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Religion

Christian Theologies of the Sacraments

A Comparative Introduction

Instructor's Guide

Delves into the ancient debate regarding the nature and purpose of the seven sacraments

What are the sacraments? For centuries, this question has elicited a lively discussion and among theologians, and a variety of answers that do anything but outline a unified belief concerning these fundamental ritual structures.

In this extremely cohesive and well-crafted volume, a group of renowned scholars map the theologies of sacraments offered by key Christian figures from the Early Church through the twenty-first century. Together, they provide a guide to the variety of views about sacraments found throughout Christianity, showcasing the variety of approaches to understanding the sacraments across the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox faith traditions.

Chapters explore the theologies of thinkers from Basil to Aquinas, Martin Luther to Gustavo Gutiérrez. Rather than attempting to distill their voices into a single view, the book addresses many of the questions that theologians have tackled over the two thousand year history of Christianity. In doing so, it paves the way for developing theologies of sacraments for present and future contexts. The text places each theology of the sacraments into its proper sociohistorical context, illuminating how the church has used the sacraments to define itself and its congregations over time.

The definitive resource on theologies of the sacraments, this volume is a must-read for students, theologians, and spiritually interested readers alike.

**CHAPTER 1:
PATRISTIC AND MEDIEVAL THEOLOGIES OF SACRAMENTS**

In this overview chapter, Ryan M. Reeves outlines patristic and medieval theologies of sacraments, covering Basil, Augustine, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. Reeves is careful to address the sacraments in patristic and medieval theology, how the “mysteries” of the Christian faith were understood and incorporated into the life of the early and medieval Christians with emphasis on “the unity of the church in the life of the Eucharist, as it was the definitive mark of grace upon a church that had been graced with the presence of the Spirit.” Additionally, Reeves describes Augustine’s focus on sacraments as expressions of the grace of God, the importance of sourcebooks compiled in the Early Middle Ages by the likes of Isidore of Seville, the impact of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) on sacramental theology, and Thomas Aquinas’s scholastic approach to the sacraments. Furthermore, Reeves touches on how John Wycliffe and Hans Hus responded, and how their response set the stage for the Reformation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The earliest language of the sacraments is closely associated with the earliest phrase associated with the life of the church: the mysteries. How does Reeves describe the mysteries associated with the early church?
2. As we think about Augustine’s influence on sacraments, what is the force that drives his teaching about sacraments? What is a sacrament, according to Augustine?
3. Describe how sacraments during the Medieval Period differ from sacraments associated with the early church.
4. What impact did the Fourth Lateran Council, and scholastic theology, have on theological discussions of the sacraments?

CHAPTER 2: ST. BASIL THE GREAT

In chapter two, Jacob N. Van Sickle describes the sacramental theology of St. Basil, who insisted that proper understanding of the sacraments must be rooted in Scripture, adhere to orthodox Christianity as it emerged from the Council of Nicaea (325), and address the pastoral issues of a fourth-century culture in which sacred and secular societies were increasingly merging. His theology of Baptism highlighted the role of the Trinity, and his theology of the Eucharist was “oriented toward the message of Scripture and the inspiration of faith.” Readers are also reminded of the contextual nature of theology, such that studying the theology of someone like St. Basil must be accompanied by studying the various cultural influences of the time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author states that the distance in time from Basil is obvious because he does not have a word for “sacrament.” Rather, he uses the term “the mysteries” most readily for sacraments. From where in Scripture does Basil draw this term and how does he apply it?
2. Why does Van Sickle describe it as a misunderstanding that Basil holds tradition as a second source of Christian Theology that sits alongside of Scripture?
3. What was Basil’s foremost theological concern of his career?
4. Identify the four stages through which a person who is converted to Christ must proceed *before* coming to baptism.

**CHAPTER 3:
ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO**

As described by Thomas L. Humphries, Jr., the sacramental theology of St. Augustine of Hippo emphasized the mystery of God and the fruit of love, and identified sacraments as “visible signs that symbolize and connect us to the mystery of our saving God.” Baptism was to occur only once in a believer’s life and marked not only the entrance of the believer into the church but also the believer’s identity with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Augustine encouraged infant Baptism and considered marriage and ordination to be sacraments as well. In addition, for Augustine, “the Eucharist is the summit of sacramental theology because it is so obviously and closely connected to the Incarnate Christ himself and because it is a visible sign that connects us to the mystery of salvation in Christ which is fulfilled in love.” Augustine’s work on the sacraments was in many ways seminal and has continued to influence Christian sacramental theology ever since.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify the three fundamental elements of Augustine’s sacramental theology that should be considered when studying this theologian.
2. The author states that much of Augustine’s theology of Baptism operates in modern understandings of Baptism, but there are less familiar aspects of the sacrament of Baptism in his teaching. Describe these less familiar aspects of Augustine’s sacrament of Baptism.
3. What does the author state is the “capstone” of Augustine’s sacramental theology?
4. Put into your own words Augustine’s argument for the temporary polygamous form of the sacrament of marriage.
5. Why is the Eucharist the summit of sacramental theology for Augustine? Describe Augustine’s understanding of the Eucharist.

CHAPTER 2: ST. BASIL THE GREAT

In chapter 4, we read Philipp W. Rosemann’s understanding of the theology of the sacraments of the scholastic theologian and bishop Peter Lombard. Lombard’s *Book of Sentences* of the mid-twelfth century defined a sacrament as “a sign of God’s grace and the form of invisible grace, in such a way as to carry its image and be its cause,” and included seven sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, Confession (Penance), and Extreme Unction. Rosemann discusses how two sacraments reveal unique aspects of Lombard’s sacramental theology: Marriage—an expression of Christ’s union with the church—and Confession (Penance)—contrition caused by grace being poured into the hearts of believers that leads to penance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How and why did Lombard narrow the concept of sacrament? To what does he apply his definition of sacrament?
2. In your own words, describe Lombard’s definition of sacrament.
3. How does Rosemann clarify Lombard’s definition of sacrament?
4. Identify and describe the two forms of penance that coexisted in the practice of the twelfth century church. To which form of penance does Lombard devote much of his writing? Why?
5. Summarize Lombard’s presentation of marriage as a sacrament.

**CHAPTER 5:
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS**

In chapter 5, Matthew Levering describes how Thomas Aquinas's theology of the sacraments is connected to Christ's mission of reconciliation for humanity, a mission in which human beings are invited to participate. Aquinas's theology of the sacraments also included the seven sacraments mentioned above. Various aspects of this mission as related to the sacraments include love, holiness, evangelism, refraining from sin, and the vanquishing of death. Moreover, Aquinas viewed sacraments as gifts of grace from the risen Christ that aid in this mission of reconciliation for humanity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way did Aquinas conceive of the sacraments? What did he see as the purpose of sacraments?
2. Summarize Aquinas's five reasons for the suitability of the way in which God redeemed the human race.
3. Describe the various dimensions, according to Aquinas, in which Christ enables us to participate in his mission and thereby work out our salvation.
4. Give three reasons why Aquinas considers that the bodily mode of the sacraments is the most fitting way of communicating grace to human beings. How does this relate to Aquinas's definition of sacraments?

CHAPTER 6: JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

In Richard Cross' examination of the theologies of the sacraments of John Duns Scotus, he reveals that Scotus viewed sacraments as "signs of God's salvific activity" in the lives of believers and fascinatingly asserted that "the seven sacraments—baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, confession, unction, marriage, and ordination—correspond supernaturally to the seven requirements of natural life, individual and social: birth, nutrition, physical exercise, healing after illness, preparation for death, procreation, and the creation of spiritual leaders." The grace communicated to believers through the seven sacraments fosters the growth of Christian character in believers, evident in their growth in grace. Regarding the Eucharist, like his contemporary Aquinas, Scotus believed in transubstantiation, although there are complicated nuances with the concept of "real presence." He also asserted "that Christ somehow offers himself in the Eucharist."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Scotus's definition of sacraments, he describes them as efficacious. In what sense are the sacraments efficacious, according to Scotus?
2. Identify Scotus's main similarities and differences with Aquinas's sacramental causality of grace and Bonaventure's occasionalist view of the sacraments. What is meant by instrumental causality of the sacraments?
3. By Scotus's claims, what is the effect of the sacraments in the life of the believer?
4. Summarize Scotus's view of the Eucharist as it relates to transubstantiation. How does Scotus's view differ from Aquinas's views? In what way, according to Scotus, is Christ's body present in the Eucharist?

**CHAPTER 7:
THEOLOGIES OF SACRAMENTS IN THE REFORMATION AND
CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION**

Chapter 7 is a summary of Part II and surveys the era of the Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, which includes chapters on Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Menno Simons, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, and the Catholic Reform. In the overview chapter, Michael S. Horton recounts how the theologies of the sacraments in the Reformation era differed from those of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Salvation in the Protestant view means believers are “justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” This differed significantly from the Roman Catholic position in which “‘created’ grace is a substance infused into the sinner to bring spiritual and moral healing.” For the Reformers grace was not a created substance but God’s attitude or disposition of favor toward sinners. This dependency on grace alone involved both preaching as a means of grace in its own right and the divine activity that gives efficacy to Baptism and Communion. While they differed somewhat in their theologies of the sacraments, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Cranmer, and other Reformers were in agreement that the grace of God in Jesus Christ is presented in the Word preached and the sacrament administered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In which ways are the Lutheran and Reformed confessions similar in defining sacraments? How are they different?
2. Identify the main differences between the Lutheran view, the Reformed view, and the Catholic view of the Eucharist.
3. Who are the main voices speaking into the Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation? Describe the various positions they argue.

CHAPTER 8: MARTIN LUTHER

Robert Kolb examines Martin Luther's theology of the sacraments in chapter 8. He presents Luther's view that sacraments were a form of the Word that conveyed the forgiveness of sins, was instituted by Christ, and connected with an external sign—and as such were a powerful way for believers, many of whom were illiterate, to experience firsthand and personally the grace of God. He identified Baptism and Eucharist as sacraments, and occasionally Confession (Penance) as well, not as a separate sacrament, but as an extension of the sacrament of Baptism. As connected to Luther's "theology of the cross," by which believers are utterly dependent upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ, sacraments are a means by which believers can receive and be nourished by that grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the *ex opere operato* which theologians speak about as it relates to Luther's theology of the sacraments?
2. How does the Ockhamist school of thought contribute to Luther's theology of the sacraments?
3. Summarize Luther's doctrine of the sacrament of baptism.
4. In what three ways did Luther reject the ritualism and commercialization of the liturgy of the Lord's Supper?

**CHAPTER 9:
HULDRYCH ZWINGLI**

Bruce Gordon covers Huldrych Zwingli's theology of the sacraments. Zwingli viewed spirit and material as being utterly separate and therefore deemed it impossible for material objects to be conduits of spiritual blessing. He defined a sacrament as "a sign of a sacred thing, i.e., of grace that has been given." Sacraments are signs of the work of grace done by God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, not the means of that work of grace. Baptism is a sign of the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit and Eucharist a sign memorializing the redemptive death of Jesus Christ. While agreeing with Luther in his opposition to transubstantiation, Zwingli could not agree with him on the nature of Christ's presence in the sacraments.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it misleading to discuss Zwingli's "theology" of the sacraments?
2. In what ways does Zwingli differ from Luther as it relates to the presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper?
3. What is Zwingli's view on the nature of sacraments? To him, what is the only real sacrament?
4. Describe Zwingli's view of the sacrament of baptism and how his approach differed from that of Augustine.
5. How does Zwingli interpret Christ's words "this is my body" as it relates to the Lord's Supper? What is crucial to Zwingli's understanding of this sacrament?
6. State briefly in your own words the main issue in Zwingli's confrontation with Luther.
7. Identify several ways by which Zwingli's view of sacraments as primarily signs in the church have come to be visualized.

CHAPTER 10: MENNO SIMONS

Scot McKnight addresses the Anabaptist theology of the sacraments of Menno Simons in chapter 10. He sets out to demonstrate that Anabaptists' observance of the sacraments in their way took considerable courage because it could be life-threatening and lead to their martyrdom. Simons advocated personal conversion and regeneration versus simply participating in the institutional church, believers' Baptism versus infant Baptism, and all believers receiving both the bread and wine at Eucharist, versus only clergy receiving the wine. Baptism "accomplished nothing in sacramental terms" but was rather an act of obedience to Jesus's command and example. Eucharist in his view did not involve any "re-sacrificing" of Christ, nor did the bread and wine undergo transubstantiation into the Body and Blood of Christ—rather, Eucharist was an expression of the love of God for the church. In short the sacramental theology of Menno Simons and the Anabaptists was essentially non-sacramental.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief outline of the life of Menno Simons following McKnight's presentation of the theologian. To Simons, what did sacraments communicate?
2. Explain the meaning of Anabaptism.
3. Following McKnight's synopsis, trace in your own words Simons' theology of baptism.
4. In which two ways do the Anabaptists differ from the Catholics in their theology of the Eucharist? How does Menno Simons understand the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist?

**CHAPTER 11:
JOHN CALVIN**

In chapter 11, Randall C. Zachman presents the recurring connection and interplay between word and image in John Calvin's theology of the sacraments—that is, that both the Law and the Gospel are portrayed in a way that connects with the physical senses in the image of the sacraments. Sacraments for Calvin are connected to the self-manifestation of God in creation and in Christ as well as the self-revelation of Christ in word and sacrament. An intriguing aspect of Calvin's sacramental theology is his view that Christ initially gave himself through the “sacrament of the Law” and later gave himself through the “sacraments of the Gospel”—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the latter being a ladder ascending to heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. By which two ways does Calvin describe the efficacy of the sacraments?
2. Why is the self-manifestation of God important to understanding Calvin's theology of the sacraments? What does the self-manifestation of God involve?
3. How does Calvin draw an explicit distinction between the sacraments and Christ? Why does he make this distinction?
4. According to Calvin, “Christ reveals and offers himself not only in the Gospel that is proclaimed to the whole world, but also in the Law that was revealed only to Israel.” Describe Calvin's position on the sacraments of the Law.
5. State the ways that Calvin distinguishes between three kinds of sacraments of the Gospel. Identify the practices that Calvin considers sacraments and those that he does not consider sacraments.
6. Briefly describe the tension revealed in Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

**CHAPTER 12:
THOMAS CRANMER**

Through the writing of Ashley Null, chapter 12 examines the sacramental theology of the leading figure of the English Reformation, Thomas Cranmer. According to medieval Scholasticism, Jesus had established the church as the intermediary between God and his people. The bishops served as the administrators of saving apostolic spiritual power, and the sacraments were the effective means of dispensing that heavenly grace to the people. However, during the 1530s Thomas Cranmer chose to embrace justification by faith, which completely rejected that narrative. He believed that Jesus had come to preach a saving message, which had supernatural power to create a community linking God to his elect by inspiring trust in his divine promises. The question that would occupy Cranmer for the remainder of his life was how exactly the sacraments of the church fit into this new narrative.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Cranmer's understanding of justification by faith.
2. To Cranmer, what constitutes a sacrament? How did he come about this understanding of sacraments?
3. According to Cranmer, who is regenerated by baptism? What about communion?
4. Cranmer believed that the Incarnate Word made union with Christ possible. How does this belief impact the role of the sacraments?
5. Compare and contrast Cranmer's Christology with that of Cyril of Alexandria.

**CHAPTER 13:
THE CATHOLIC REFORM**

Donald S. Prudlo describes in chapter 13 the theologies of the sacraments as expressed in the Council of Trent (1545–63) and the subsequent “Catholic Reform.” Sacraments were reaffirmed as “channels of grace” available to believers through the medium of material things like bread, wine, and oil. Moreover, the validity of the seven sacraments—Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, Confession (Penance), and Extreme Unction—as instituted by Christ himself was also reaffirmed. While only Baptism and Eucharist are explicitly instituted by Christ in Scripture, church history and leadership (primarily bishops) were cited as advocating that the other five sacraments were ultimately also instituted by Christ. IN addition, Prudlo addresses in this chapter how the sacramental theology that emerged from the Council of Trent made an impact on Catholic architecture, music, and devotional life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify the various changes to the Roman Catholic Church that are often associated with the Catholic Counter-Reformation.
2. Explain the purpose of the Council of Trent and state its core reaffirmation for the Catholic Church.
3. According to the Catholic Church, which sacraments are considered to have been instituted by Christ himself?
4. How does the Catholic Eucharist differ from Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli’s view of the Lord’s Supper? Explain the Catholic doctrine of the Mass and the result of the Council of Trent concerning the Mass.
5. In what positive ways did the Council of Trent fix the Roman Catholic Church in terms of the doctrine of the sacraments?

CHAPTER 14: THEOLOGIES OF SACRAMENTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Chapter 14, written by James R. Gordon, introduces the reader to Part III of the book by focusing on the theologies of sacraments from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries, which covers John and Charles Wesley, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, Edward Schillebeeckx, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and feminist and womanist theologies. Gordon explores the relationship of sacraments to the ideas of conversion and regeneration, particularly in the ministries of eighteenth-century pastors Jonathan Edwards and John and Charles Wesley. Sacramental theology in the nineteenth century is addressed in relation to the First Vatican Council (1868), the Oxford Movement, and the writing of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Twentieth-century theologies of the sacraments are described in terms of what transpired at the Second Vatican Council (1962) and the 1982 document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* from the World Council of Churches, as well as the work of theologians Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Alexander Schmemmann. All these perspectives contribute to what is often emphasized in theologies of the sacraments in the twenty-first century, that “the things the church does in the liturgy, including the sacraments, *already implicitly contain* the things we believe about God and therefore should be a foundational starting point for thinking about who God is.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by “Modernity” as it relates to theology in the eighteenth through twenty-first centuries? What will be the result of one’s view of the sacraments, if not properly contextualized in the challenges of Modernity? Why?
2. Do the Christian sacraments play a causative role in an individual’s salvation? How was this question dealt with by Modernity in the eighteenth century?
3. Identify and describe the three main theological movements impacting the Christian view of the sacraments in the nineteenth century.
4. Why does Gordon make the claim that the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church made the most significant development in the sacraments in the twentieth century?
5. Briefly state how the work of Schmemmann is impacting the sacraments in the twenty-first century.

**CHAPTER 15:
JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY**

Chapter 15, written by Paul W. Chilcote, examines the theologies of the sacraments of the eighteenth-century brothers John and Charles Wesley. Based on the synergistic relationship between worship and theology, and combining the evangelical experience and sacramental grace, the Wesley brothers asserted that God in Christ initiates the work of grace in believers through Baptism and sustains it through Eucharist. Believers receive inward grace through the outward means of the sacraments. In their theological writings and hymns, the grace-focused sacramental theology of the Wesley brothers found vigorous and creative expression.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did the Wesley's theology and practice of sacraments emerge out of their view of the Christian life as an act of worship? Why or why not?
2. What characterized the Wesley revival, like nearly all other movements of renewal throughout church history?
3. List and explain the several critical doxological premises around which the Wesleys constructed their theology of the sacraments.
4. On which basis did the Wesleys define sacrament. What is the definition used by the Wesleys?
5. What five benefits of the sacrament of baptism did John Wesley identify in his *Treatise on Baptism*?
6. What does constant Communion refer to? Identify the five common objections made by Wesley against the practice of constant Communion. How do these objections differ with the position taken by the Wesleys on communion?

**CHAPTER 16:
FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER**

Paul T. Nimmo recounts the theology of the sacraments of the post- Enlightenment Reformed theologian and pastor Friedrich Schleiermacher in chapter 16. Rather than rooting his theologies of the sacraments in a “magical” or “empirical” approach, Schleiermacher advocated a “mystical” approach, grounded in “the religious affections of the Christian community” united in its redemption through Jesus Christ. Baptism and Eucharist are “actions which establish and preserve communion of life with Christ in the present day.” His approach to the theology of the sacraments was quite ecumenical, for while disagreeing with Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli he accepted their views as equally valid, rather than reasons for division in the church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. State the two important contextual considerations that shape Schleiermacher’s sacramental thinking.
2. What is the middle ground that Schleiermacher achieves as he seeks to describe the sacraments as neither “magical” nor “empirical”?
3. What does “essential and variable features” refer to? On what basis does Schleiermacher emphasize the constancy of the church and its preservation by these essential and variable features?
4. Explain Schleiermacher’s dual concept of the sacraments. How does he apply to baptism?
5. Describe Schleiermacher’s reflections on the Eucharist. Why does he place such emphasis on the role of community in communion? What is the power of the Eucharist according to Schleiermacher?

**CHAPTER 17:
KARL BARTH**

John Yocum traces Karl Barth's theology of the sacraments in chapter 17, especially regarding Baptism and Eucharist as addressed in Barth's magnum opus, *Church Dogmatics*. Sacraments along with preaching are the two primary ways the church proclaims Jesus Christ as the Word of God. Barth emphasizes sacraments as signs of the "secondary objectivity of God," signs of receiving the self-giving God. While linking Christian Baptism with the Baptism of Jesus, fascinatingly Barth eventually argues that Baptism is not an actual sacrament—and eventually Barth actually denies any sacrament except Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Barth's "general concept" of sacrament is equivalent to that of a sign. What two aspects of this sacramentality are important in Barth's treatment of sacraments in his first volume?
2. Describe Barth's insistence on the sacramental nature of knowledge of God as it relates to the "secondary objectivity" of God.
3. What is Barth's objection to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation?
4. Briefly state the important aspects of Barth's sacramental theology highlighted at the 1941 seminar with Hans Urs von Balthasar.
5. Contrast Barth's "radically new view" of baptism from his 1959-60 lecture with his view of baptism in the 1943 lecture.
6. Why is baptism, according to Barth, no longer a sacrament?

CHAPTER 18: EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX AND LOUIS-MARIE CHAUVET

Joseph C. Mudd argues in chapter 18 that Edward Schillebeeckx and Louis-Marie Chauvet formulate their theologies of sacraments to intentionally counter the negative influences of Neo-Scholasticism, which created too much separation between the natural and supernatural, theology and life. Schillebeeckx, building on his interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, emphasized that sacraments are instances of personal encounter grounded in the saving work of God in the incarnation and therefore proper to a distinctly human world. Chauvet describes this theology as “objectivist.” It was a theology concerned with the objective effects of sacraments in terms of the production of grace in the individual recipient. He proposes a theology of sacramentality grounded in contemporary explorations into the nature of language and culture. Schillebeeckx and Chauvet are two of the most innovative, and sometimes controversial, voices in Catholic sacramental theology in the past fifty years. They share a common concern that contemporary sacramental theologies take the concrete historicity of human subjects seriously rather than rely on abstract philosophical categories.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the impact that Neo-Scholasticism on sacramental theology. What was sacramental theology in the Neo-Scholastic mode primarily concerned with?
2. Compare and contrast Schillebeeckx and Chauvet’s understanding of the sacraments.
3. Describe Schillebeeckx’s Christology. Why, according to this theologian, is Christ the “sacrament of encounter” with God?
4. Explain Schillebeeckx’s view that the Church is a sacrament. What effect does the Church have on the salvation accomplished by Christ?
5. As it relates to ethics, what is the connection between the Church and the world? How does Schillebeeckx explain this?
6. In what does Chauvet ground his approach to sacraments? How is this different than Schillebeeckx’s approach?
7. What is the “Paschal mystery” and what part does it play in Chauvet’s Christology?
8. State Chauvet’s theory of “symbolic gift exchange.”

**CHAPTER 19:
FEMINISM AND WOMANISM**

Mary Veeneman investigates in chapter 19 feminist and womanist approaches to theologies of the sacraments in which sacraments are “events in the church in which God’s grace is made present to the community.” Citing the work of Susan Ross, Elizabeth Johnson, and others, she posits the need for theologies of the sacraments to be reworked in light of the experience of women, particularly regarding the sacraments of Ordination and Eucharist. Ordained clergy should relate the Eucharist to ministry to the poor and hungry. In addition, the patriarchal framework that undergirds male privilege in the Catholic Church has resulted in misunderstanding both the maleness of Jesus and the possible role of women to serve as ordained clergy. Ultimately reevaluating theologies of the sacraments from a feminist and womanist perspective is for the sake of empowering worship and furthering mission in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Barth’s “general concept” of sacrament is equivalent to that of a sign. What two aspects of this sacramentality are important in Barth’s treatment of sacraments in his first volume?
2. Describe Barth’s insistence on the sacramental nature of knowledge of God as it relates to the “secondary objectivity” of God.
3. What is Barth’s objection to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation?
4. Briefly state the important aspects of Barth’s sacramental theology highlighted at the 1941 seminar with Hans Urs von Balthasar.
5. Contrast Barth’s “radically new view” of baptism from his 1959-60 lecture with his view of baptism in the 1943 lecture.
6. Why is baptism, according to Barth, no longer a sacrament?

CHAPTER 20: LIBERATION THEOLOGY

In chapter 20, Mario I. Aguilar identifies theologies of sacraments in the context of liberation theology, rooted primarily in work among poor Christians in 1960s Latin America. In doing so he addresses the “first step” (“the experience of God through the poor and the marginalized”) and the “second step” (“the historical and theological developments that led to the beginnings of liberation theology as a reflection on Christian experience”). The seminal work in liberation theology developed by Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo is described, as is the impact of the 1968 Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellín. In addition, the work of Ernesto Cardenal, a Nicaraguan Catholic priest, poet, and politician, in viewing the Eucharist in connection to the prophetic work of Jesus Christ among the poor is examined—specifically in the context of celebrating Eucharist in the Nicaraguan peasant communities of the archipelago of Solentiname.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What led to the development of “liberation theology”?
2. Explain what is meant by “second step” within the theological method.
3. What role did Gutiérrez play in the development of liberation theology? What is the connection between his work and that of the Marxists?
4. According to liberation theology, how can “the poor” be understood as a sacramental presence of Christ?
5. What impact did the 1968 Conference of Bishops on Latin America have on the Catholic Church?
6. Summarize the role of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism under the influence of liberation theology.