque ad publicum baptismum.[78]

Amalarius equates the body of Christ with the Temple, and refers to a longer treatment of this in the *De Officiis*. This complex passage relies on an interpretation of John 2.20, such that the building of Temple in forty-six years is equated with Jesus speaking of 'the temple of his body'. Amalarius does not mention the gospel at all, but uses the Johannine analogy to make the puzzling statement that the body of Christ was therefore completed in forty-six years (*corpus Christi legitur fabricatum per quadraginta et sex annos*). Amalarius places this in the context of Quinquagesima because Ash Wednesday (*caput ieiunii*), which falls in the week which this Sunday begins, is forty-six days before 'the day of public baptism', that is Easter. Through baptism, he reasons, the people of God scattered to the four corners of the world on account of Adam are gathered into one body of Christ. Therefore the forty-six days from the beginning of Lent until Easter, the day of baptism, reflect the forty-six years taken to build the Temple and, by his reckoning, 'the body of Christ'. The longer treatment in the *De Officiis* takes the allegory even further and identifies the name Adam with the number forty-six. The allegorical interpretation in both places seems to rest entirely on numerical allusion. References to Adam and, earlier, to Abraham and Noah are not out of place, however. It became customary in the Roman liturgy for Adam, Noah and Abraham to be recalled in the Breviary and Missal on Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima, each figure having a particular emphasis on one of these days, and mirroring the first three lections at the Paschal Vigil. Quinquagesima is, as the chronology suggests, mainly concerned with Abraham, not Adam. Amalarius is aware of this earlier in the same chapter (*Nam et Abraham tertia aetate mundi extitit*), but by its latter part concerns himself with Adam, since it ties in with his numerical reference. The *mysterium* here is the body of Christ fashioned, as it were, in the forty-six days between Ash Wednesday and Lent. It is hardly, as Hanssens implies, a 'mystery' in the life of Christ like the passion. It is more accurately a term used by Amalarius in connection with numerical symbolism. It does however carry theological weight in the sense that the symbolism points beyond superficial coincidence to the mystery of initiation which incorporates into Christ's body,

[78] Hanssens, III, 70-71, 25-31.

the Church. In this case, it may simply be that Amalarius is, albeit in a typically laborious way, calling the Body of Christ in its corporeal and its ecclesial senses a 'mystery'.

The third example of a *mysterium* in the life of Christ is more straightforwardly interpreted. Commenting on the Easter liturgy, Amalarius refers to the extinguishing and reilluminating of lights in the church during the triduum:

> In eadem vero nocte, id est dominica, quae pertinet ad resurrectionem Christi, causa significandi mysterii [resurrectionis Christi] omnia lumina renovantur. Propter sacramentum dominicae sepulturae et resurrectionis in dominica nocte, liquet ratum esse ordinem, ut, cum, ventum fuerit ad officium quod pertinet ad resurrectionem Christi, novus ignis et permansurus exurgat, qui inluminet totam ecclesiam.[79]

The *mysterium* of the resurrection rekindles every light; the entombing and rising of Christ is a *sacramentum*: what is the difference? While it could be a simple matter of style, a more sophisticated interpretation would have it to be the unfathomable truth of the resurrection that does the 'rekindling': without this the resurrection would have no power. It is significant that elsewhere, in liturgical texts, verbs expressing restoration in some sense are used with *mysterium* in the sense of renewal, for example by the *mysterium* of the incarnation.[80] In any case this is metaphor - it is ultimately not about actual lights in church, but a more profound sense of the restoration of 'light' after the 'darkness' of the three days. Mystery is a more appropriate word in a metaphorical context, since the reality hidden in the verbal and (here) visible form is the agent of the renewal. The visible entombing and risen-ness of Christ as celebrated on this night are a 'sacrament', however, because in time they are visible, and in liturgical expression they are subordinate to the unseen power of God which is mystery. Liturgically this passage is important, since it shows how mystery is not simply a

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[79] *Liber de ordine antiphonarii*, c.44 'De extinctione luminum circa sepultram Domini': Hanssens, III, 80, 1-6. Amalarius' concern with lights in the liturgy is further discussed in context by A.J. MacGregor, *Fire and Light in the Western Triduum*, Alcuin Club Collections 71 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 20-23.

[80] See the analytical tables in Chapter 7.

verbal device, but relies on visual, ritual forms too, here the extinguishing and relighting of candles.

**In vita Christiana**

Amalarius' first *mysterium* in the Christian life is post-baptismal anointing with the oil of chrism:

> 44. Post hoc salutare lavacrum linitur caput eius sacro chrismate, unde sacerdotes et reges unctos esse novimus in veteri testamento, ut intellegat baptizatus regale ac sacerdotale mysterium se accepisse, quia illius corpori adunatus est, qui rex summus et sacerdos est verus, et regnum sperare debet perpetuum et hostias immaculatae conversationis. Deo semper offerre meminere. Tegitur postea linteo.[81]

The *mysterium* here is beyond the sacrament of baptism or of anointing: it is made available to the baptized through the sacrament. There is a clear distinction of meaning in that the *mysterium* is the priestly and kingly status of Christ, in which the baptized participate through the sacrament of anointing with chrism. A *mysterium* is dynamic and active since it *can* be received and appropriated by the intellect but not *explained* by it. Once again, the visual, physical element is important as a sign of the mystery at work, it has the character of sacrament, but equally so is the inner perception of the one baptized and the transformative effect of the dynamic *mysterium* on the life subsequently lived in union with Christ.

**Signum rei mysticae**

**Significatio rei mysticae**

Hanssens' final classification of Amalarius' use of *mysterium* is here taken as one, since the *signum-significatio* division is important and in need of assessment.[82] The overall implication of both is that in addition to the uses already examined, Amalarius makes indirect use of the possibilities of mystery

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[81] *Epistula Amalarii de baptismo*, 'De unctione capitis': Hanssens, I, 247, 1-8.
[82] See above for an indication of later lexical development.

language in 'signs' and 'significations' of mysteries, as opposed to the mysteries themselves. This overall point is not at issue. The first example of a *signum* is the eucharist: *in consecratione tanti mysterii*.[83] The eucharist is a mystery which has the quality of sign; it carries more theological weight than the simply visible or sensible to the touch or taste. The use of *mysterium* by Amalarius in this context is especially relevant to the accusation that his is a symbolic interpretation of the eucharist. As we have argued, *mysterium* goes further than *sacramentum* in that it gives primary emphasis to the reality hidden in the sensible form, rather than to the form as a veil of inner meaning. This suggests that for Amalarius the eucharistic elements are far more than mere symbols, but are *loci* of encounter with the dynamic, active mystery of God to which the whole sacramental economy points. Thus it seems more than a *signum*, too.

The second *signum* is that of the paschal candle at the liturgy of Holy Saturday:

> [5.] Cereus propter benedicitur, quia nisi ex benedictione ministri, non potest [cereus] ex sua simplici natura transire ad misteria.[84]

While the paschal candle cannot penetrate the mystery in itself, by its own nature as a candle, in mystery it can be the column of fire that led the children of Israel. In contrast to the previous example, here Amalarius seems to wish to limit the signifiance of the candle as *signum*. Alone, as a pillar of wax, even though it is blessed by the ministers, it is only *in mystery* as the column of fire that carries theological weight beyond its sensible characteristics.

**Text as Art: a Proposal**

These final examples suggest that *mysterium* is capable of visual as well as textual expression. The relationship between visual and textual can be discussed in terms of each individually, but also in terms of both, if *the text is itself seen as visual as well as audible.* What follows in response to this notion does not

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[83] *Canonis missae interpretatio*: Hanssens, I, 299, 20-25.
[84] *Liber officialis* I.i, c.18 'De cereo benedicendo': Hanssens, II, 113, 31-32

pretend to be a exhaustive exploration, merely the suggestion in the light of the foregoing discussion and in the light of some recent writing that the notion may prove useful and deserving of further study. In Chapter 6 we identified in the transition from improvisation to fixed text an important shift in what was required of the text in order that the divine initiative remained consciously dynamic, and we argued that *mysterium* is an example of how this need might have been met. Having examined its use and implications in selected texts and in a particular intellectual and cultural context, and finding there an extraordinary richness and flexibility in the use of *mysterium*, we return to our earlier assertion at the end of Chapter 7 that a text, however fixed, is seen, spoken and heard. In Chapter 3 we drew attention to the thought of Maritain and Jones as interpreted by Williams on the properties of art as 'more than it is', and in the discussion of Paschasius Radbertus, we referred to the opinion of Kilmartin on the desire for 'what can be concretely grasped'. Kilmartin further argues that consequently the Franks were not as adept at the concept of the image as eastern Christians, and that therefore the matter of pictorial images was controversial.[85] In the light of these, and in dialogue with recent work on the understanding of pictorial art in the Carolingian world, we now propose that liturgical text can be understood as 'art' on the grounds that it creates the conditions for interaction with it not only in terms of sight but also in speech and hearing, all of which facilitate its properties as 'more' and 'beyond' which are reflective of and in the context of worship communicative of the divine initiative. In suggesting this association there is an awareness of how much more there is to be said in this regard than can be attempted here, but it is hoped that at least to indicate the direction further work might take.

We focus particularly on the work of Herbert Kessler and his discussion of the perception, properties and function of art in the Carolingian period, thus coterminous with the present discussion. Kessler argues that:

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[85] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, pp. 79-81.

> For the Carolingians the issue was not whether images were to be allowed but, rather, how they were to function. The debate centred on whether pictures participated in the sacred, in particular, on whether they afforded access to worlds beyond this one.[86]

Kessler notes that there was opposition to art in favour of words which consciously understands writing to be the means by which mystery is to be engaged with, because this cannot be done in pictures. For example Theodulf in the *Libri Carolini:*

> For we, who adhere not to the letter that brings death but to the life giving spirit, who are not the carnal but the spiritual Israel, who reject contemplating the invisible through visible things, we give thanks that we have received from God mysteries, not only superior to images – which are entirely devoid of mystery – but superior also to the tablets and two cherubim...which are / figures of things to come, and we have spiritually and in truth those very things which they had carnally and veiled under typical prefigurations.
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> John saw and heard many mysteries revealed by God, but he was commanded not to make paintings of them but rather write them in a book.[87]

Theodulf is saying that words are better because in any case the 'invisible' cannot be contemplated by way of the 'visible', let alone in a picture, and the Revelation to John is used to give his views divine sanction. At most, he continues:

> To contemplate Christ, who is the power and wisdom of God...it is necessary to have not corporal sight, which we have in common with irrational animals, but spiritual vision, for this the Prophet prayed when he said, 'Take the veil from my eyes that I may see the marvels that spring from thy law.[88]

Agobard of Lyons, writing in about 825, is similarly negative:

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[86] Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 149.
[87] Ibid., pp. 149-50.
[88] Ibid., p. 150.

> We look at a picture merely as a picture, devoid of life, sense and reason. It feeds the vision of the eye. True God is venerated by the soul.[89]

To the detractors of pictures physical sight is incapable of contemplating what Theodulf calls 'mysteries', and so a category of 'spiritual seeing' is proposed, which is an operation not of the physical sense but of the soul, and is possible through written texts, not pictures. Hrabanus Maurus, who featured in the discussion of *mysterium-sacramentum*, expands on the superior properties of writing:

> The sign of writing is worth more than the form of an image and offers more beauty to the soul than the false picture with colours, which does not show the figures of things correctly. For script is the perfect and blessed norm of salvation and it is more important in all things and is more use to everyone…It serves ears, lips and eyes, while painting offers some consolation to the eyes.[90]

A text, according to this writer, 'serves ears, lips and eyes', whereas a picture can only offer 'mere consolation'. If these are the properties of text in general, they are presumably true of liturgical text: indeed if Hrabanus' definition is accepted, although for him scripture is principally in view, liturgical texts by their nature and purpose are arguably better placed than most other written genres to serve 'ears, lips and eyes', which correspond to our 'seen, spoken and heard'. Just as we suggested that once ordinarily written down rather than improvised a great deal was demanded of liturgical text, so here in these contemporary opinions of writing as opposed to art much is also required. Indeed the transition from improvisation to fixed text occurs at around the same time as images were squaring up to text in intellectual debate, and so on this basis liturgical texts were surely in a good position to have made up for the perceived deficiencies of pictures. But need there be such a division between text and art? The examples above are of negative contributions to the extensive debate about art in this period stemming at least in part from a perceived threat posed to writing by images on account of their appealing danger, arising according to Peter Brown at

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[89]Ibid., p. 151.
[90]Ibid., p. 150 and note 16.

the end of the sixth century and opposed by the twin demands of the need for interpretation and the positive possibilities of seeing beyond this world to the next.[91] This was a debate which has been extensively discussed elsewhere, and in which participants drew in authorities of the stature of Augustine and Gregory the Great. Augustine favoured the division, in that he 'maintained that because pictures are limited in appearance, they are entirely different from words, which not only allow but actually demand interpretation', as shown in his commentary on the Gospel of John:

> For a picture is looked at in a different way from that in which a writing is looked at. When you have seen a picture, to have seen and praised it is the whole thing; when you see a writing, this is not the whole, since you are reminded also to read it.[92]

But does this superior capability of writing not also apply to art? As Kessler then argues, Pope Hadrian (the sender of the *Hadrianum*) attempted to influence Carolingian attitudes to art in favour of the more positive, over against the disparagements of local opinion, in that:

> He went so far as to try to separate Charlemagne from the more extreme condemnations of images...Pope Hadrian's more expansive view of images was integrated into Carolingian attitudes by the second quarter of the ninth century.[93]

Among the distinguished authorities there were also those who viewed pictures more favourably, for example Augustine's contemporary Paulinus of Nola, another of those whose use of *mysterium-sacramentum* we have already noted, and who suggested in connection with the paintings which decorated the basilica at Nola that:

> Whoever on seeing [the paintings] recognizes Truth from idle figures, feeds his faithful spirit with a by no means idle image.[94]

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[91] Ibid., p. 104, interpreting Peter Brown, 'Images as a Substitute for Writing', in *East and West: Modes of Communication*, ed. E. Chrysos & I. Wood (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 15ff.
[92] *Tractate XXIV on the Gospel of John*, PL 35: 1593; Kessler, p. 150.
[93] Kessler, p. 153.
[94] *Carmen*, XXVII, in *Paulinus' Churches at Nola,* ed. & tr. R.C. Goldschmidt (Amsterdam, 1940), p. 60; thus Kessler, p. 151 and note 22.

The picture may be 'idle', but what it provokes in the viewer is 'by no means idle'. If this can be true of art, we suggest, surely it can be so of text, which along with its spoken and auditory properties has a physical 'visual' dimension: can it not also be said to have a *spiritual* visual dimension which is in a sense activated by these physical properties in recognition of what is 'beyond' them? Alcuin the liturgist himself, notes Kessler, in the commentary to which we have already made reference in this chapter, saw as particularly characteristic of the Gospel of John in contrast to the synoptists 'his contemplative faculties, his ability to discern the sacred mysteries beneath the historical account.'[95] If Alcuin could make this assessment of the Gospel, given his liturgical expertise something of the intellectual process which led him to this conclusion could also, very plausibly, have informed his liturgical compositions and indeed his view of the properties of liturgical texts.

If writing could have these properties as well as art, the evidence marshalled by Kessler suggests, though not so explicitly interpreted by him, that text and art have much in common in their potential for encounter with the 'more than is' to which both were consciously held to give access. We might go further and say that the division between writing and art which art's detractors attempted to establish is actually false: because art can be like this, so can text, because text *is* art. This is surely supported by Kessler's example of the ninth-century Grandval Bible, in which, he holds, 'text elides with picture and history merges with effigy to reveal the divine spirit of God that even images of the Incarnate Logos could not represent.'[96] The text and the pictures are here made indispensable to one another: the consequences of this are, in Kessler's scheme, bound up also with the symbolic character of the vellum on which the text is written and the pictures drawn. In origin it is flesh, and 'no medieval scribe would have forgotten that the parchment on which divine revelation is transcribed is literally flesh, the skin of animals, nor that this carnal barrier, too is to disappear at the end of time.'[97] In this Kessler continues to argue for the

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[95] Kessler, p. 181 and note 38: Alcuin, *Comment. In Ioan.* (PL 100:74), 'Atque inter ipsos Evangeliorum scriptores valde beatum Ioannem, in divinorum profunditate mysteriorum eminentiorem esse.'
[96] Kessler, p. 187.
[97] Ibid.

distinction of text and picture: 'words are the carnal elements and pictures their spiritual transformations.'[98] This seems to give the 'lower' place to the text, 'flesh' to be transformed, but this is to forget that the words are only written *on* flesh, which doesn't make them flesh themselves, and that the pictures are *also* painted on flesh, and if so why do they not need to be 'transformed'? Kessler's is a false hierarchy: just as pictures can be painted by finite humanity on finite flesh and interpreted with the eyes of spiritual sight, so words, too, turned by human hand and subject to human limitation - Shakespeare and Vermeer both had to die - are also susceptible to a manner of 'seeing' that shows what 'lies beyond'. If anything this capacity draws on more human resources in a text than in a picture, which cannot be heard or expressed in speech, only described in a poor substitute for actually looking at it: text demands more of the speaker and hearer. A text requires more of the recipient also because the 'picture' it paints demands the participation of the imagination in order to be 'seen' beyond the superficial, *prima facie*, meaning of the words, and so is text not in fact as 'dangerous' as image precisely because it also functioned as a bridge, in Kessler's words 'spanning the gap between illiterate and literate and the chasm between humans and the invisible God'?[99] A liturgical text is a performative text: in its performance, those who cannot read hear, the 'picture' is painted which draws in and unites the literate and illiterate, and that which cannot be held in the fleshly grasp of the page, the *mysterium* can be encountered in worship. If liturgical text *is* art in this way, then *mysterium* describes this imaginative apprehension and transformation by the 'beyond' of divine initiative, *whether or not* the word itself is used. This is the imaginative context in which liturgical text functions in the period in question, and in liturgical terms, when interpreted in this way, it seems as though the text does act as the launch-point and the steersman of the liturgical encounter with the *mysterium*, since its performance does not exist independently of it but arises out of the demands it makes on the human senses in the imaginative process of transforming them and opening the eyes of the soul. Given the sophisticated way in which text and image were discussed in this period and what seems on interpretation now to have been the profoundly creative tension between them, *mysterium* and its multi-layered implications can

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[98] Ibid., p. 188.
[99] Ibid., p. 104.

be seen as a vital aspect of this: the creative tensions between visible and invisible and between seen and heard are contained in it. In its use and flexibility is a constant reminder of the intellectual and specifically theological concerns of the time, in a manner which simply is not the case today, where liturgical language sits uncomfortably with modern secular culture, attempting to be expressive of it but never quite succeeding because never breaking free from the dimensions fashioned for it in the period we are studying, dimensions in fact subtly communicative of a 'beyond' the presence of and contact with which was assumed, even feared, but accepted as part of the shared inheritance of faith and expressed instinctively in the worship of the church. *Mysterium* enfolds (to borrow once more the 'envelope' image) the finitude of human response and the boundless generosity of divine initiative. It is this which needs to be brought into the light from the so-called 'dark ages' and realized afresh as the language of the sheer unconfined possibility of God that the liturgy celebrates and makes truly present.

# CHAPTER 10

# CONCLUSION

The sheer range of directly theological and other writing that has needed to be deployed on the subject of this essay shows that a discussion of mystery need not, indeed should not, be limited to one area of theology nor to a single methodology. While liturgical studies have formed the core of what is offered here, it will be seen that historical and systematic theology, philology, aesthetics and history have also played key roles. This suggests that mystery ought no longer to be regarded as the preserve of a particular ecclesial or academic setting. While 'Western Catholic' is what might be termed the 'default setting', the diversity of opinion used here suggests a deeper principle which can be shared across ecclesial and confessional fault-lines. The early picture shows this to have been the case between liturgical 'families' and different theological cultures: there is no reason to suppose that it need be any different today. No one liturgical 'family' had a monopoly on the language or concept of mystery: all played a role in developing and deepening the possibilities of these. However the shared aspect does not mean that mystery was monochrome – each tradition shows differences of emphasis. This textured nature is mirrored today: one could not claim that Wiles and von Balthasar are identical in their theological method and conclusions, and yet they both have significant things to say about the nature and expression of mystery that together with other points of view can be seen, in synthesis, to show that a deeper principle is at work, an overall picture of a concept of remarkable vitality, diversity and possibility. While there are differences of emphasis, even so far as scepticism about the extent of its possibilities, there is an instinctive conviction in western theology of whatever label that mystery is a significant concept. Attempts consciously to do away with it, as Toland tried to, have on the whole not succeeded.

Related to this is the fact that neither need mystery be confined to eastern Christianity as has often been assumed. The general conclusions of Robert Taft in this regard have been shown to be vindicated in that there is no need for

western Christians automatically to look to the east for something perceived as lacking, since it is already firmly there in the western liturgical tradition, and can be seen particularly in the period studied here. The difference, perhaps in some sense the problem, is that the rich possibilities evident in the period studied are no longer so *consciously* present in western Christian thought; they have been obscured, although in the twentieth century they began to be noticed once again by such figures as Odo Casel. Some of the factors influencing and encouraging the process of obscuring begin to be suggested in the history of western liturgy in the period we have studied. There is for example the ending of the truce between realist and symbolist interpretations of the eucharist, and the gradual reduction of textual diversity as the Roman tradition came to dominate (although not totally) the liturgical expression of Christianity in the west. Both in their way suggest a deeper trend towards definition and circumscription which militated against the sort of confidence in divine initiative that is nevertheless still apparent in the use of mystery language in the first millennium. Mystery language does survive in modern rites – it is there in the Books of Common Prayer and subsequent revisions, and appears more often than at any time before in the family of rites which comprise *Common Worship* in the Church of England. The Roman *Novus Ordo* has many examples, but its presence in all these texts is largely unremarked both in terms of reasons for its inclusion and the implications of its being there. This is a situation which has such potential consequences as indiscriminate and therefore misleading translation of *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. The presence of this vocabulary in modern rites is not evidence of a contemporary concern with mystery language or theology: rather, the impression is of a 'leftover' language, an unquestioning, perhaps even indifferent continuation of a vocabulary that ought to stand at the centre of liturgical thinking and evolution as the evidence of the first millennium suggests. It ought to do so because of what it declares liturgy to be *for*: the proclamation of and participation in the activity of God in the Church.

It is also the case that in relation to the presumed mystery the departure of which is mourned, the picture is not at all as straightforward as some critics of contemporary texts would have it believed. It is not simply a particular language or style of language which in itself conveys mystery: this is false nostalgia. It is

instead the way in which the language is used to convey a deeper sense of the hiddenness of divine activity encountered and experienced in Christ the sacrament of the mystery of God, in *the* sacraments but not only in them, and in the liturgy as a whole. The thesis has shown how the use of the word mystery can indicate this deep reality of the liturgy in whatever setting, a reality the continued existence of which in spite of revision and reform is the *real* conservatism; not in the sense of a liturgical 'deep-freeze', but precisely *because* it points to the dynamic initiative of the God who is beyond language and ritual, the reality of which can nonetheless be experienced and encountered in these things which are shown to be 'more than they are', and thus limitless in the positive sense of assuring the church of God's eternal and boundless love for the world he has made. If this can be conveyed with equal conviction in Greek, Syriac and Latin, it can surely also be conveyed in different styles of English, including the contemporary, since language has innate qualities and potentialities which can be likened to those of painting, indeed seen to be 'more than they are', and are capable, to use Soskice's notion, of indicating a 'new reality' each time words are spoken and heard. This 'new reality' is a paradigm of the renewal of creation in which the worshipping church participates, and to which the language of mystery points even when it has a more specific use – it is 'a way of speaking' which in its own flexibility exemplifies the totality of linguistic potential. 'Mystery', then, *is* a language, whether it be expressed in Greek, Latin or English or versions or styles of them.

Liturgical change has resulted, then, in the terminology of mystery being present in liturgical texts without its full significance being realised. Casel's aim was the recovery of an understanding of mystery which he believed to have been forgotten, based on his interpretation of the witness of the patristic era. Whatever the strengths or shortcomings of his work, the present study has argued that there is *another* critical period in which a strong case can be made for mystery in a central role, and which itself needs to be understood every bit as much as any perceived 'golden age' of liturgical theology before it. The changes which took place in this period, such as the transition from improvisation to fixed text at its beginning and the dissolution at its end of the confidently flexible approach to the theology of the eucharist, are themselves essential to an understanding of

liturgical change, how liturgy conveys theology and how it speaks of the culture in which it is created and used. These conclusions in turn have important things to say to the present time, in which the language of the liturgy is a subject of controversy, and in which there seems to be very little of the confidence and risk which so clearly attended the formative centuries of the western liturgy that have been studied. Simple retention of ancient forms or languages *because they are ancient* is not a sufficient understanding of the living liturgical tradition if their original *Sitz im Leben* is not understood in its own context. The wholesale adoption of mystery language from the fourth century onwards shows that the church decided that *such a language was necessary if the liturgy was authentically to express the faith handed on to it*. It was a radical step because it boldly employed the very language so strenuously avoided only a short time before, and indicated a new confidence in the message to be proclaimed, since it indicated that in the mystery of God in Christ, all other mysteries are eclipsed and shown to be fraudulent. This suggests that present concerns with liturgical language should begin with the question of what is deemed necessary for the mission of the church in our own time; the tools for seeking the answer may be seen at work in the very tradition on and in which that mission builds. The tradition is most authentically reflected not in the ancient text *because ancient*, but in the *necessary text because necessary*, which may well be ancient or might just as easily be new. This is the attitude suggested by improvisation, a much more dangerous way of doing liturgy which the text-bound church has largely forgotten – dangerous, because trusting – but which does not need to return to improvisation if the texts are made to work hard enough. The indicator of this will come not through, for example, the closest possible translation of Latin, but from the capacity of the text to be 'more than it is' in the created space between speaker and hearers, between speaker and speaker and between hearer and hearer, the space whose physical dimensions may easily be appraised, but whose dimensions *in mysterio* cannot be measured and which therefore stand as the guarantee of divine initiative and commitment. This is what is required of the liturgy, and required of its texts, if the tradition is to be most authentically expressed, and the rich, conscious use of *mysterium* as a *necessary language* proper to the liturgy is both acknowledgement and indicator of this. We must also acknowledge, however, with Grimes and others, the *limitations* of language

as an indicator. As with a piece of visual art, which might be said to include a visible and performed text, there will always be 'more' than language can tell us – but what it can suggest is nonetheless important since words themselves are used in dialogue, and in the sacramental dialogue between the divine and the human the creative power of God is at work.

The history of the church in the context of human history has seen a distinct erosion of the intellectual culture in which such an approach to liturgical theology and practice can most naturally and instinctively arise. The previously-published case study in the appendix shows how this can be seen in the matter of ordination rites, how they are understood as liturgical theology, and what they state or imply about the orders conferred in them. The human instinct is for safety in definition, whereas the divine initiative is for risk in the free and generous course of divine activity for which the necessary human price is not what *is* known but what *cannot* be known. Mystery indicates, or rather ought to indicate, a confidence in reticence of a kind at which, ironically, the philosophers with whom the early Christian apologists contended were better than some of their Christian successors. Reticence in the sense of reluctance to describe divine initiative is evidence for the conviction that such initiative is there, and yet, the liturgical allegory of Amalarius can be read alternatively as a striving after the mystery that renders it all the more in his very desire to describe what cannot fully be described, but fruitfully encountered. Even Hopkins' linguistic dexterities of alliteration, sprung rhythm and other devices do not do this, but rather convey the limits of even striving. Indeed Hopkins wants us to recover a sense of mystery in creation that 'trade', as he calls it, has destroyed; he certainly does not wish to tie down the mystery:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the deepest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Or:

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

The struggle in the Book of Common Prayer to be precise, negatively or positively, about the cross in relation to the eucharist can be read with irony as seeming all the more to emphasise what cannot fully be known or wholly depicted through the medium of liturgical language, never adequately described, and which is known more intuitively than descriptively:

> Jesus Christ…who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world…

Mystery *is* a language, and one that can even ultimately throw off the need to use the very word, but without the word, in that it alerts us most directly to the depths beyond the language, the liturgy would be the poorer, and is in any case the poorer for the failure to realise this.

## Future directions

This thesis has attempted to explore the implications of the language of mystery as centred on the word itself and the conceptual matrix which it indicates. Paradoxically it has not sought *primarily* to solve any technical problem of liturgical history or shed any further light on the development of a particular text. Thus for example the discussion of *mysterium fidei* does not establish a date or explicit record for its inclusion, but in reviewing the evidence seeks to go beyond these questions to its implications *since it is there*. Its presence suggests a realisation of the potential of such terminology, which in some places led the words of institution or *qui pridie* to be called the *mysterium*. It suggests a desire to place mystery at the heart of the church's liturgical self-expression, and in so doing to suggest reticence where later eras would seek ever-closer definition. The changes in the intellectual context suggest why the presence of the *mysterium fidei* became a problem – not just because nobody knew for sure why or when it had been inserted, but also because it simply did not any longer fit the context it had once so easily done, and having run out of explanations as to what it meant, none entirely convincing, it was eventually removed, although of course replacement with an acclamation after the words of institution can have other implications about what is perceived to be happening in the eucharistic prayer and the significance of the overall shape of that prayer.

We have attempted to reach outside the boundaries of individual historical and theological approaches in order to explore what the wider picture indicates, and to examine in some detail a selection of examples from what we argue is a period of intensely creative liturgical evolution equal to the first four centuries which preceded it, and the understanding of which is crucial to any study of subsequent developments in the middle ages and after. There nevertheless remains much to be done: the discussion raises questions as much as it hazards conclusions. There is scope for a great deal of work on how liturgical texts relate to their context in the period of the middle ages after 1000 and before the Reformation, especially given the fact that the increasingly filtered and refined Roman liturgy yet contained so many prayers fashioned in the ferment of

500 to 1000: what contradictions are thereby thrown up by their co-existence and use amidst the narrowing sacramental outlook of scholasticism? The present study has prepared the ground for this in that it has suggested this way of seeing later periods and the texts which are current in them. Also, of course, there is the immense task of sifting in this way the cultural and intellectual sands of the present: what does the language of a collect from the Sacramentary of Verona newly translated so as to be closer to the Latin say about liturgical theology at the turn of the second millennium? What concerns, what instincts of intellectual culture govern the composition and selection of texts, and how do they compare with the concerns of a thousand and more years previously? How is this process in turn affected by inherited assumption and current politico-ecclesial issues in the fractured body in which there has occurred a return to the diversity of the sacramentaries and the *libelli* before them – and indeed what do these formats tell us about how liturgy is 'done' today? The *libellus* had a relatively short life in its first incarnation, and yet today there may be 'missalettes in the sanctuary',[1] and in the Church of England the *libelli* which *Visual Liturgy* has made it easy to compile and produce. Do such things as these speak of the divine initiative or do they effectively confine it within human boundaries?

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[1] See Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 25.

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# APPENDIX

# MYSTERY AND REVELATION IN ORDINATION RITES: TOWARDS A LITURGICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION[1]

## A Case Study

> Few of us indeed have the opportunity of acquainting ourselves with the whole system of truth which is preserved in the Church. Every word of Revelation has a deep meaning. It is the outward form of a heavenly truth, and in this sense a mystery or Sacrament. We may read it, confess it, but there is something in it which we cannot fathom, which we only, more or less, as the case may be, enter into.[2]

It is, perhaps, a commonplace that 'mystery' and 'revelation' as theological terms are inextricably linked. If we need to be persuaded, we need look no further than Markus Bockmuehl's splendid study of these twin concepts and their relationship,[3] in which the author shows that, on the basis of the Old and New Testament evidence, they are characterised by their interplay. Some months ago in England an article appeared in a liturgical publication in which the author admitted to a haunting suspicion that "we ought to have a closer look at 'mystery' as it appears in liturgy."[4] This is essentially the purpose of the research I am doing at the moment, which seeks to take better note of the context in which mystery language is used in the liturgy, by which I mean not only the immediate euchological setting, but also in terms of the wider historical, theological, and critically, philosophical concerns which lie behind it. In this way I not only hope to inform our knowledge of how liturgy evolves and why, but what the liturgy itself as a source can tell us about the wider context of thought in which it is set. Does it, for example, as it were 'keep up' with that thought, or is it really, as is often thought, innately conservative and tending to lag behind the latest ideas? Furthermore, what does the changing language of the liturgy tell us about the changing nature of the intellectual culture in which it is set? Does the language of

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[1] What follows is a case study given at the XVIII Congress of Societas Liturgica at Santa Clara University, California, in August 2001, and subsequently published in *Studia Liturgica* 33 (2003), 117-27.

[2] J.H. Newman, *On the Prophetical Office of the Church,* Chapter 10, 'The Essentials of the Gospel.'

[3] M.N.A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1997).

[4] C.O. Buchanan, Editorial, *News of Liturgy* 317 (May 2001), p.1.

the liturgy reflect the warp and weft of cultural unity and diversity? Moreover, should it?

Bockmuehl marshals impressive evidence to show not only how scripture presents mystery as the hidden but progressive purpose of God, high in the consciousness of Israel and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, but also that there evolved a language of mystery with common features in Hebrew, Greek and Christian religion. This common language, although differently nuanced according to context, was latterly underlaid by assumptions derived from Greek philosophy, which itself facilitated the argument between pagan religion and Christianity in the first four centuries of the Christian era. Indeed, it has been shown in a study of post-Hellenistic philosophy[5] how the shared assumption among mutually disagreeing schools of the sheer rightness of Plato gave methodological impetus to the arguments of the Christian apologists for the truth of Christianity based on the assumption that it was of greater antiquity, ironically, than Platonism itself, because in their view the Old Testament was Christian!

This is a fascinating area of which I give a tantalising glimpse because I want to persuade you that there is literally more to mystery and revelation than meet the eye – back to Newman again – and in particular that it is the innate quality of 'hiddenness' or perhaps, if I may coin a neologism, ‘moreness’, that has constantly been in danger of being forgotten in every age of Christianity, and most of all, if I may say so, in our own. The Carthusians, for all their seclusion, perhaps indeed because of it, have not failed to spot this and remind us further that mystery is not a synonym for inaccessibility. One of their number, anonymous of course, has written that 'mysteries are not dark shadows, before which we must shut our eyes and be silent. On the contrary, they are dazzling splendours, with which we must sate our gaze'. Yet silence itself, too, is part of the mechanism whereby God is revealed in mystery. John Haught, speaking of the biblical tradition, reminds us that there, revelation is mainly, though not exclusively, auditory, and yet 'there can be no revelatory ‘word’ without a

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[5] G.R. Boys-Stones, *Post Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: OUP 2001), p. 163.

background of silence out of which it is spoken.' There must be, he continues, 'an ineffable dimension of reality' which is 'immune to any kind of erosion' from those seeking to explain creation by scientific methods and knowledge alone. In former ages, moreover, 'mystery was so much a part of life's presuppostions [that] there was no need to make revelation the explicit notion it has become today.' And consequently, this should be important to us 'because its very possibility has come under question...because the reality of an encompassing and incomprehensible mystery...is no longer an obvious aspect of everyone's experience'.[6] Haught's well-chosen words express the heart of my own hunch that this is precisely the malaise threatening liturgy: that because there is no longer a shared culture of mystery, an assumption, ultimately philosophical but mediated by culture, that there can be such a thing, the liturgy suffers. We hear of the 'loss of mystery in the liturgy', but often from those who claim this to mean something to do with ceremonial detail or a debate about Latin and the vernacular. I am convinced the problem is deeper, and that one could very easily have a beautifully choreographed High Mass in Latin which nevertheless seemed to assume, perhaps through its very perfection, that knowledge is paramount and that the 'moreness' inherent in life with God is being squeezed out of the picture by the human instinct to control. After all, if you have to explain a joke it isn't funny.

So we begin with a paradox, only to be expected of God: mystery is part of the hiddenness of God, part of the 'moreness' that will always ultimately be beyond human grasp, but as Rudolf Otto classically put it, it is something both *tremendum* and *fascinans*.[7] It has a capacity to draw us, to enthrall us, and so, we might say, to be a language and a phenomenon whereby and wherein we speak of and experience God-in-revelation. But it is also something we cannot help resisting and wishing to define out of existence, simply because we find the idea of God so difficult, on God's terms at any rate. There, surely, is our need for redemption.

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[6] J.F. Haught, *Mystery and Promise: A Theology of Revelation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1993), pp. 43-44.
[7] R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: OUP 1924), *passim.*

But what happens when we try to talk about mystery in the context of the liturgy? What place does mystery have? Has it become a merely convenient, perhaps contingent language for the majesty of God, or is it more sophisticated? Historically, not much work is needed to discover that 'mystery' was not really a liturgical and/or sacramental word until the later third and early fourth century or thereabouts. It doesn't take much more work to realise that this must have had something to do with the fact that only then was anything emerging that could properly called a sacramental theology. Of course this was also precisely the time that the intellectual struggle between pagan religion and Christianity was coming to an end, at least in one form. It seems likely, then, that 'mystery' as explicit language was now considered 'safe' to use in Christian worship and theology, although at least as implied concept it had always been part of the common philosophical armoury with which the debate was conducted, and in which the great Christian apologists like Clement of Alexandria were expert. In this way 'mystery' can be used as an indicator of the state of play of the pagan-Christian debate and its specific application in the area of Christian worship.

I want to argue that this methodological assumption can be taken further and put more precisely in its historical, theological and philosophical context in order to show how the liturgy is affected by these things, and also how far the liturgy is itself a source for the discussion – in other words, is a historical and theological text, and a document of the development of Christian thought and its relationship with the culture and society in which it is set. One thing I hope to establish is the neglected importance of philosophy in the development of the liturgy, and that mystery-language, explicit or implicit, is a measure of this. In this paper, however, I want to focus particularly on some aspects of mystery in ordination through its liturgy, as a tentative contribution to a renewed theology of ordination which, I suspect we will mostly agree, is something badly needed.

This is not to say that a *soi-disant* 'liturgical' theology of ordination has not already been discussed, at least in outline. Kevin Irwin, in his magisterial *Context and Text*, has summarised and added to this work. He reminds us of Houssiau's discussion of the then-new Roman rite of ordination more than thirty years ago, and of Legrand's 'useful example of deriving the theology of orders from

liturgical euchology.'[8] There is also, of course, David Power's irreplaceable work *Ministers of Christ and his Church*,[9] thoroughly liturgical in its outlook, and much more recently, in *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, Mary Collins discusses 'The Public Language of Ministry'.[10] But Irwin's own valuable work provides me with my starting point. Of the ordination rites in the Sacramentary of Verona, he says: 'The value of tracking the historical evolution of such a text can help determine significant shifts in the liturgical theology of ordination in light of prevailing Church polity and structures.'[11] This tallies with my prefatory remarks as to the use of liturgical texts. I want to add to this entirely correct assertion the observation that not only Church polity and structures need to be in view, but social and intellectual matrices also, if we are to get a full picture of when, how and why liturgy, and therefore a liturgical theology of ordination, changes over time. Irwin furnishes us with a handy set of four criteria to employ:

1. The interpretation of euchological texts.
2. The interpretation of the scriptures proclaimed in the rite.
3. The nature of the 'symbolic engagement' of the participants.
4. Clashes of theology in the rite, for example dignity and humility.

To these may be added:

5. The social and historical context of the rite.
6. The intellectual context of the rite.
7. The cultural assumptions of the rite.

These resulting seven criteria can be used in looking at 'mystery and revelation' in ordination rites. These considerations are most usefully seen in any rite or group of rites in overlap, rather than in isolation. Furthermore, I believe that the understanding of mystery as allowance for the 'hiddenness' and 'moreness' of God as aspect of revelation can be examined in terms of two themes in ordination rites: first, the degree of definition of the ministry to be conferred; second, the resulting status and authority of the ordinand in relation to the prevailing

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[8] K.W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1994), p. 214 and n. 52.
[9] D.N. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church: The Theology of the Priesthood* (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1969).
[10] M. Collins, 'The Public Language of Ministry', quoted in *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, ed. K.W. Irwin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1990), pp. 56-57.
[11] *Context and Text*, p. 187.

ecclesiastical and secular polity. What do these reveal about the place of mystery in ordination rites, and to what conclusions for liturgy, for the nature and purpose of ordination, and more widely for the church and for the world do they point? I deliberately employ a wide historical purview in this task, attempting to show in passing how the detail of the liturgy can point to broad trends.

My overall argument is that the later the rite, the greater the tendency to want to explain the nature of the ministry to be conferred, and my question, is this a healthy development, or does it suggest an excessive desire to want to bring it within essentially human structures of authority for the purposes of management and control? This is true at the level of rubric, of spoken text invocatory or otherwise, and of visible action. I submit that it is therefore also true at the level of underlying theology, and of surrounding intellectual and cultural disposition. The effect is the *relative*, but not of course total, absence especially in reformed rites, be they stemming from the sixteenth century or from the late twentieth, of a sense of God's hidden action in the ordinands, in those who confer the orders, and in the ministry subsequently exercised. There is, it seems to me, an increasing lack of confidence in the 'things not seen' of the Letter to the Hebrews which serves to effect a creeping, if occasionally innocent emphasis on the creation of functional operatives in a corporation, firmly hedged about with the kind of definition that enables a high degree of control, both in terms of theology and of function. Do we, for instance, ever get the feeling that an ordination service is a little bit too much like a graduation ceremony, the awarding of qualifications rather than the recognition of a divine stirring of gifts? This shift, occurring over many centuries and so more, not less, significant for all that, represents the onset of the deeper malaise to which I referred earlier, that of a cultural and intellectual capitulation to the seen and an abrogation of our fundamental dependence on the *un*seen. The fact that we restate our equal belief in both every Sunday in the Nicene Creed is neither here nor there, for we have surely learned well the sinister art of lip service. In other words, is mystery the premium product that our intellectual and cultural pride, at least in the west, can no longer afford. Do I hear a cheer from our eastern brethren?

To begin, then, at the beginning. In the *Apostolic Tradition* we find minimal stage direction, in fact just enough to set the scene for what is to be done and to inform the relative roles of the participants. One of the most significant instructions is the command for silence: 'all shall keep silence, praying for the descent of the Holy Spirit'.[12] Moreover the presbytery are bidden to 'stand by and be still'. I sense an Amen to that. By excluding human noise and movement, these instructions assume the priority of and create the context for God's activity in the Church. Space is left for the 'moreness' that must always be allowed for, and the descent of the Holy Spirit is prayed for, but not assumed – there is a refreshing provisionality, a submission to God's sovereignty. This is further underlined in the Prayer for the Ordination of a Bishop, which admits to God 'you know all things *before* they come to pass.'[13] Even the ministry of the Church is dependent on his hidden, though real purpose, and yet this is softened by a confidence in the fact that he 'did not leave [his] sanctuary without a ministry.'[14] This attitude of profound humility in face of the mystery, moreover, is not spoiled by an over-precise list of the functions of the bishop. Of those that are mentioned, it is established first of all that this is a servant who is to feed the flock as one who shares the high-priesthood of Christ in this ministry. Flowing from this, and in this context, are the eucharistic presidency, absolution, and the conferral of orders, which themselves, it is further enjoined, require gentleness and pureness of heart. The emphasis is so very clearly on the priority of God, and there is a touching coyness about the functions of the bishop which so very soon were to become as much aspects of government and control. The presbyter, too, is to be characterised by 'simplicity of heart', but no specific functions are mentioned, other than to 'help and govern'[15], although the latter surely has less force than the English word in translation implies – a *gubernator* in Latin is primarily, of course, a helmsman, subject to the whims of the sea and weather, and needing to be vigilant, subject to his own limitations. Only by transference does it mean a leader or director. Significantly, too, in the *Apostolic Tradition* functions are mentioned in the context of a prayer, not in that of a charge to the

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[12] *Apostolic Tradition* 2, 'Of Bishops', in P.F. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West* (New York: Pueblo 1990), p.107.
[13] *Apostolic Tradition* 3, 'Prayer for the Ordination of a Bishop', Bradshaw, p.107.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Apostolic Tradition* 7, 'Of Presbyters', Bradshaw, p. 108.

ordinand, an important distinction which we may compare with the form of some later rites.

In the *Apostolic Tradition*, then, we can see fairly clearly mirrored the assumptions driving Christian thought of the time, including the philosophical conviction, unquestioned, that 'mystery' is possible and necessary, however it is ultimately understood – in the Christian context this means, of course, the hidden-and-revealed nature of God. Later rites are more complex of course, as is the liturgy generally. Such detail does not necessarily mean a confusion of purpose – the intention to ordain ministers for the Church - but it may mean a change of focus that weakens the sense of the priority of God and the 'moreness' this must imply. Anscar Chupungco has noticed the cultural shift between the *Apostolic Tradition* and the *Sacramentary of Verona* (=Leonine Sacramentary) in terms of the ordination of bishops in discussing the fact that the Roman Rite of 1968 used the former as the basis of the rite for bishops, and the latter for the rites for priests and deacons. This seemingly peculiar act of only thirty years ago prompted 'a lingering uneasiness over the fact that there is no theological and linguistic unity between the formulary for the bishop...and those for presbyters and deacons [because] they project two different theological visions of the ordained ministry'.[16] The key difference, he argues, clear from the texts, is that 'the Veronese formularies have succeeded in shifting the accent from the shepherding ministry of the *Apostolic Tradition* to the ranking system of Roman society', as shown by the frequency of the words *dignitas*, *honor*, and *gradus*.[17] This suggests that already by the time of the *Veronense*, there had been a change in the assumptions to which the *Apostolic Tradition* points, such that ordination was now more about conferring status and the power of authority than it had been before. Moreover, the idea of mystery as the 'moreness' of God to which we are always subject has undergone a change. As Chupungco points out, *Veronense* refers to *mysterii tui summam* in the second part of the ordination prayer. This phrase, although misleadingly translated as 'fullness of the priesthood', which it doesn't mean at all, in the English version of the 1968 rite,

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[16] A. Chupungco, 'The Early Cultural Setting of Ordination Rites', in *Worship, Progress and Tradition* (Bettsville: Pastoral Press 1995), 43-65 (pp. 43).
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

'alludes to heights more than to plenitude or completeness'.[18] Thus, it seems to me, the notion of ordination as mystery is slyly brought into the very ranking system to which I am trying to suggest it implicitly cautions against. Although not explicit on the matter, the tenor of the *Apostolic Tradition* would suggest that the mystery of ordination is rooted precisely in the shepherd ministry, not in rank or status. Now, however, the helmsman has become the admiral, and interestingly, by the fourteenth century *gubernator* could indeed mean a naval commander or admiral in the Latin of that period.[19] In *Veronense*, then, ministry rooted in the mystery revealed but not exhausted or terminated in the person of the Good Shepherd has been somewhat obscured by an accommodation of forms of human derivation, and there is a danger of an excessive focus on the person of the one ordaining and the one ordained, and what power they are held to exercise and receive. That which was once left more explicitly to the good pleasure of God has been brought within the potentially more stifling ambit of the prevailing culture, the mystery has thus been circumscribed, and the revelation of Christ the Servant through the ministry of the Church has been diminished.

The *Veronense*, of course, formed the basis for the rites in use in the Catholic Church down to the 1960s. Have reformed rites, Roman and otherwise, been conscious of what was lost in terms of mystery by the cultural shift towards rank and status? My contention is that they have been so concerned to establish precise functional boundaries that the 'moreness' of God still does not have the focus it perhaps ought to have. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, for example, in all three rites, is notable by its inclusion of public examination of the ordinands, and in the case of priests and bishops a charge to them. For all that this is a reformed rite, and therefore to some extent a commentary on Roman ways gone to the bad, the rubrics alone suggest a body language that if anything continues and makes more explicit the Veronese concern with 'who's in charge'. Thus 'The Bishop, sitting in his chair, shall examine every one of them that are to be Ordered'. Later, 'the Bishop laying his Hands severally upon the Head of every one of them, humbly kneeling before him, shall say: Take thou authority...'. Let us recall that this is all happening in the vernacular, and so the cultural

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[18] *Ibid.*, p.49.
[19] *Oxford Dictionary of Mediaeval Latin from British Sources,* vol. 1, s.v.

message of the rite is all the more explicit. We may wish to say that it is highly unlikely that many people attended ordinations, happening as they did in episcopal palace chapels and the like, but such an observation merely reinforces the argument for the human circumscription of the sacrament of Order, its assimilation into the secular polity and its distancing by excessive definition from the priority and 'moreness' of God's activity in the Church and in the world to which it is supposed to point. Thus Richard Hooker could write that 'a thousand five hundred years and upward the Church of Christ hath now continued under the sacred regiment of Bishops. Neither for so long hath Christianity been ever planted in any kingdom throughout the world but with this kind of government alone.'[20] Shepherds, then, appear now to be more importantly soldiers. I think this is fairly unsurprising in the context of the secular polity of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. It is true that those to be made Deacon are reminded in a reading from the First Letter to Timothy that they are to 'hold the mystery of the faith (*μυστηριον της πιστεως*) in a pure conscience' (I Tim.3.9), and that the charge to the candidates for the priesthood makes much of the duty of the priest to 'seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad'. However, the latter charge is couched very much in the language of circumscription – there are many active verbs referring to things that the priest must *do*, and a clear desire to exclude any possibility of uncertainty, perhaps for reasons of theological polemic implying what a priest *isn't*. One is reminded of an advertisement in England for wood-protecting fluid, the catchphrase of which is 'it does exactly what it says on the tin'. Once again, then, the good work begun in the ordinand is hedged about by the increasing concern of the Church to define the role on its own terms. The priest is to submit himself to the godly judgements of his Father-in-God, to whom is committed 'the charge and government'. I conclude from all this, then, that the framers of the Veronese rite would have recognised the cultural milieu of their sixteenth-century English successors.

The reform of the ordination rites of the Roman Catholic Church and of Anglican provinces in the years 1950-1970, after several centuries of suspended animation, was potentially an opportunity to address cultural as well as

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[20] Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, VII, i, 4.

theological concerns, but I wonder if it was taken as such, and if so, if it has succeeded. It is perfectly true that Rome returned to the *Apostolic Tradition* for its rite for bishops, which may suggest a realization that something may have been lost, or rather too much added, but in leaving Verona as the basis for priests and deacons, as Chupungco has reminded us, it surely created a lingering inconsistency of theology. For the remainder of this paper, however, I want to compare the current Rites for the Ordination of Priests in the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, to see how these relate to the indications of earlier rites.

My conclusion as to definition is that the Anglican rite is far more concerned about this than the Roman. Firstly, the Roman rite allows for the use of the readings for the Mass of the Day, whatever it is, whereas the Anglican specifies particular lections related to ministry, which may be varied at the discretion of the bishop. This suggests that the Anglican rite definitely wishes to use the readings to say something about the nature of the ministry to be conferred, perhaps to exclude as much as to include certain theological possibilities. The Roman rite sees no need to do this, although it may be done, and thus may be said to convey a greater sense of confidence in what is being done, and thus a greater trust in God's hidden action in mystery. I do not read this as a failure to place the ministry to be conferred in a scriptural context. Rather, by allowing the readings for the Mass of the Day the ordination is being set explicitly within the whole life of the Church and the cycle of the liturgical year. It is an indication, then, of the mystery of the Church. The clear Anglican preference for readings specifically about ministry might be said to betray the opposite, and might in fact create the conditions for a much tighter, and thus more restrictive, impression of the ministry of the priest. Second, a similar point might be read into the attitude of the rites towards the inclusion of a sermon or homily. The Anglican rite has a compulsory sermon after the readings, and does not specify the preacher. This could be a recipe for a welcome freedom: it might even allow a lay person to preach, which may have much value. But the effect, and the implicit trust in the preacher, is perhaps torpedoed by the later, heavily defining compulsory text delivered by the bishop. Does it ever happen that the two are openly contradictory? Rome directs that the ordaining bishop shall

preach, either in his own words or using the provided text. Thus there is no separate address on the nature and duties of priesthood, but there is, it must be said, a more substantial examination of the ordinand. This arrangement seems to create a better balance, although it precludes a non-episcopal preacher, because it allows the bishop to acknowledge the culture in which the ordination is taking place and relate anything he may wish to say about the nature of the priest's ministry directly to that culture. I would like to know how often the provided text is, in fact, used. There is also scope for less circumscription by an excessive desire for theological definition, and for more acknowledgement of God's unseen action through the Spirit in both the ordinand and the whole people of God. This balance, I submit, is further facilitated in the Roman ordinal by the fact that the laying on of hands occurs in silence, whereas in the Anglican it is accompanied by a formula which might be said to tell God what he is supposed to do. The Roman practice is much to be preferred as a powerfully simple expression of dependence on God and an acknowledgement of his hidden action and of our *in*ability ultimately to define or circumscribe it. It is a welcome counter-cultural, and therefore challenging, sign in an empirical world and among churches which perceive themselves to be on the back foot in relation to contemporary culture.

Towards a liturgical theology of ordination? My final point above has brought us back to the silence enjoined by the *Apostolic Tradition* rite, and it is here, I believe, that a liturgical theology of ordination should begin. Ignatius' wonderful assertion in his letter to the Ephesians that the mystery of the incarnation, though to be 'proclaimed with a shout', nevertheless took place 'in the quiet of God',[21] and so hidden in mystery yet at the same time powerfully revelatory of the God who chose to take our nature upon him, must also be the basis of our understanding of what happens in and through ordination. While I would not wish to give the impression that contemporary rites lack anything essential for the conferring of a ministry – quite a different argument – I believe they do convey the weight both of cumulative historical assumption and contemporary cultural assimilation, neither of which may necessarily be congenial to the ministry to be exercised and its ability to connect with that

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[21] Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 19.

culture, and both of which have tended literally and figuratively to replace the silence of God with the world's noise. I conclude this paper with some questions, as all I have tried to do is begin to suggest areas of possible interest. Clearly much more work is required to take them forward. Thus: where does one draw the line between necessary explanation and deliberate reticence in an ordination rite? What status does contemporary culture have as an influence on the location of this boundary, and how can it be measured? Is it in fact the case that the rites effectively owe more to ecclesial desires to preserve existing structures of governance and authority than to the priority of God's hidden-and-revealed action in the Church and the world?