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Exchanging Symbols for Symbolic Exchange

Towards a Realistic, Ecumenical, Reformed Sacramental Theology

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Abstract

This article examines recent articulations of Reformed sacramental theology by Michael Horton and Nicholas Wolterstorff, both of whom appropriate the insights of speech act theory in their accounts of Calvinist sacramentology. I put these expressions of Reformed thought into conversation with the fundamental theology of the French Roman Catholic, Louis-Marie Chauvet, noting areas of convergence. I contend that Chauvet's sacramental theology provides the resources for the Reformed to develop their own sacramental theology in a considerably higher direction, while also remaining true to their fundamental commitments.

Keywords

Calvin – Catholicism – Chauvet – ecumenism – sacraments – symbol

Introduction

The place of the sacraments in Reformed thought has long been contested territory; going back as far as the divergence between Calvin and Zwingli. And though Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments carried the day in the Reformed Confessions, some later Calvinists have been uneasy with his high sacramental theology; calling it an “uncongenial foreign element,” or “not only incom-

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prehensible but impossible”, or even rejecting any sacramentality at all.¹ The result, admittedly anecdotal, is that although Calvinism is certainly making a comeback, this is a fairly truncated Calvinism as the majority of contemporary “Calvinists” are entirely a-sacramental. At the same time, there is a growing recognition of Calvin as a churchly and sacramental theologian, and many scholars make persuasive attempts to show that Calvin’s sacramental theology was not only consistent with but integral to his theology as a whole. These theologians seek to revalorize Calvinist sacramental theology; and recover the Reformed Tradition’s sacramental tenor.²

In this article I argue that Reformed Christians must recover realistic sacramental language in liturgical contexts and that this provides an opportunity

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- 1 Charles Hodge, “The Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord’s Supper” *Princeton Review* 20 (April 1848), 251 (cited in Ralph Cunnington, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper: A Blot Upon His Labors as a Public Instructor?” *WTJ* 73 [2011], 215); Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (1878; repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 811 (cited in Cunnington, “Calvin’s Doctrine,” 215); Karl Barth rejected Calvin’s sacramentalism, siding instead with Zwingly (*Church Dogmatics* 4/4 [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010]), 130.
 - 2 Cunnington, “Calvin’s Doctrine,” 215–236; Christopher Ganski, “Spirit and Flesh: The Significance of the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper for Pneumatology” (Ph.D. diss, Marquette University, 2012); Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 99–152; Michael S. Horton, “Union and Communion: Calvin’s Theology of Word and Sacrament,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 No. 4 (October 2009): 398–414; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 751–827; George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Peter J. Leithart, “Embracing Ritual: Sacraments as Rites” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 6–20; Peter J. Leithart, “‘Framing’ Sacramental Theology: Trinity and Symbol” *Westminster Theological Journal* 62 (2000): 1–16; Peter J. Leithart, “Modernity and the ‘Merely Social’: Towards a Socio-Theological Account of Baptismal Regeneration” *Pro Ecclesia* 9 no. 3 (Summer 2001): 319–330; Keith A. Mathison, *Given For You: Recovering Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* (Phillipsburg P&R, 2002); Laura Smit, “The Depth behind Things: Toward a Calvinist Sacramental Theology” in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* ed. James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 205–227; Nathan R. Kerr, “Corpus Verum: On the Ecclesial Recovery of Real Presence in John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Eucharist” in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* ed. James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 229–242; James K.A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 80–86; Eugene R. Schlesinger, “Use Your Allusion: How Reformed Sacramental Theology Makes Sense of Sacramental Language in John 3 and 6” *Westminster Theological Journal* 74 no. 2 (Fall 2012): 355–366.

for ecumenical progress. To this end, I deploy a two-pronged argument. First, I argue that in order to be true to their own tradition Reformed churches need this sort of realism. Along the way I will offer a proposal for a reconception of the relation between Word and sacrament. Second, drawing more broadly from the social sciences and the theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet, I explore the ecumenical potential of the realism for which I argue in the first part by putting Calvin into more direct conversation with Chauvet. I shall demonstrate that Chauvet's sacramental fundamental theology overlaps considerably with Calvin's sacramental emphases.³ By highlighting this common ground, I allow Reformed sacramental theology to be heightened considerably, while also remaining true to itself. This grants to Calvin a somewhat unexpected ecumenical potential.⁴

Reformed Sacramental Theology Briefly Stated

Because of the phenomenon of Calvinist soteriology being appropriated by those who eschew Calvinist sacramental theology, the word "Reformed" is itself contested territory these days. For simplicity's sake, I assume that the Reformed confessions (the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards) define the term "Reformed." Some would object to this use, but my appropriation of it is more heuristic than anything else. If others disagree, it does not damage my argument, which only pertains to the sacramental theology enshrined in the Reformed confessions. John Calvin's influence on these documents, including their sacramental theology, is obvious; as the same basic terminology is employed (viz., identifying the sacraments as "signs and seals").⁵ The key to understanding Reformed sacramental theology is that for Calvin, the sacraments and the Word have the same content. They are different modes of deliv-

3 For another voice advocating the utility of Chauvet for Reformed sacramental thought see M.E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom: Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament Justification and Freedom* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1999), e.g., 69, 76–80.

4 For a notable example of Reformed-Catholic ecumenism see the Group des Dombes document "The Holy Spirit, The Church and the Sacraments" *One in Christ* 16 (1980): 234–264.

5 For this reason, I also class the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles as a Reformed confession. Though the English Reformation took on its own distinct character, the continental and Calvinistic influence upon Cranmer as he drew up the articles is obvious. This allows me, an Anglican, to write this article on Reformed sacramental theology in good conscience. I am neither betraying my own tradition nor trespassing onto another.

ering the same reality: Jesus Christ and all his benefits.⁶ “The word must explain the sign,” but the sacraments “bring the clearest promises.”⁷

The Promissory, Performative Nature of Sacraments for Calvin

This language of promises is crucial to Calvin's understanding of the sacraments. For him the sacraments are primarily relational, rather than ontological. They are communicative means whereby God gives himself to us in Christ. And because for Calvin, the way we receive the grace of Christ is faith, the sacraments function particularly by strengthening faith in the promises of God.⁸ This does not mean that the sacraments are exclusively or primarily cognitive. Though Calvin veers towards didacticism on occasion, he retains an irreducibly mystical component in his sacramental theology, writing, “Now, if anyone should ask me how this takes place, I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare. And, to speak more plainly, I rather experience it than understand it.”⁹ This mysticism stems from the fact that, for Calvin, faith does not merely receive Christ's benefits, but Christ himself.¹⁰ We are not dealing with information about a person, but with the person himself. This is why Calvin was able to insist—and coherently so—that believers are truly fed in the Supper with Christ's body and blood, even apart from substantial change in the elements. Because faith receives the whole Christ, and because by virtue of the Incarnation, Christ is inseparably united with his body and blood, it follows

6 Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 810; Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Sacrament as Action, Not Presence,” in *Christ the Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry*, ed. David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1996), 112–114; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 4.14.1–6, 14–17; Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 65–67.

7 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.4, 5.

8 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.1–5. Belgic Confession, 33; Heidelberg Catechism, 66; Westminster Confession, 27.1; Westminster Larger Catechism, 162; 39 Articles, 25; Horton, *Christian Faith*, 778–779; Wolterstorff, “Action Not Presence,” 110–112.

9 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.32; On Calvin's tendency towards the cognitive and didactic in his sacramental theology see B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 88.

10 Horton, *Christian Faith*, 811, drawing from Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 136, who in turn is citing Calvin Calvin, De la Cene, OS 1:507 (TT 2:169–170); Comm. 1 Cor. 11.24 (CO 49:487).

that to receive him we must receive his body and blood.¹¹ That faith is the “mouth” of the sacrament in no way diminishes the reality of it. And, indeed, Augustine said much the same thing.¹² For Calvin it was particularly the Holy Spirit who bridged the gap between the church on earth and the body of Christ locally present at the Father’s right hand.¹³ This is the true meaning of “spiritual presence.” So Calvin recovered the Eucharist’s “upward” vector as well as its pneumatological dimension; highlighting the importance of both the *sursum corda* and the epiclesis.¹⁴

The foregoing explains what, in Calvin’s thought, is happening in the sacraments. And in many ways, this is where Calvin would like to remain. However, some account of the mechanics of the sacraments was needed. And when it fell to Calvin to explain these mechanics, he resorted to the concept of signs and seals. That the sacraments are signs is easy enough to understand. They depict and signify a certain reality—cleansing with Christ’s blood, renewal and rebirth by the Holy Spirit, and union with Christ in his death and resurrection in the case of baptism; the crucified body and shed blood of Christ as the believer’s true nourishment and the church’s unity in the case of the Eucharist. And as seals, the sacraments are authenticating pledges, promises of God.¹⁵ So in the sacraments, God is engaged in an act of promising.

This leads Michael Horton and Nicholas Wolterstorff to develop their Reformed sacramental theologies in terms of speech act theory. In any given speech act, we must distinguish between the locution (the act or utterance itself), the illocution (the act or utterance’s intended effect), and the perlocution (the actual effect). The locution is the ritual action of washing or offering/receiving of bread and wine. The illocution is to strengthen faith in the promise that God effectively accomplishes what is signified in the act. And the perlocution is that by the Holy Spirit’s agency, faith is strengthened. But this

11 Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 136; Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.8–10; Wolterstorff, “Action not Presence,” 113. Zwingli could not go here because his Christology tended towards Nestorianism. For him we *could* have Christ’s divinity without his humanity (see Horton, *Christian Faith*, 808).

12 Augustine, “In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus xxvi,” in *Homélie Sur L’Évangile de Saint Jean xvii–xxxiii*, ed. M.F. Berrouard, Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Oeuvres de Saint Augustin 72 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1977), 12 (pp. 512, 514).

13 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.31. This is explored in more detail by Christopher Ganski (*Spirit and Flesh*).

14 Smit, “Depth Behind Things,” 215–218; Horton, *Christian Faith*, 814; Hunsinger, *Eucharist and Ecumenism*, 74–75.

15 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.15.1–5.

carries the further result that God does indeed accomplish what is promised, as faith *is* the means of receiving the promise.¹⁶ Faith receives Christ. Therefore, God truly does use the sacraments instrumentally to deliver his grace in Christ.

The important point is this: the sacraments' telos is to deliver Christ to the faithful *by* strengthening their faith in his promises. This is what God aims to accomplish through the sacraments. It follows that sacramental practice ought to conform with this telos. Therefore, sacramental practices which fail to strengthen faith in Christ are inadequate; and those which undermine confidence in the promises are at cross-purposes with a Reformed doctrine of sacrament.

A Plea for Realism

To avoid this internal contradiction, I plead with Reformed Christians to adopt robust and realistic language in their sacramental worship. To begin with, we should note that the Reformed doctrine of the sacraments is a second-order reflection on a first-order practice and reality. By "first-order," I mean the actual language of faith and practice, in particular the way we worship. And by "second-order," I mean language that takes place at a conceptual remove from the first-order. This is the language we employ to talk about our first-order language, how we talk about the way we worship. What matters is the encounter with God through Christ in the sacraments. Reformed teaching is merely a doctrinal accounting and explication of how we can affirm this encounter—how we can talk about the sacraments the same way the New Testament does—while also maintaining the biblical testimony to the way of salvation by grace through faith. As second-order reflection, it belongs to a different "language game" than first-order discourse. It treats the same topic, but in a different idiom.

It is not that there is no place for second-order reflection. It is essential. This article is an exercise in it. Yet there is a world of difference between discussing the metaphysical relationship of body and blood to bread and wine respectively, or parsing locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions and being fed with the body and blood of Christ in the context of worship. Calvin affirms this understanding, preferring to experience this feeding rather than understand it.¹⁷ And

16 Wolterstorff, "Action, Not Presence," 110–114. Also cited in Horton, *People and Place*, 108–109.

17 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.32.

so we should pursue the closest possible association between the sign and the thing signified in order that the signs might indeed strengthen confidence in the thing signified. To fail to do this is to take with one hand what is given with the other, and render Reformed sacramental practice self-defeating, because it introduces doubt as to whether or not God will deliver what he promises by the sacramental sign.

Allow me to illustrate how these first and second-order modes of speech can coexist with an example from my own tradition, the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁸ Consider the speech deployed in its liturgies: “Grant us so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son and drink his blood” (337). “Bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ” (342). “We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit ... Now sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior” (306–307). “Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit, you have bestowed on *these* your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace” (308).

I would venture a guess that most Evangelical and Reformed Christians would be deeply uncomfortable with talking about the sacraments this way. It seems “magical” and as if it undermines commitment to salvation *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. But consider the way Scripture speaks about the sacraments. When one is baptized her sins are washed away, she receives the Holy Spirit, is buried with Christ, and puts on Christ (Acts 22:16; 2:38; Romans 6:3–5; Galatians 3:27). This is the washing of regeneration and the washing with water whereby Christ saves his people (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26). And while some might object to understanding Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 5:26 as referring to baptism, the Reformed confessions supply them as proof texts for their doctrines of baptism. The bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper are participations in Christ’s body and blood respectively (1 Corinthians 10:16–17); and the words of institution *never* receive any sort of interpretive or qualifying gloss. Simply put, the Bible talks about the sacraments this way. Therefore this sort of realistic language is biblically authorized; indeed, it is one of the only biblically authorized ways to discuss the sacraments. Reformed Christians who are nervous with my proposal *must* reckon with this, whether or not my proposals are accepted.

18 *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979). Further references will be in parentheses in the body of the paragraph.

A Reformed sacramental theology allows a means by which we can adopt these biblical patterns of speech while also maintaining other doctrinal commitments.¹⁹ But it cannot replace this mode of speech. The Book of Common Prayer is actually a brilliant example of this in action. Within the first-order context of worship, we have unvarnished realism. But in the second-order context of doctrinal teaching, the realism is kept from abuse by the presence of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which articulate a Reformed doctrine of sacrament, within the same Prayer Book (872–872).²⁰ These two streams are not in tension or competition with each other, but rather complement and complete one another. This is not a call for the Reformed to become Anglican or adopt the Book of Common Prayer. Rather, I offer the Book of Common Prayer as an example of how realistic language and Calvinist doctrine can mutually reinforce one another. A Calvinist doctrine of the sacraments is incomplete without this realism, because without this realism, all we are left with is functional Zwinglianism.

Word and Sacrament Reconsidered

In the previous section I argued that a Reformed doctrine of sacrament demands realistic first-order language because of its understanding that the telos of the sacraments is to strengthen faith (and thereby to deliver Christ to recipients). In this section, I shore up this contention by turning to the relation between Word and sacrament, tightening their linkage and relativizing their differences. I noted above that for Calvin the Word and the sacraments have the same content: Christ and all his benefits, which believers receive by faith. For this reason, I suggest we situate them on a continuum. They are different modes of delivering the same reality, a reality which is received in the same manner.

19 For an explication of how Reformed sacramental theology avoids “magic” while also maintaining *sola gratia* and *sola fide* see Schlesinger, “Use Your Allusion.”

20 There is ongoing disagreement within the Anglican Communion regarding the precise role of the 39 Articles. Options range from “binding confessional statement” to a nonbinding articulation of responses to certain historical issues. So while the Articles may not represent *the* authentic Anglican viewpoint, they still represent *an* authentic Anglican viewpoint. My proposal is not so much an attempt to speak for the Anglican tradition as a whole, but to show how a particularly Evangelical and Reformed Anglicanism, which allows a mutually interpretive role to Prayer Book liturgy, Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Book of Homilies, models the complementary interplay of Calvinist doctrine and realistic first-order language.

In this section I shall further demonstrate that as signs they function by similar mechanisms. If this is the case, then the same realism Reformed Christians use to conceive of the gospel in its “verbal” form ought to be appropriate for speaking about the gospel in its “sacramental” form.

I have already noted Michael Horton’s appropriation of speech-act theory for explicating sacramental efficacy. The same theoretical commitment funds his treatment of the Word of God as well. Explicitly evoking J.L. Austin, he writes, “God does things with words,” and notes that “Scripture itself [assumes] that God’s *speaking* is *acting*, and this acting is not only descriptive and propositional; it is also creative and performative.”²¹ Horton situates this vivacity of the word within the context of covenantal relations, specifying it as “covenantal speech.”²² Within this framework, the didactic functions of the Word, while not eliminated, are relativized in favor of its “sacramental functions.”²³ Calvin himself regarded the Word as sacramental, and envisaged the sacraments’ efficacy as derivative from the Word’s.²⁴ This allows Horton to distinguish, but not to “contrast ... between divine and human action: the human signs are sanctified as divine signs that communicate the reality signified. Once again the covenant, not abstract theories of philosophical realism or constructivism, provides the context.”²⁵

Establishing Polyvalence

Carrying forward these observations, I propose the following account of the relationship between Word and sacrament. First, in dealing with signs, whether the linguistic signs of Scripture and preaching or the material signs of the sacraments, we must account for the phenomenon of polyvalence. Signs do not merely refer to objects or states of mind. Instead they elastically evoke. They are malleable because they function not only on the order denotation and definition, but also of connotation and association. This polyvalence is part of the nature of the symbolic. To a great extent “Symbolic language ‘works’

21 Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 39.

22 Horton, *People and Place*, 40, 58 (“Covenantal speech” occurs on p. 58).

23 Horton, *People and Place*, 40.

24 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.4 (cited in B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 85); and Horton, *People and Place*, 40.

25 Horton, *People and Place*, 42.

precisely because it is inexact. It is based on association and image.”²⁶ There is an “indefinite range of possible meanings” to any given symbol.²⁷ We can return continually to symbols and find new meanings, which in turn render the meanings we had gleaned before richer.²⁸

Interestingly, contemporary cognitive linguistics understands the forging of such associations—termed conceptual blending or metaphoric process—as constitutive of all human thought and knowing,²⁹ with the further recognition that such knowing is thoroughly embodied and materially mediated.³⁰ Therefore the distinction between Word and sacrament cannot proceed along the lines of the material/immaterial distinction. Words are thoroughly material, whether intoned or inscribed, heard, read, or even thought.³¹ Semiotics notes similar phenomena in the fact that in the interplay of signs, signifiers are able to stand in for one another, “Figures of speech enable us to see one thing in terms of another. A trope such as a metaphor can be regarded as a new sign formed from the signifier of one sign and the signified of another ... The signifier thus stands for a different signified; the new signified replaces the usual one.”³² Through this process new associations are formed, which in turn reinforce one another and produce a whole greater than the sum of the parts: a great associative tapestry. Each part partakes of the whole, and the whole is impoverished if any part is missing. This allows symbols to become deeply personal, for in any symbolic encounter we do not merely engage the “meaning” of a sign, but an entire history which the sign evokes. All the many associations that have been forged between this sign and other elements of the semiotic web are mediated to us in this encounter. Because we all take slightly different paths to arrive where we are, this history will be different for each of us. No two people can ever have the exact same experience.

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- 26 Susan A. Ross, “The Aesthetic and the Sacramental,” *Worship* 59, no. 1 (Ja 1985): 3.
- 27 Michael S. Driscoll, “Symbol, Mystery, and Catechesis: Toward a Mystagogical Approach” *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring 1998): 69.
- 28 Peter E. Fink, “Three Languages of Christian Sacraments” *Worship* 52 no. 6 (November 1978): 566.
- 29 Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 40–44; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 46–57.
- 30 Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 10–13, 73–129; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 102.
- 31 Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 210–212.
- 32 Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 125.

In addition to observations from the hard and soft sciences, there is theological warrant for applying this polyvalence to the written Scriptures. Writing about inspiration, Henri de Lubac states, “The sacred writings were not solely made inspired one day: the sacred books themselves are and remain inspired ... the Spirit did not only dictate them: it is as if he has enclosed himself in them. He dwells here. His breath always animates them. The Scripture is full of the Spirit.”³³ This strong doctrine of inspiration, not only as the source of Scripture, but as a quality of Scripture, funds the patristic and medieval practices of spiritual exegesis, where multiple senses of Scripture can be legitimately discovered.

To my mind, these observations regarding biblical inspiration and interpretation conspire with the polyvalent nature of symbols to demand that biblical texts and church practice be read in light of one another. As a Christian theologian, I reject the attempt to separate the world of the Bible from the life of the church. Therefore, Scripture and church practice are mutually reinforcing, interpenetrating, and interpreting.³⁴ We cannot do sacramental theology without biblical interpretation and should not approach the Bible except in concert with the sacraments. The one ought to provide the key for the other.³⁵ As we have seen, all signs are capable of disclosing new depths of meaning. But those signs specifically chosen and appropriated by God, Word and sacrament, must always be particularly alive with new possibilities through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who means it to have an effect on us here and now as well.³⁶ This is a call for what has been dubbed “theological interpretation of Scripture,” grounded theologically in the recognition that the Bible is Christian Scripture, philosophically in a recognition of the way signs and language work, and scientifically in the processes of human knowing.

While this commitment to polyvalence grants a good deal of interpretive freedom, as de Lubac notes, it is a ruled freedom. A certain connection between the new interpretation and the historical context must always be retained.³⁷ But while the grammatical-historical sense of Scripture is important, even fundamental, we must be careful to avoid reductive precisions because the

33 Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Sens De L'écriture*, vol. 1/1 (Paris: Aubier, 1959), 128 (my translation).

34 Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 1.

35 Levering, *Participatory*, 5.

36 de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1, 361.

37 de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1, 44.

historical sense is not exhaustive of the texts' meaning.³⁸ In this connection, the Scriptures and the sacraments are mutually reinforcing, which is only to be expected given that their content is the same and the same Holy Spirit inspires and animates them. Indeed, the rule here is not so much being "right," as it is fittingness with the Christ event.³⁹ In fact, the Christ event itself partakes of this polyvalence, as attested by the proliferation of "models of the atonement," and accounting for the existence of multiple sacraments to mediate its reality.⁴⁰

Sacraments as Symbolic Anchors for the Word

Within this symbiosis, the sacraments serve as symbolic anchors⁴¹ for the various imageries employed by Holy Scripture and Christian theological reflection. The many and varied biblical uses of water mix, mingle, and cascade over one another in the baptismal font. The varied imageries of wine and bread, of conviviality, of human industry, etc. gather together in the *synaxis* of the Eucharist. But the sacraments serve this role not simply by referential aptness but by taking this imagery up into the paschal mystery.⁴² So here we are not only implicated in our own complex history of associations with elements of the symbolic world of which the sacraments partake. Instead, we are implicated in the self-giving of God in Christ. For God to give Godself to us at all demands some sort of symbolic act, and the sacraments are the symbolic means whereby he has determined to give himself in this way. They condense the reality of Christ's saving work into a perceptible form, and yet in so doing they "relate more than what can be experienced in reality in a certain place," projecting us into a fuller experience of reality than that which we perceive.⁴³ Once more,

38 Henri de Lubac *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Sens De L'Ecriture*, vol. 1/2 (Paris: Aubier, 1959), 431; Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Sens De L'Ecriture*, vol. 2/2 (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 86; Levering, *Participatory Exegesis*, 7, 85–86.

39 de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/2, 88.

40 Though I do not explicitly draw on him here, this is reminiscent of Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963), 176–179.

41 Fauconnier and Turner write of material anchors facilitating conceptual blending (*The Way We Think*, 195–205). Though I see the same basic mechanism occurring here, my phrase "symbolic anchor" predates my engagement with Fauconnier and Turner.

42 Here distinctive Christian theological commitments require us to move beyond the tendency toward reductionism in cognitive linguistics' account of these processes.

43 Ross, "Aesthetic and Sacramental," 4. See also Schillebeeckx, *Sacrament of Encounter*, 43–45.

as in Calvin, we are not dealing with information about a person, but with the person himself, and this relationality is primary. This allows us to bridge the gap between the biblical and the sacramental because in reality they are elements of a single symbolic world. They belong to, reinforce, and complement—even complete—each other.

To cash out this section: Word and sacrament function as part of a self-supporting symbolic world, and ought to be conceived of as two modes of expression for the same reality. One cannot be abstracted from the other without impoverishing the whole. Further, within this revised framework, no logic for attenuating the use of realistic language in the context of the sacraments can be put forth that does not have the same effect on the way the Word is conceived. For this reason, if Reformed Christians are to maintain their doctrinal and practical commitments vis-à-vis the Word, they must also heighten the sense of realism employed vis-à-vis the sacraments. Evangelical (in the sense of commitment to the Gospel) commitments are no more undermined by speaking of the sacraments without hemming, hawing, and hedging than they are by speaking thus of the Word. Far from it, they are reinforced.

The Nature of Symbols/The Symbolic Nature of Reality

The first two sections remained more or less within the parameters of the Reformed tradition's doctrine of sacrament. Having relativized the distinction between Word and sacrament, and having argued for simple realism in sacramental practice, I now put this particular articulation of Reformed sacramental theology into conversation with streams of Roman Catholic sacramental theology, particularly the French theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet. This is appropriate because despite the manifest sophistication of Chauvet's work, he states that the goal is to be able to simply say, "Amen," in response to "The Body of Christ."⁴⁴ Taking this realism as my starting point, I explore the ecumenical possibilities of interfacing the Reformed tradition with Chauvet.

A Historical Sketch

The ecumenical utility of Chauvet will become a bit clearer through a brief historical excursus. Though much of Scholastic Theology—with its concern

44 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), xiii, 54, 87.

for form, content, and validity—tended to lose sight of it, there is a venerable tradition recognizing the signifying character of the sacraments. In addition to obvious connections (e.g., baptism and cleansing, Eucharist and Christ's body and blood), there was a fairly free play of symbolic association beginning with Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 10:15–17) and ranging through the Fathers.⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas devoted significant attention to the semiotic import of the sacramental elements, even when in his view, the substance of those elements had been replaced by another.⁴⁶ Likewise Calvin contended that God would be a deceiver were he to offer the sign without the thing signified; insisting also upon the reality of the bread and the wine because they needed their own integrity to serve as signs the way they were meant to.⁴⁷

It would be trite and facile to argue that Calvin and Aquinas agreed after all. They did not. However, their points of agreement ought to be noted. Calvin insists that we must receive the things signified along with the sign, else God is a deceiver.⁴⁸ Thomas would agree. Further, Calvin's rejection of substantial change in the sacraments was in part to safeguard the signifying character of the signs. If we no longer have real bread, for instance, the semiotic connection with nourishment from Christ's body is sundered. Without real, cleansing water, the nexus with Christ's blood is ruptured.⁴⁹ Aquinas, while maintaining substantial change (at least in the Eucharist), highlighted the significatory power of the remaining accidents.⁵⁰ He even argues that the accidents of bread and wine were necessary for the sacrament as well.⁵¹ At stake are differing views of the appropriateness of Aristotelian categories, not the true union of sign and thing signified, nor of semiotic analysis.⁵² So long as the framework remains Aristotle in particular or substance metaphysics in general, ecumenical consensus is unlikely.

45 Apostolic Constitutions 7:35; Saint Augustine, *Sermon* 272.

46 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3.Q60.A1, A3, A6; 3.Q66.A3–4, A10; 3.Q73.A6; 3.Q74.A1, A3, A5–8.

47 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.1, 14.

48 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.10.

49 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.14. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.14. Chauvet, by the way, is able willing to affirm the bread-ness of the Eucharistic bread. The Eucharist is the fulfillment of bread (*Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), 392–398).

50 Aquinas, *ST*, 3.Q66.A3; 3.Q74.A3, A5–A6; 3.Q77.A6.

51 *Ibid.*, 3.Q77. A1–A2.

52 See Chauvet's treatment of Aquinas in *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7–36.

Post-Conciliar Developments in Catholicism

In the wake of (and leading up to) Vatican II, a move to a more relational ontology has been arising with Roman Catholicism. Karl Rahner's theology of symbol roots it in the triune life of God: the Father expressively realizes himself in the Logos, who is the Symbol of the Father.⁵³ My phrase "expressively realizes" is meant to indicate that the Father both gives himself to others as an object of knowledge and gains presence-to-self in the generation of the Son. If this symbolic expression is constitutive of the divine life, it follows that it is constitutive of all beings.⁵⁴ This recognition of the symbolic nature of reality deeply resonates with the Christian affirmation that humanity is created in the image of God, and that Christ himself is this image (Genesis 1:26–27; Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4).⁵⁵ We are essentially "worded" all the way down.⁵⁶ This means that semiotics, as the study of signs, touches not merely upon communication, but upon the nature of all reality, or at least reality as it is available for human experience.

Rahner has shown that the beginning point of a theology of sacrament is the reality of the Incarnation: just as the Son is the Symbol of the Father, the incarnate humanity of Christ is the Symbol of the Son, which leads to his Body, the Church as yet another Symbol, which is itself symbolically realized in the sacraments.⁵⁷ This sort of trajectory is carried forward in the theology of Edward Schillebeeckx. That the divine life of the Son can be translated into human existence, can be present in its fullness not just in spite of, but precisely *through* the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, demands a far-reaching and robust understanding of the symbol.⁵⁸ Schillebeeckx adds another plank to the platform of relational ontology by having the sacraments as a symbol-izing of the Christ event; geared towards facilitating an encounter between God and humanity.⁵⁹ On the ecumenical front, Schillebeeckx himself notes a linguistic similarity between

53 Karl Rahner, "Zur Theologie des Symbols," in *Karl Rahner Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Wendelin Knoch and Tobias Trappe, vol. 18 (Freiburg; Basel; Wien: Herder, 2006), 436–438.

54 Rahner, "Theologie des Symbols," 430–431.

55 For significant exegetical and theological support of the *imago dei* being understood in this sense, see David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 895–1051.

56 That this phrase comes from Michael Horton serves to show the overlap with the Reformed tradition here *People and Place*, 44.

57 Rahner, "Theologie des Symbols," 446–448.

58 Schillebeeckx, *Sacrament of Encounter*, 7–43.

59 Schillebeeckx, *Sacrament of Encounter*, 54–68, 179–184.

his own views and Calvin's, but maintains that the Catholic and Reformed conceive of salvation in such different ways (particularly vis-à-vis justification) that the similarities are merely superficial.⁶⁰ Therefore, the connections and similarities ought not be overdrawn. Even with similar conceptions of the dynamics of symbolism, important differences remain.

Chauvet's Symbolic Theological Anthropology

Chauvet's work unfolds in continuity with these developments, but in a more postmodern mode and with greater social-scientific engagement. Chauvet's concerns are not merely to outline a theology of the sacraments, but to articulate a sacramental theology, that is, a fundamental theology in sacramental mode.⁶¹ Chauvet rigorously examines the structure of faith in light of human corporeality, which includes our character as socially and linguistically constituted.⁶² Our bodies find themselves in relation to other bodies: bodies politic, bodies of tradition, and the cosmic body of the universe as God's free gift of creation.⁶³ Our linguistic constitution is part and parcel of our embodiment, as language cannot be mediated—whether intoning/inscribing words or hearing/reading them—except by way of bodies.⁶⁴

Chauvet notes that human existence and experience of the world are inextricably bound up in signs. This recognition presents a significant overlap between philosophy and the social sciences.⁶⁵ We find ourselves as subjects through our place in a community. And our participation in human communities is necessarily mediated by signs. Our communities and relationships are, indeed, constituted by signs.⁶⁶ Expressions of love within a marriage such as

60 Schillebeeckx, *Sacrament of Encounter*, 184–195; Susan K. Wood also notes that the primary obstacle in this regard is the two traditions' divergence in understandings of justification (*One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism* [Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009], 70).

61 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 159–160.

62 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 55–58, 146.

63 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149–152.

64 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 143–146.

65 See, e.g., Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 3–17; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 46–155. Chauvet draws upon the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jacques Derrida; the linguistic work of Emile Benveniste, the psychology of Jacques Lacan; the anthropological work of Claude Levi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, and others.

66 Peter J. Leithart, "Conjugating the Rites: New and Old in Augustine's Theology of Signs" *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999), 146.

a kiss, holding hands, a gift of flowers, a kind note, etc. do not merely give expression to an already existent relationship. In a very real sense, they are the relationship.⁶⁷ While any one of these expressions could, in abstraction, be done away with, leaving a genuine relationship intact, to peel them all away, like so many layers of an onion, would eventually leave no relationship at all. Without such signs, there is no relationship of which to speak. So signs are not an extraneous epiphenomenon added to human being in the world, but are rather the means by which we are in the world. This moves away from merely instrumental views of language, and instead sees language as, in some measure, constitutive of reality.⁶⁸ It moves us away from substance metaphysics and toward a relational ontology. We *are* as we relate.

This leads Louis-Marie Chauvet to construct his post-modern critique of onto-theology on symbolic grounds.⁶⁹ Thus, when we deal with signs, we are not simply dealing with representations of reality, but with reality itself. This has been obscured in recent centuries, particularly in sacramental discourse. It is difficult to ascertain the precise time when “symbol” and “real” were separated, but it was certainly in progress by the of time Eucharistic debates at Corbie in the ninth Century, when Radbertus and Ratramnus debated each other on the nature of Christ’s Eucharistic presence: Radbertus affirmed a realistic understanding of Christ’s body, while Ratramnus’s was more “mystical.” In our present context, to refer to a sacrament as “symbolic” leads to the instant conclusion that one means “not real.” Christianity, though, is deeply committed to symbols being “real.” Symbols must be able to communicate (not just refer to) their reality, otherwise the Incarnation of Christ would be impossible. Once we are willing to grant that the “symbol” of humanity is adequate to communicate and participate in the divine life, we are not at a far remove from bread, wine, or water doing the same.

Human beings are inextricably symbolic creatures. Our life cannot be disentangled from the mediation of language: of symbol and signification.⁷⁰ We live in symbolic worlds, made up of complex and interconnected symbol systems. These systems cohere in such a way that the constitutive parts reinforce

67 I am not sure who first used this illustration, but have encountered it in Leithart, “Embracing Ritual,” 13–14; and John H. McKenna, “Eucharistic Presence: An Invitation to Dialogue” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999), 309–310.

68 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 3–17.

69 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7–81.

70 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 3–17; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 84–135; Megan L. Willis, “Language as the Sanctuary of Being: A Theological Exploration with Louis-Marie Chauvet,” *The Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010): 872–880.

one another; abstracting an element from the system alienates it and hollows it out.⁷¹ For this reason, Chauvet proposes that we understand the sacraments in terms of the “symbolic efficacy” observed by Levi-Strauss.⁷² Symbols function powerfully and effectively within these worlds for the people who inhabit them.⁷³ For this reason, symbols touch us at the core of who we are, and do indeed affect “reality.” It is important to guard against a misunderstanding here. Chauvet insists that Christianity is committed to sacramental grace being more than merely “intra-linguistic.” It is indeed “extra-linguistic,” but because of our linguistic constitution, this grace can only be mediated to us, or at least grasped by us, only linguistically.⁷⁴ This, then, opens Calvin up to an even more sacramental vista because Chauvet’s overt semiology allows a Calvinian account of sacramentality to extend to the whole of reality as experienced by human beings.

Chauvet’s Ecumenical Promise

Having briefly articulated Chauvet’s basic account of sacramentality, I want to delineate several points of contact between Chauvet and the Reformed that show ecumenical promise. The first of these I have already touched upon by noting the move toward a relational ontology. Ultimately this is what Chauvet is getting at in his engagement with Heidegger and critique of onto-theology.⁷⁵ This drives his critique of Aquinas, which contends that the Thomistic account, largely because of its metaphysical commitments, cannot help resorting to a productionist scheme of sacramental causality.⁷⁶ This criticism of sacramental productionism was shared by Calvin, as one of his chief concerns regarding transubstantiation was that it turned Christ into a manipulable object rather than the subject in the Eucharist.⁷⁷ Obviously, Chauvet is more sympathetic to Aquinas than Calvin, and indeed, as a faithful Roman Catholic, he affirms that

71 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 15–16.

72 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 91–96; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 135–140; see also Ganski, “Spirit and Flesh,” 103.

73 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 135–136, 139–140.

74 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 140.

75 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7–83.

76 See Chauvet’s treatment of Aquinas in *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7–36.

77 Bryan Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo, 1989), 154 (drawing upon Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.31).

transubstantiation is *aptissime* within an Aristotelian framework.⁷⁸ Chauvet, however, is not content to remain in an Aristotelian framework. A major burden of his project is to articulate a sacramental theology on an entirely different “terrain.”⁷⁹ The fact of his critique and its overlap with Calvin’s holds forth promise that on this new terrain, Christ’s real presence might be formulated in a way that both sides are able to affirm.

Meanwhile, as I noted above, the dynamics of Reformed sacramental theology are situated within the context of covenantal relations. This is what drives Horton’s appropriation of speech act theory, which accounts for the relationally performative character of the sacraments.⁸⁰ Within Chauvet’s relational ontology, the performative dimension is also highlighted by means of speech act theory.⁸¹ Indeed, Horton advocates shifting our understanding of “participation” from *methexis* to *koinonia*, highlighting the covenantal and relational quality of God’s dealings with humanity.⁸²

Further, as with Calvin, for Chauvet the sacraments are intimately connected with the Word. For Calvin, following Augustine, the sacraments are “visible words.”⁸³ For Chauvet, the sacraments are always sacraments *of* the Word. Indeed, they are the Word of God at the mercy of the body.⁸⁴ The Emmaus Road incident of Luke 24 and Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 are paradigmatic examples for Chauvet of the relationship between Word and sacrament in the structure of faith.⁸⁵ In both cases, the narratives highlight the need to relinquish a demand for immediate perception and instead receive faith by means of the Word: the church’s report of who Jesus is.⁸⁶ The reconsideration of the relationship between Word and sacrament that I articulated above represents a way for the Reformed to conceive of the sacraments in a way that is both faithful to their own doctrinal commitments and more amenable to Catholicism as represented by Chauvet. In essence, as the relationship between Word and sacrament is relativized and as the materiality of

78 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 383.

79 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 9, 46–47.

80 Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 10–13; Horton, *People and Place*, 100–110, 135–141.

81 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 130–135. See also the emphasis on the illocutionary stance of sacramental observance (326, 348, 426–431, 443).

82 Horton, *People and Place*, 137, 201.

83 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.14.6; Saint Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 19.16.

84 Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xii.

85 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 161–171.

86 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 161, 171–173.

faith is recognized, previously troubling Roman Catholic formulations can be seen in a different light.

A final point of contact comes from Chauvet's emphasis on the absence of Jesus Christ's body, which emerges in his reading of the Emmaus Road scene from Luke 24. The structure of faith is such that one can recognize Christ's presence only by first reckoning with his absence. The women at the tomb go looking for the body, but find it is not there (Luke 24:1–8). They want to find the corpse of Jesus, but are refused, leading Chauvet to classify the demand to immediate access to Christ as a necrotic temptation.⁸⁷ Cleopas and his companion on the road are kept from recognizing the risen Christ until the bread is broken and he vanishes from their sight (Luke 24:16–31). So Chauvet insists that in a very real sense, Jesus' body is absent from and inaccessible to us until the parousia.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, Horton opens his ecclesiology with a chapter entitled "Real Absence, Real Presence," in which he notes the distinct emphasis in Calvin upon the ascension of Christ for ecclesiology and sacramental theology.⁸⁹ It is Calvin's insistence on the ascension and ongoing bodily integrity of Christ that drives his disagreements with both Luther and Rome.⁹⁰ And it is this absence of Christ that drives Calvin's recovery of the Holy Spirit's work in his account of sacramental presence.⁹¹ In passing, I should note that Chauvet shares with Calvin his pneumatological emphasis.⁹² I do not want to suggest that Calvin and Horton and Chauvet are up to the same thing in this regard. They manifestly are not, beginning with the fact that they are motivated by different concerns (the structure of faith for Chauvet, Christology for Calvin). What I do want to suggest, however, is that Chauvet's insistence on the absence of Christ can help to alleviate Reformed concerns about Catholic sacramental theology.

At the same time, and in a closely related way, Chauvet can help provide the Reformed with a more satisfactory account of Eucharistic presence, one which has the potential to heal ecclesial divisions. Drawing from Henri de

87 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 173–177.

88 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 177–178.

89 Horton, *People and Place*, 1–34. Horton draws particularly from Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1999). Also worth noting is Horton's own gesture to the Emmaus Road incident as paradigmatic of the proper theological approach (*Lord and Servant*, 9).

90 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.26–30; Hunsinger, *Eucharist and Ecumenism*, 34–46.

91 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.31; Smit, "Depth Behind Things," 215–218; Horton, *Christian Faith*, 814; Hunsinger, *Eucharist and Ecumenism*, 74–75; Ganski, *Spirit and Flesh*.

92 Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 9.

Lubac's *ressourcement* of the threefold body of Christ (historical, ecclesial, and sacramental), Chauvet strongly argues that the ecclesial body must be in view when considering the Eucharistic body of Christ.⁹³ Calvin's notion of Eucharistic presence deals primarily, if not exclusively, with the historical body, which was born of the Virgin, died on the cross, rose from death, and ascended to the Father's right hand. This was par for the course in the sixteenth Century. Taking into account the fact that the ecclesial body (in addition to the historical body) is in view in the Eucharist, helps to attenuate concerns regarding the continued bodily integrity of Jesus, which drove Calvin's debates with Luther, for instance. Yes, the historical body of Christ is localized in heaven. However, the church is no less really the body of Christ, and it is in the midst of the church that the real presence is realized. Calvinists can hold onto their important doctrinal concerns while making room for other articulations. Indeed, by taking as his starting point not the hypostatic union, but rather the Passover of Christ, Chauvet further helps us avoid focusing too-narrowly on the historical body, and allows for a more dynamic account of Eucharistic presence, a more fully illocutionary one, and one which allows us to further avoid objectifying Christ.⁹⁴

It is obvious that more work needs to be done in order to achieve anything approaching ecumenical consensus. I have left untouched the fundamental disagreement between the Reformed and Rome regarding justification (though perhaps gestured to ways that this dilemma might be reconceived).⁹⁵ Moreover, my argument has been geared almost exclusively towards addressing Reformed concerns, leaving unaddressed the objections that Roman Catholics have toward Calvinists: notably the sacrament of order.⁹⁶ However, if I can persuade the Reformed to "up the ante" in their sacramental language, which I

93 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 214, 294, 388, 390, 465–468; See de Lubac's treatment of the history of the threefold body in *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. Gemma Simmonds, Richard Price, and Christopher Stephens (London: SCM Press, 2006). While initially the Eucharist referred fundamentally to the church as *totus Christus*, eventually the sacramental body came to be exclusively identified with the historical body born of the Virgin, and separated from the ecclesial body.

94 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 476–489.

95 The landmark Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* also provides an exemplary model for how these issues might be resolved. Should the Reformed see their way clear to affirming the *JDDJ*, this doctrine may no longer present an obstacle.

96 As an Anglican, I am not in a position to offer proposals to Presbyterians and the Continental Reformed regarding ministerial orders (for that matter, my status as an Anglican is not

contend they need to do in order to be faithful Calvinists, then progress is being made.

Chauvet provides additional resources for helping the Reformed to see how their own accounting of the sacraments is more profoundly effective than they had perhaps thought.

Accounting for sacramental efficacy functioning by strengthening faith might lead some to consider the sacraments dispensable. We can enjoy the benefits of Christ by faith quite well apart from them, or so the logic would go. But because of our irreducibly symbolic nature as human beings, sacraments are not so much window dressing for an already grasped reality or an already existent relationship. Instead, they are indispensable for allowing the relationship to exist. We cannot relate to another or to God without symbolic exchange.⁹⁷ Therefore, the sacraments are not merely dispensable visual aids, but necessary components of how we relate to God. They are like the layers of an onion: keep peeling them away, and you have nothing left. Symbols don't just *teach* things or *remind* us of them; they *do* things.⁹⁸ Or rather, through them, persons do things. This brings us close to Horton's and Wolterstorff's use of speech act theory in sacramental theology. God does things with words (and other signs). But it pushes the discourse a bit further. While remaining consonant with Reformed sacramental theology, it provides a far more robust account of sacramental efficacy. Because we are inextricably social and symbolic, and because the sacraments affect us at a social and symbolic level, they actually affect and change us at the most fundamental level possible.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Given the all-around rancor of Reformation-era polemics, few would suggest Calvin as a viable candidate for ecumenical *rapprochement*. And yet my foregoing argument has shown an affinity between Calvin's sacramental theology and certain segments of contemporary Roman Catholicism. In many ways Calvin's

objectively better than the Reformed vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic Church's recognition of order in my communion). However, I will register my commitment to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and direct readers to George Hunsinger's intra-Presbyterian proposal regarding order (*Eucharist and Ecumenism*, 207–219).

97 Peter J. Leithart, "Embracing Ritual," 11–14.

98 Leithart, "Embracing Ritual," 13.

99 Peter J. Leithart, "Merely Social and Baptismal Regeneration" 327–329; Leithart "Framing", 15.

thought anticipates Chauvet and Schillebeeckx because his particular mechanism of sacramental efficacy was grounded in semiosis. Surely it is anachronistic to read Calvin as anticipating phenomenology, the linguistic turn, or post-structuralism. Yet as anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy have noted that all of human existence is mediated by signs and that the symbolic does indeed affect us at the core of our being, Calvin's account of sacramental efficacy gains plausibility. Not only that, but what has hitherto been seen as a "weaker" commitment to sacramentality can now be opened up into a richer, more robust understanding without suffering any fundamental change, except perhaps a change in outlook—recognizing just how powerfully efficacious a Calvinist sacramental theology can allow the sacraments to be.