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The Mysteries of the Liturgical Institution (1629-1662)

The liturgy, an authorized expression if ever there was one, dramatizes the mysteries of religion. Within a meaningful network of lexical and sacramental equivalences, these mysteries expose the life of Christ, but at the price of distinguishing certain individuals who are authorized to attend them, as Gabriel de l'Aubespine describes: before becoming a mystery in its own right, the Eucharist is first hidden. Representing the body of Christ, it enables the baptized to enter fully into the community that it creates. Its use and interpretation are reserved to the liturgy and to the spokesmen of the ultimate vocal authority: the Word of God.

Every religion gives rise to a form of worship, a more or less public practice which connects gestures and conviction, expressions and dogma. For a liturgist at the end of the seventeenth century, the Church “through its holy and religious actions [...] makes known the greatness and Majesty of God it adores.”¹ Is there anything secret about the Catholic religion which lays itself open through such a theatrical form of worship as the service? Conceptualized from the outset within its institutional dimension, the liturgy allows the Church to teach, to explain the divine action: “It teaches those who

1. Jean Grancolas, *L'Antiquité des ceremonies qui se pratiquent dans l'administration des sacremens*, par M. J. Grancolas, *Docteur en Théologie de la Faculté de Paris* (Paris: Christophe Remy, 1692), 2. This book, dedicated to Bossuet, draws mainly on patristic sources.

receive the Heavenly grace through the Sacraments to penetrate under these external Symbols and see what God does for them.”² For Jean Grancolas, this explanatory role presupposes an obvious equivalence: “Saint Augustine (ep. 119) calls [the ceremonies] the public Book of the Church, where all the faithful can read and know the greatness of our mysteries performed before our eyes through the different Ceremonies.”³ Their public character does not in any way contradict the mysteries, which are the driving force of an institution that explains and performs, and the titles of many works use this term to describe the Mass, but without actually commenting on it or using it in a specific manner.⁴ Especially since this dialectics between mysteries and exposition is another way of representing the subjective relationship between the faithful and God to whom they are attached. The “public Book” is the outer form of a practice which is first and foremost private: “All Ceremonies are but the reflection of inner and spiritual worship, which we must offer God by attaching ourselves to Him.”⁵ The liturgy represents both a pledge of spiritual fidelity and a public duty, as Grancolas stresses in a paragraph dedicated to the origin of the Divine *Office*, which

2. Grancolas, *L'Antiquité des ceremonies*, 2. On the term “liturgy,” it is worth remembering this clarification made by Pierre-Marie Gy: “Le vocabulaire liturgique latin au Moyen Âge,” in *La Lexicographie du latin médiéval et ses rapports avec les recherches actuelles sur la civilisation du Moyen Âge*. ed. Y. Lefèvre (Paris: CNRS, 1981), 295-301, here 295: “In Latin the term ‘liturgia’ hardly appeared before the middle of the sixteenth century, first in translations of the Byzantine Eucharistic liturgies, then as a sort of neutral term between the Catholic Mass and the Protestant Lord’s Supper. In mediaeval Latin the phrase which came closest to the French ‘liturgie’ was ‘divina officia’ or ‘ecclesiasticum officium,’ but they did not have quite the same connotations.”

3. Grancolas, *L'Antiquité des ceremonies*, 6.

4. *Les Misteres de la sainte messe* [Lyons: Guillaume Le Roy, around 1488]; *Entretien ecclesiastique, ou Recueil des ceremonies et mysteres de l'office divin, sur les plus remarquables solemnitez de l'année par Pierre le Heudre, Curé de Bony* (Toul, France: Simon S. Martel, 1633); *L'Office de la semaine sainte, selon le Missel & Breviaire Romain Ensemble l'explication des sacrez Mysteres representez par les Ceremonies de cet Office. Par Fr. Daniel de Cigogné, de l'Ordre de Saint François* (Paris: Rocolet, Soubron, Henault, Hauteville, Clopeiau, 1651); Épiphanie Frenicle, *Les Mysteres contenus dans les Offices divins...* (Paris: Soubron-Lambert, 1655); *La Religion chrestienne, sommairement exposée sur le Symbole. Contenant une explication particuliere des Sacremens, & des Mysteres & Ceremonies de la Messe, tirée de l'Ecriture sainte, & des Peres de l'Église. Par Monsieur D. D. C. Prêtre* (Paris: Michel le Petit, 1670).

5. Grancolas, *L'Antiquité des ceremonies*, 2.

allows him to make a connection between Cicero and Ambrose.⁶ In this eloquent game of lexical equivalences, the identification of “ministerium” with “mysterium” is inevitably called to mind.⁷ In one of the most important liturgical texts of the twelfth century, Innocent III states: “Missa dicitur et ministerium et mysterium.”⁸ How are the public and institutional aspect of the ceremonies and the mysteries they enact joined together? In what way do the mysteries structure the society they address? What role do they play within the authority from which the order establishing the ceremonies claims to be derived?

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF CHRIST

If, to begin with, mysteries indicate the obvious natural limitations of human knowledge,⁹ they represent no less a positive and dynamic element for every believer. The ceremonies, which are

6. Grancolas, *L'Antiquité des ceremonies*, 189: “As for the name given to the public prayers of the Church, the Latins called them *officium*, office, which each and everyone has to perform, *id quod quisque debet efficere*. It is with this meaning that Cicero & Saint Ambrose used it in the titles of their works on the duties of men in civil life & for the conduct of Christians: *De officiis*, or *liber officiorum*; this name was given to the prayer of the Church, because it is like a debt or an office which it pays to God when it dedicates its prayers to Him.” We find here the primary meaning of the Greek term *leitourgia*.

7. Franz Blatt, “Ministerium – Mysterium.” in *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* (Bulletin Du Cange), vol. IV, (1928), 80-81; to which one can add: *Codex Theodosianus cum perpetuis commentariis Jacobi Gothofredi... tomi sexti, pars I* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1743), 130-131, note d; Jules Corblet, *Essai historique et liturgique sur les ciboires et la réserve de l'eucharistie* (Paris: Alphonse Pringuet, 1858), 51 (it uses note *a* from: Bossuet, *Défense de la Tradition sur la Communion sous une espèce*, in *œuvres de Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet* (Paris: Boudet-Lamy, 1788), vol. XVII, 508). See also Christine Mohrmann, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1961), vol. I, 228-230. For the lexical field, see Juan Fernández, *Divinarum scripturarum iuxta sanctorum patrum sententias locupletissimus thesaurus...* (Methymnae a Campo: Excudebat Jacobus à Canto, 1594), folio 147 verso-folio 148 verso: “caput. CXXXVI. Arcanum, Secretum, Mysterium.”

8. Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio* (Salmanticae: Apud Joannem à Canova, 1564), book VI, chap. 12, folio 182 recto. This volum was also entitled *De missarum mysteriis*.

9. Denys Petau, “Preface,” *De la pénitence publique, et de la preparation à la communion* (Paris: Sébastien et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1644): “The Mysteries of our Religion are so refined & the majesty of our Sacraments so adored, that it infinitely surpasses everything of which we can think.”

merely “the reflection of inner worship,” allude to the *mysterium fidei* which Jean-Étienne Duranti, while quoting Étienne de Baugé, bishop of Autun in the twelfth century, defined as: “*Mysterium fidei*, idest, secretum.”¹⁰ In order to overcome its anthropological limitations, spiritual privacy relies on a very precise sacramental act: the Eucharist.¹¹ In this context, the translation of the Greek *mysterion* into *sacramentum* represents a particularly meaningful equivalence.¹² “The word *sacrament* refers to a sacred thing, which is secret and concealed. Thus, the Fathers use the Latin word *sacramentum* to refer to the deep mysteries of the Christian religion.”¹³

The liturgy binds the faithful to the Christ-like life, whose anamnesis the liturgy is.¹⁴ When the Franciscan Olivier Maillard

10. Joannis Stephani Duranti, *De Ritibus Ecclesiae catholicae libri tres* (Rome: Ex Typographia Vaticana, 1591), 234: “Stephanus Eduens. de Sacramento altaris cap. 16. *Mysterium fidei*, idest, secretum, quia quod sensibus nostris est occultum fidei est revelatum.” *De sacramento altaris* was published in Paris in 1517. Duranti, who died in 1589, is one of the great liturgists of the sixteenth century who moved away from the symbolism propounded by Durand de Mende. On this secret vocabulary, see also Jean Gerson, *De mystica theologia*, ed. André Combes (Lucani: In Aedibus Thesauri Mundi, 1958), 1-2; Maximilien Sandaeus, *Theologia mystica. Seu contemplatio divina Religiosorum à calumniis vindicata* (Moguntiae: Impensis Ioannis Theobaldi Schönwetteri, 1627), 1.

11. Duranti, *De Ritibus*, 234: “Ad haec Florus Mag. in exposit. Missae post Alcuï. de divinis offic. cap. de celebrat. Missae. Totum ergo, quod in hac oblatione Dominici corporis & sanguinis agitur mysterium est, aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur.” When defining “mysterium fidei” Domenico Magri writes: “verba apposita in forma consecrationis sanguinis.” Magri, *Hierolexicon, sive sacrum dictionarium...* (Rome: Sumptibus Pontii Bernardon, 1677), 395. Eusèbe Renaudot notes: “*Mystery* is used in the same way in Ethiopian, Greek, Latin & all languages: it absolutely does not mean the Eucharist, except in formal styles [...] *the holy Mysteries*” (*Défense de l’histoire des Patriarches d’Alexandrie, & de la Collection des Liturgies Orientales. Contre un Escriit intitulé, Défense de la mémoire de feu M. Ludolf, &c* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1717), 64).

12. Albert Réville, “Du sens du mot *sacramentum* dans Tertullien,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1889), vol. I, 195-204; Joseph de Ghellinck et al., *Pour l’histoire du mot “sacramentum”* (Paris-Louvain: Champion-Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1924); Pelagio Visentin, “Mysterium-Sacramentum dai Padri alla scolastica,” *Studia Patavina* 4, (1957): 394-414.

13. Nicolas Le Tourneux (1640-1686), *Abregé des principaux traitez de la theologie, contenant ce qu’il y a de plus necessaire dans la Theologie, pour la connoissance des veritez de la Religion Chrétienne* (Paris: Jean Couterot, 1693), treatise V, 287.

14. “Accipiamus primus misterium quod est memoriale.” *De corpore Christi*, 15th c., anonymous sermon for Holy Wednesday, ed. Dionisio Pacetti. “Pretesi

(around 1430-1502) wrote an *expositio missae*, this connection was emphasized from the title: *The Very Devout Similarity and Correspondence of the Sacred and Holy Mysteries of the Mass with the Passion of Our Sweet Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ*.¹⁵ Christ's entire life can thus be seen as a mystery which underpins the nature of revelation. Fulvio Androtio divided his *Devot memorial* into as many chapters as there were "mysteries," while Jean Bourgeois, another Jesuit, entitled his biography: *Mysteries of the Life, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ*.¹⁶ There is indeed a "hidden life"¹⁷ of Christ, which does not limit itself to his retreat into the desert, or the fact that he was not recognized by some, but which refers more fundamentally to his annihilation through incarnation. As the oft-commented Pauline text reads: "semetipsum exinanivit" (Philippians 2:7),¹⁸ which is a complex action that subsumes

scritti giovanili di S. Bernardino da Siena." *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. XLV (1952), 127-151, here 134.

15. *La Conformité et correspondance tres devote des sacrés et saintz mystères de la messe a la Passion de notre doux sauveur et redempteur Jesuchrist necessaire à tous ceulx et celles qui devotement veullent ouyr ladicté messe : composée par le beat pere reverend frère Olivier Maillard, de l'ordre des freres mineurs appellez de l'Observance* (Paris: Joland Bonhomme, 1552), see in particular folio 4 verso on the mystery of the Incarnation.

16. *Devot memorial des saincts Mysteres de la Mort & Passion de nostre S. & R. Iesus Christ, tiré des œuvres Spirituelles du R. P. Fulvius Androtius de la Compagnie de Iesus, Traduit d'Italien en François* (Paris: Pierre de Bresche, 1623), folio 16 verso, 19 recto, etc.; Jean Bourgoys, *Mysteres de la vie, passion et mort de Iesus Christ* (Antwerp: Henry Aertssens, 1622).

17. *Trente journées de retraite, en mémoire et à l'honneur des trente années de la vie cachée de nostre Seigneur Iesus-Christ: touchant les diverses miseres de l'homme. Dialogue de l'homme avec Iesus, par Louis Dulaurens P. de l'Oratoire. Seconde edition* (Paris: Sébastien et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1651).

18. Simon Martin, *Les Actions Admirables de Iesus, en sa vie tres-sainte tant cachée que Manifeste, Avec un Traicté pour les Festes des Saints* (Paris: Fiacre Dehors, 1630), 422. See also Simonis de Cassia, *De gestis domini salvatoris...* (Coloniae: ex officina Eucharij Cervicorni, 1540), 131, book IV, chap. II, *De occulta vita Iesu; et les Sermons sur les Mysteres de la Vierge, preschez par M. Jacques Biroat, Docteur en Theologie, Prieur de Beussan de l'Ordre de Cluny, Conseiller & Predicateur du Roy. Seconde edition* (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1671), 227: "Do we not know that Saint Paul said that God was annihilated in the Incarnation because He concealed His perfections in this Mystery, & that He did not appear as He was?" See also Claude Texier, *Sermons sur les Mysteres de la vie de N. Seigneur; et sur les autres mysteres de nostre religion* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1678), 38; Guillaume de Saint Martin, *Octave du S. Sacrement* (Paris, Edme Couterot, 1683), 145; Juan Fernández, *Divinarum scripturarum*, folio 148 verso: "Mysterium etiam vocatur incarnatio & passio Christi, ut Paulus ait: *Loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio* (I. Cor. 2)."

divinity into a human life that is entirely an image of the divine word. The liturgy of the seventeenth century was first and foremost organized around the mystery of the incarnate Word.¹⁹ This collection of mysteries concerning the nature of Christ, His mission, and His survival, caught the attention of the Cluniac Benedictine and preacher to the king Jacques Biroat (died 1666). In 1657, the first of his speeches delivered during the octave of the Blessed Sacrament was entitled “On the Hidden Life of the Savior.” If His public life is connected to the “tangible” existence of Christ on earth, His “secret & invisible life” is that of the sacrament which He established.²⁰ After having been reduced to His incarnated form, which concealed His glory, Christ was reduced to the sacrament which gives meaning to a ceremony that glorifies Him. This chain of events illustrates the theological settings based on the Johannine *Sicut misit me vivens Pater*, which was chosen by Biroat as the epigraph to his speech. A mirror image of the divine and human life of the Son, the Eucharist allows the faithful to take part in Christ’s life: the sacrament *is* the latter’s secret life.

The reference to the life of the Son was further explored by the Cluniac in his *Sermons on the Mysteries of the Virgin*, which were dedicated to the “Queen of Mysteries.”²¹ The terms chosen to evoke His life before birth could not be more precise and insistent:

From the moment she conceived the Savior in her womb, all her actions became mysterious & sacramental [...] all her actions while in this state were Sacraments & Mysteries. [...] she was the living Ark of the Savior in this mystery which passed through her. Sacraments are comprised of two things: one is matter, which is visible; the other is grace, which is invisible.²²

19. Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et la liturgie* (Paris: 1966 / Genève: Slatkine, 1998), 100.

20. *La Vie de Iesus-Christ, dans le St Sacrement de l’Autel; preschée durant l’Octave du Saint Sacrement, dans l’Église de Saint André des Arcs l’année 1657. Par M. Jacques Biroat Docteur en Theologie, Conseiller & Predicateur du Roy, de l’Ordre de Saint Benoist* (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1658), 1-2.

21. Jacques Biroat, *Sermons sur les Mysteres de la Vierge, preschez par M. Jacques Biroat, Docteur en Theologie, Prieur de Beussan de l’Ordre de Cluny, Conseiller & Predicateur du Roy. Seconde edition* (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1671), folio 2 recto.

22. Biroat, *Sermons sur les Mysteres*, 151. On the “hidden” Christ, see 228.

Even before the Eucharist and the ceremonies were created, the fine dialectics of the exposed mystery had begun.²³ The intimacy which existed between mother and Son is directly related to the revelation of the divine message: “He revealed in her heart all His Mysteries, & told her through a secret Gospel what He later publicly said to everyone.”²⁴ If the time preceding his birth was so precious, this is not only because of this secret communication, but also because it was then, according to Biroat, that Jesus’s human nature was formed, in conjunction with his mystical body:

Firstly, she formed & conceived Jesus Christ in her womb; which is why Saint Dionysius called it the first temple where He was received, & the principle of His life. *Dei receptaculum, principium vitae* (Dion. Cap. 4 de Div. Hom.) is not enough, she begot Him from her own substance; & the Holy Spirit which, through its powers, elevated Mary’s natural fecundity, took the purest drops of her blood and turned them into this divine Body, which was going to bring about the redemption of the world [...]. But in the end she contributed in an effective manner to the formation of Jesus Christ in that, as she prepared the organs of His holy body, & united this small body with her blessed soul, she produced this holy humanity, which was at that moment united with the subsistence of the Word.²⁵

His birth made his incarnation public, but this coming into the world was also a means for hiding certain divine attributes.²⁶ In other words, each revelation is an opportunity to come face to face with another aspect of the divine mystery. Christ’s body, life, and mysteries are summed up in the Eucharist, a sacrament which was at the heart of the controversies caused by the Reformation.²⁷ It is an

23. On Christ establishing the liturgy, see Duranti, *De Ritibus*, book II, chap. 3 (*De Missae institutione*), 109: “Christum Missae sacrificium instituisse eiusque auctorem esse.”

24. *Sermons sur les Mysteres de la Vierge*, 158.

25. *Sermons sur les Mysteres de la Vierge*, 295. On the mystical body, see also page 241: “not only is she the mystical body of the Leader, she formed His very body.” On the expression of this mystical body, see the classic work: Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum. L’eucharistie et l’Église au Moyen Age* (Paris: Aubier, 1949).

26. *Sermons sur les Mysteres de la Vierge*, 153: “At the moment of the Incarnation, the Word came out of its secrecy & its solitude, where it had lived from the beginning of time with the Father & the Holy Spirit, to come and converse with men.”

27. See the classic work of Remi Snoeks, *L’Argument de Tradition dans la controverse eucharistique entre catholiques et réformés français au XVIIe siècle* (Louvain-Gembloux, Belgium: Publications universitaires de Louvain, Éditions

opportunity for theologians to trace the genealogy of their tradition – a return to origins, which is so important for the liturgy – and to specify the manner in which a community is formed and its cohesion affirmed. What does this introspection tell us about the nature of Christianity?

CONCEALING THE SACRAMENT: CATECHUMENS AND THE EUCHARIST

Grancolas's work took particular interest in the ancient liturgical practices and his treatise on the Mass was no exception. When defining this key term, he states:

Mass means *Dismissal* because in the past, at the beginning of the sacrifice, they used to dismiss, that is, send out of the Church those who had not yet been baptized, the so-called Catechumens, & those who were doing penance, & because at the end they would this time send out the whole congregation by saying *Ite, missa est*, you are dismissed, thus warning the faithful not to leave the Church until the sacrifice had been completed.²⁸

This definition splits the community on the basis of each one's relationship with the Eucharist. In 1629, Gabriel de l'Aubespine (1547-1639), bishop of Orléans consecrated by Clement VIII in Rome in 1604, devoted a whole treatise to this aspect.²⁹ Several editions of *L'Ancienne police de l'Église, sur l'administration de l'Eucharistie* were published during that century. L'Aubespine, who defined the Eucharist as “summum Christianae Religionis mysterium, arcanum, & Sacramentum,”³⁰ attempted to show the extent to which there was limited access to it and belief in the real presence

J. Duculot, 1951), centred on *Traité du Saint Sacrement* (1622) of Du Perron and on *Perpétuité de la foi*.

28. Jean Grancolas, *Traité de la messe et de l'office divin: où l'on trouve une explication littérale des anciennes Pratiques & des Cérémonies de l'Église, appuyée sur l'autorité des Peres & des Conciles* (Paris: Jacques Vincent, 1713), 2.

29. On his ecclesiastical career, see *Gallia christiana... Opera & studio Monachorum Congregationis S. Mauri Ordinis S. Benedicti* (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1744), vol. VIII, col. 1492-1493. On his family: Louis Moreri, *Le Grand dictionnaire historique* (Paris-Lyons: Thierry-Girin-Rivière, 1683), vol. II, 380-381.

30. Gabriel de l'Aubespine, *Christianus, Fidelis, Sanctus, Iustus, Observatio*. xxv, in *Sancti Optati Milevitani. Opera cum observationibus et notis reverendissimis D. D. Gabrielis Albaspinæi* (Paris: Apud Claudium Sonnum, 1631), 76.

was inherent to it. He emphasized the fact that the sacred mysteries were concealed from the catechumens by all possible means:

These rules were so strictly observed in the first centuries that one never spoke of the Blessed Sacrament to these Catechumens; they never heard the Sermons of the faithful with whom one could speak; they never attended the Sacrifice of the Mass. They were very far from receiving and taking part in it; even the books which discussed it, & where this Mystery was explained, pronounced anathemas in their prefaces against those who would make them known to Strangers.³¹

This religion of secrecy evoked the clandestine condition of the first Christians, which had become commonplace.³² L'Aubespine recalled the persecution of Christians in order to add a pragmatic aspect to the dissimulation of the Eucharist:

[Christians] would sometimes remove [the Eucharist] to avoid persecution, & when they could not gather safely there would be no appearance; for it is supposed that private individuals were as careful to hide the Blessed Sacrament in their houses, as Clergymen were in their Churches.³³

Thus, Tertullian tells the story of a Christian woman married to a pagan: it was imperative that the latter be treated as a stranger, for if the sacrament was not concealed from him, it would amount to desecration.³⁴ L'Aubespine does recognize the historical break which occurred beginning with the fifth century, when catechumens were allowed in during sermons, but this also explained the use of rhetorical subterfuges meant to conceal the essential: preachers "delivered them using such disguised words & such obscurity, that they made it clear enough they did not wish to reveal the secret to those who were listening."³⁵ Christ faced with the Capernaïtes is given as a founding

31. Gabriel de l'Aubespine. *L'Ancienne police de l'Église, sur l'administration de l'Eucharistie*. Par M. Gabriel de l'Aubespine, Evêque d'Orléans, & Commandeur de l'Ordre du S. Esprit. Troisième édition (Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1655), 5, cf. 28 ("We hid all the Sacraments from the Catechumens"), and 11-12, 14 on the dismissal.

32. For example in *Remonstrance et conclusion [de] Monsieur l'advocat general du Roy, pour Monsieur le procureur general de sa majesté au parlement séant à Tours, le seize janvier mil cinq cens nonante, lors de la lecture des lettres patentes du roy du cinquiesme desdits mois et an in Actions notables et plaidoyéz de Messire Louis Servin* (Paris: Estienne Richer, 1639), 412.

33. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne police de l'Église*, 19-20.

34. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne police de l'Église*, 20-21.

35. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne police de l'Église*, 10; and 11: "Thus we learn not only that there were Catechumens & Strangers attending the Sermons, but

example: “He knew that they were still enveloped in darkness, & incapable of hearing the ineffable secret.”³⁶

The vocal space is divided. Just like the act of interpretation, the word in its most simple expression causes a sacramental separation between those who make up the community and those who have not yet joined it, or who have been excluded from it, such as the energumens.³⁷ Mysteries conceal and are concealed at one and the same time; but L’Aubespine also mentions the use of silence. Not only the “ancient Fathers of the Church” concealed the sacraments, they also went as far as to “refuse not only any information, but also the mere utterance of the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed.”³⁸ The “public” in this ceremony is therefore essentially limited and determined by this relationship with the mysteries.

[The] ancient Fathers often called the Eucharist: wonderful Mystery, formidable Mystery, terrible Mystery. It is why we should not at all be amazed that they did not allow Strangers to know it, since they themselves never saw it, & never touched it without trembling.³⁹

The hold of secrecy was so important and significant that it extended even over the faithful, since it concerned the Mystery itself. Its transmission was limited to orality, and therefore to the liturgical context:

Finally, we find that these ancient rules concealed a lot of things, not only to the Catechumens, but also to the faithful, even though they had been initiated, & had the right to see, to touch & to receive the Eucharist, which was the greatest Mystery, & the most Sacred & the

that the Mystery was hidden from them & obscure words were used so as not to reveal it.”

36. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 23. See also the quote from Augustine’s sermon 46 (26): “*You, Catechumen, you are called a Listener & you are deaf? The ears of your body are open, since you hear well the words which are being uttered; but the ears of your heart are still closed, because you do not hear what is being said.*”

37. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 221. Cf. Nicolas de Chevanes (lawyer to the Parliament of Dijon), letter dated December 28, 1646 (edited in *Mémoires historiques, critiques, et littéraires, par feu M. Bruys...*, vol. II (Paris: Jean-Thomas Hérisant, 1751), 401-405): “You asked me if they used to give Communion to Energumens. I believe I should make my feelings fully known. Thus, I say that at the time of the Apostles & the primitive Church, it is certain that the Communion was denied to Energumens. This is supported by Chapter VII, Book VIII of the Apostolic Constitutions: [... the Deacon cried] *Exite, Energumeni*. Just as he said: *Exite, Poenitentes; exite, Catechumeni*.”

38. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 45-46.

39. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 36.

most formidable thing in the Christian Religion. This is shown in these words of Saint Dionysius from the last chapter of his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy: *It is forbidden to commit to writing the prayers & the invocations of the Mysteries of the Church, & the power they have, & even more so the wonders & effects that God performs through them.*⁴⁰

The secret is also protected through rules imposed by the vocal community, which designates – this is no trivial matter – the holders of the liturgical knowledge as well as the congregation which attends service. Joining this community presupposes a gradual learning of the effective orality which leads to the first sacrament: baptism. One conceals to protect, but also to arouse the catechumens’ desire.⁴¹ But what is being concealed? That which the community produces: the body of Christ. “The real reason why they took care to conceal the Eucharist from the Catechumens, & to deny them all knowledge & participation, was because it was the real body of our Lord.”⁴² Once again, the power of identifying equivalences plays a major theological role: the Eucharist *is* the body of Christ, the Word is a body, its body *is* the community. The term “Synaxis” helps to keep together the different dimensions expounded so far:

The word *Synaxis* has four meanings for the Ancients: the Union with Jesus Christ through the Sacrifice & through the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, Prayers, & the Service of the Mass; & finally, the local assembly of the faithful. [... the] word *Collecta* carries the same meanings in Latin as *Synaxis* does in Greek.⁴³

Being baptized represents the first stage in becoming part of the body of Christ, which is fully achieved in the Eucharist.⁴⁴ The faithful are “incorporated,”⁴⁵ the Incarnation and the Eucharist are reunited in the image of the two natures of Christ, another mystery of the “union.” Having occurred thanks to the Incarnation, the union between the divine and human natures in one person makes pos-

40. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 56-57.

41. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 24-25.

42. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 33.

43. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 89.

44. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 3: “It was not sensible to unite them with Jesus Christ & incorporate them with His Church without first cleansing them of their Pagan errors & making them fear the only God.” On baptism, see also page 18 where L’Aubespine quotes the Dionysian *Ecclesiastical History*.

45. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne police de l’Église*, 68, 83, 143.

sible the union of the faithful in the body of Christ, a union which partakes fully of the mystery:

One of the main effects of the Incarnation of our Lord, & one of the main graces He bestowed upon us through His merits, is that we have been given the right to be able to be united & incorporated with Him: & this by such a close & excellent union, that the wonders the Gospel mentions with regard to those who find themselves in this union are beyond comprehension.⁴⁶

The New Testament corpus used is firstly that of Saint Paul, known to have used the *mysterion* as well as developed the idea of the mystical body in a specific way.⁴⁷ L'Aubespine insists on the intensity of the bodily union thus conceived,⁴⁸ and adds amply to Paul's ideas by citing long quotations from Saint Dionysius in order to comment on the deification which is the Eucharist, "the greatest force to join us, incorporate us and [bring us in] synaxis" with Christ.⁴⁹ Union and synaxis become synonymous and mean being in "*society with Jesus Christ*."⁵⁰ In an attempt to better define the mystery, L'Aubespine uses Tertullian, who describes the origin of the model which makes the conception of this union possible:

Tertullian elegantly expresses the greatness of this union, which is formed by means of the Eucharist [...] according to him, by receiving & eating the Eucharist we acquire indivisibility & perpetuity with the Body of Jesus Christ. What should give force to this word, *Indivuitatem*, is the fact that he uses it in the nineteenth chapter of his book *Adversus Praxeam*, in order to show the unity that exists between the Father & the Son: *When we say that the Son is indivisible & inseparable from the Father; & in the twelfth chapter, that if they know it, they will know the Father, not as if it were Father & Son all*

46. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne police de l'Église*, 143.

47. See for example Thomas de Vio [Cajétan], *Epistolae Pauli et aliorum apostolorum ad Graecam veritatem castigatae...* (Parisii: Apud Hieronymum de Marnef & Guilielmum Cavellat, 1571), folio 264 verso-266 recto; and the direct Pauline reference in Sandaeus, *Theologia mystica*, 1.

48. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne Police de l'Église*, 146: "We cannot be united with Him, nor incorporated with Him, except by those means He established, which are the Sacraments of the Church, among which only the Eucharist can perform this perfect union, & incorporate us more perfectly with Him than the other Sacraments; it is [the Eucharist] which performs the Marriage that exists between Him & His Church, & consequently between Him & the members of this Church; it is [the Eucharist] which consummates this Marriage, & makes us bones of His bones, & flesh of His flesh, as we said somewhere else."

49. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne Police de l'Église*, 147.

50. L'Aubespine, *L'Ancienne Police de l'Église*, 150; they are Dionysian terms.

*together; but because through this indivisibility they cannot be known nor ignored one without the other.*⁵¹

The ecclesial incorporation is therefore in the image of the relationship between the Father and the Son, a mystery of co-presence and conception of place: “We have to be the Temple of God & His Son. This is especially done by receiving the Eucharist, *in me manet & ego in eo*.”⁵² Through the Eucharist, the Father and His Word “dwell within us.”⁵³ The nature of the community thus formed through the accession to the Eucharistic sacrament is itself a mystery, in the image of a still greater mystery. All the more so since this community brings the faithful, as well as each one of them and Christ, together. The individual and the community are conceived of at the same time, and one through the other, thus making possible a perfect communication between divine persons.⁵⁴ In fact, the third person is also used by L’Aubespine to describe this complex of relationships introduced by baptism and then the Eucharist:

There is nothing fairer than the man who is the image of the Eternal Word, & who was copied from this Original, was remade & recolored by the Holy Spirit, appeared before this very same Word, & received the human flesh of this Word. The Church is the Bride of Jesus Christ, & its particulars are the bones, limbs & flesh of this Bride, & this betrothal & this Marriage are consummated by receiving the Eucharist.⁵⁵

The believer is “recolored” by the Holy Spirit and introduced into the general structure of the Word as institution. The community acquires a body vocally and sacramentally, while Christ incorporates this nuptial body by means of an essential similarity which stems both from the creating Word and his incarnation – two testamentary moments and, first and foremost, two modes of conceptualizing the similarity between God and humans. Passing from the

51. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne Police de l’Église*, 155-156.

52. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne Police de l’Église*, 160.

53. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne Police de l’Église*, 160.

54. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne Police de l’Église*, 164.

55. L’Aubespine, *L’Ancienne Police de l’Église*, 161. Cf. page 164: “This Temple was first built through Baptism, when the Holy Spirit entered, & was followed by the Son by means of the Eucharist. Finally, the Father was attracted by His Spirit & by His Son, in whom He delighted.” Antoine de Laval spoke of the Holy Spirit as an “infallible guide, eternal director & teacher of the Church & the Kings” (Antoine de Laval, *Paraphrase des CL Pseaumes de David* (Paris: Veuve Abel l’Angelier, 1618), folio 4.)

discursiveness of a treatise enjoying episcopal authority to that of a sermon on the same subject, how is the unspeakable mystery which is supposed to be concealed from the profane laid open (and made public)? How is the mystery depicted in an actual speech?

CIRCUMINCESSION. DOGMA SECRETS IN SERMONS.

In 1662, César-Auguste Margotin, a preacher to the king, published a little-known sermon, delivered for the Trinitarian Order in the church of the Mathurins and dedicated to the queen:⁵⁶ *The Great Mystery of the Christians*. However, we are not dealing with “discovering the great Mystery of the Divine works”; quite the contrary, the author assures us, using an introductory technique typical of the tactics of secrecy.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the dynamics expounded by L’Aubespine is present from the very next words, dismissing his subject and beginning to discuss it at one and the same time: “I would rather happily lose myself in God through the movements of my heart, than let it descend through the ideas of my mind, so I can see in me what it produces in itself.”⁵⁸ And to use as his model voluntary blindness, which adapts to the muted colors of an image doubly staged through an ekphrasis:

My Brothers, follow me on the Calvary, which I am climbing so I can find the darkness and show you the light, so I can draw the redeeming water of Baptism from the opening of the heart of the dying Jesus Christ and show you the fire of His love, & since it is at His death that the temple veil is torn, & the Sanctuary is revealed, we must ask the Holy Spirit by the intercession of His Bride to give us access & let us in.⁵⁹

56. On this order founded in 1193 and approved by Innocent III in 1198, see Thierry Knecht, “Trinitaires,” in *Guide pour l’histoire des ordres et des congrégations religieuses. France, XVIe-XXe siècles*. ed. Daniel-Odon Hurel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 179-180.

57. M. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens. Expliqué et presché dans l’Église des RR. PP. Religieux de l’Ordre de la tres-sainte Trinité de la Redemption des Captifs, le jour de leur Feste, par M. Margotin, Prestre, Predicateur Ordinaire du Roy, & de son Altesse Royale* (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1662), 4-5. Unless I am mistaken, neither the text nor the author have been the subject of a study.

58. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 5. L’Aubespine stated that the Eucharist “is the heart of the Body of Jesus Christ” (*Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 110).

59. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 6.

Only the Church can let us into the secret of the mystery. The birth of the Christian is conceivable not only through the birth of Christ, but also through his theatrical death: “He brings him forth not only from His own entrails, but also from the cruelest trenches & bitterest pains of His Cross. *Non corruptibilibus auro & argento redempti estis, sed pretioso sanguine Agni immaculati* (I Pet. 1).”⁶⁰ The drama thus displayed places the context of presentation and the possibility of explanation in one of the key moments of the realization of the divine plan, which brings together the various dimensions of the Word: “You shall learn that the uncreated Word of Eternity, having been incarnated in time, expires on the Cross so that, by giving you life through its death, it imitates perfectly the innascibility & paternity of its much adored Principle.”⁶¹ Margotin concentrates on the manner of the giving and appearance of the divine, and the effect it causes in the human being by means of the similarity (“in the image of”) to the original (God).

The sermon’s ambition is essentially to conceptualize the Trinity, its nature, its unity, the type of relations it creates, its main role. Its appearance is part of a chronology which organizes entities hierarchically:

When the Son of God was personally joined & united with human Nature, the Holy Spirit did not appear visibly in this Mystery, & when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, the Son of God did not appear visibly during this tremendous descent; but the two appeared successively, one after the other, to make us see in time the priority of their origins in the Eternity.⁶²

Before substance, the Incarnation and the Eucharistic institution allow us, in a striking condensed form, to conceptualize the presence. Not only did God annihilate himself and had himself reduced into Christ, the same movement is repeated with the Host. And yet, by means of the mystery, these apparent limitations are in fact the dazzling manifestation of divine transcendence. To this chronology is added a miraculous geography, in a reversal on a level with the rhetoric of mysteries:

The Savior succeeds in imitating divinity through this last mystery; & in fact, since Judea was in sole possession of divinity for a long

60. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 20.

61. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 14; cf. 23.

62. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 60.

time, it continued for a while to hold the glorious advantage of being in sole possession of the humanity of Jesus Christ, since God invisible & visible first revealed Himself to it; but divinity & humanity reached the limits they had imposed upon themselves; divinity was present everywhere, but it made itself known everywhere, & the humanity of the Son of God, which occupied a single place through the Incarnation, was extended through the Eucharist; & if the hope of the pain that the Savior was going to suffer in Judea happily kept Him there a long time, now the desire He holds to do good everywhere takes Him to all the places of the world, so much so that, through a mystery filled with the infinity of other mysteries, this same God who has reduced Himself, has reduced Himself further still, so He may spread everywhere; the abbreviated word of the Father is abbreviated further still so it may multiply, & even though immensity is a particular privilege of the divine nature, the holy humanity of Jesus Christ does not cease to imitate it perfectly; for this multiplied presence which it acquires through this last mystery is a perfect image of this unique & general presence of God everywhere.⁶³

Concentration, presence, and universalization naturally lead Margotin to deal with the question of the substance, the source of the mysteries detailed here. Christ's issuing from the divine substance allows us to think of Christians as being "produced" by Christ "from his own Blood," just as their relationship is seen in the same way as that between the Father and the Son, which is completed and symbolized by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁴ the "nexus" between the other two persons:⁶⁵

[The Eternal Father and the Son] produce the Holy Spirit through their mutual love, but in such a way that there is no distinction between them other than that of paternity & filiation, which are the two opposed terms of a simple relationship; but in such a way that the entire substance of one is the entire substance of the other. The Essence of the Son is the Essence of the Father, so much so that, if the Father wants something, the Son wants it too, thus the Father has nothing kept separate except His paternity, & the Son has no particularity other than His filiation. They have nothing kept separate except these two opposed terms, beyond which everything else is shared,

63. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 32-33.

64. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 12; cf. 16-17.

65. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 62-63: "The great Saint Augustine said that the Holy Spirit is the link between the Father & the Son *Nexus Patris & Filij*, because the Father & the Son, who love each other, produce it through their mutual love; and yet, the Christian man who loves God in His creatures, & the creatures in God, unites in his heart God & the creatures, because from the knowledge & love of their perfections he rises continually to the knowledge & love of the Creator's perfections."

& in this divine & incomprehensible manner the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father.⁶⁶

The Trinity, which allows us to conceptualize the relationship between the genealogical roles within the same substance and the mutual dwelling of each one in the other – to use terms which are external to the perfect unity of the three divine persons – gave rise to a precise theological term: “circumincession.” The term appeared in the twelfth century in Burgundius’s translation of *De fide orthodoxa* by John of Damascus, to render the Greek *perichoresis* and to refer to the co-presence of the persons within the Trinity.⁶⁷ Disseminated in particular by Alexander of Hales in his commentary on the Johannine “Ego in Patre et Pater in me” as expounded by Pierre Lombard,⁶⁸ this rather rarely used term is used by Margotin in its second sense to refer to the Eucharistic mystery:

66. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 36-38.

67. Saint John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa. Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus*. ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (New-York-Louvain-Paderborn: The Franciscan Institute St Bonaventure-E. Nauwelaerts-F. Schöningh, 1955), 340: “Cap. 91. De hiis quae de Christo dicuntur. Eorum quae de Christo dicuntur, modi sunt generales quatuor. Haec enim et ante incarnationem conveniunt ei, alia autem in unionem, alia autem post unionem, alia autem post resurrectionem. Et eorum quidem eorum copulationem naturae et homousion quod est ad Patrem ostendunt, ut hoc: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*, et *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem*, et hoc *Qui in forma Dei existit*; et quae talia. Alia autem perfectionem hypostaseos eius, ut hoc: *Filius Dei et character hypostaseos eius*, et hoc *Magni consilii angelus, mirabilis, consiliarius*; et similia. Alia autem circumincessionem quae est in invicem hypostaseon significant, ut hoc: *Ego in Patre et Pater in me*.” *Perichoresis* can also be translated as “immediate” (*De orthodoxa fide accurata expositio, Iacobo Billio, S. Michaelis in Eremo Coenobiarcha, interprete*. in S. Ioannis Damasceni. *Opera, multo quam unquam antehac auctiora, magna ex parte nunc de integro conversa. Per D. Iacobum Billium Prunaeum, S. Michaëlis in eremo Coenobiarcham...* (Parisiis, 1610), 484). I will look at this pair of concepts somewhere else.

68. Alexandre de Halès, *Glossa in quatuor libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (Quaracchi: Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1951), vol. I, book. I, distinctio xix, 195. See also *Lexicon scholasticum philosophico-theologicum in quo termini, definitiones, distinctiones et effata seu axiomatice propositiones philosophiam ac theologiam spectantes a B. Ioanne Duns Scoto doctore subtili atque Mariano O. F. M. exponuntur, declarantur opera et studio R. P. Mariani Fernandez Garcia* (Quaracchi: Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1910), 142-144. On circumincession, see George-Leonard Prestige, *Dieu dans la pensée patristique* (Paris: Aubier, 1955) chap. xiv; and more recently: Emmanuel Durand, *La Périchorèse des personnes divines* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005).

The Divinity, though invisible by itself, is nevertheless, as the Apostle says, visible through creatures, & likewise the humanity in the Sacrament, where not only a man, but a God is concealed, becomes perceptible, & through the species, & the impression it leaves in the hearts of all real Christians, all the more so since Jesus Christ, as climax & as crowning of *His imitations*, enters it, & through a kind of circumincession it remains there.⁶⁹

The circumincession explains the mysteries concentrated in the Eucharist, symbol of the Incarnation, of Christ's mystical body, of his dwelling in every Christian. The circumincession thus allows us to better conceptualize the mystery of the co-presence which makes Christ possible: being "the eternal image of an eternal Original," he is described as being in the perpetual sight of the Father, and "thus the Christian man sees his original without interruption & without respite, he only has eyes for Jesus Christ *oculi sapientis in capite eius*."⁷⁰ Christ dwells both in God and in the human being. Thus, Christians, thanks to his presence, "together produce a perfect Image of the Holy Spirit."⁷¹ Life is identified with the "life shared" with Christ, the greatest mystery being not only the fact that "it was possible to find, by means of charity, a shared bond which forms one & the same body out of so many different parts & nations," but that such heterogeneous existences and persons as God and humans could be *united* through the Trinitarian mystery.⁷²

The liturgical mystery is also that of the indissolubly divine and human institution made possible. The society thus created stems from the Trinitarian relationship and the two senses of circumincession which joins together substances and persons. This series of equivalences which religious expression is built on leads to the dogmatic mysteries illustrating the institution through which and in which the Word is thought of as the presence of God. The extreme attention accorded to the context and nature of the uttered word is a reflection of its vocal, sacramental and institutional effectiveness: the Church is the holder of the Trinitarian secret which creates it. The mysteries of the liturgical institution,

69. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 33-34. My emphasis.

70. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 56. On the relationship between images and their original, see also 59-60; and on the process of imitation see 50.

71. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 34 (as consequence of circumincession), 39, 48.

72. Margotin, *Le Grand mystere des chrestiens*, 50 and 61 respectively.

displayed in various forms throughout the year, recall their origin, the anthropology which together they determine in relation to the divine nature, as well as the community which stems from such a particular ontology.

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