Introduction: Context, History, Object

The Heideggerean cry to "overcome" metaphysics understood as "onto-theology" continues to reverberate throughout the continental world and beyond. Ever since Martin Heidegger's resurrection of the *Seinsfrage* and his subsequent turn to time and language as the horizon of Being, philosophers and theologians courageous—or perhaps naïve—enough to grapple with the Heideggerean corpus have been struggling to come to grips with the implications of Heidegger's claims. According to many commentators, this is a task that in the Catholic world has only just begun.

Broadly speaking, this book is about sacramental presence after the kind of postmodern narrative that draws on Heidegger for its main inspiration. More specifically, it is about the *ontology* of sacramental presence after Heidegger, both in its "ecclesial" and "primordial" contexts. It is an examination of the interface between sacramental theology and metaphysics, a question thematized in light of Heidegger's *destruktion* of metaphysics, and made explicit in relation to Christian theology through the thought of the two contemporary thinkers that we have chosen to enter into dialogue with: the prominent "postmodern" sacramental theologian, retired professor Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Leuven professor Lieven Boeve, a "next generation" theologian who more systematically applies postmodern insights to the Christian narrative.

In a nutshell, the respective approaches of Chauvet and Boeve can perhaps be summarized most effectively in Derridean terms. Jacques Derrida famously claimed that "there is nothing outside the text." Applied to Chauvet and Boeve's thought, this would read, "there is no Revelation outside the text." This is a way of explaining their conviction that there is no encounter with Jesus Christ, no vision of faith that is supported or legitimated by any kind of capital *T*, timeless, metaphysical truth that somehow escapes the temporal and linguistic mode of *in-der-Welt-sein* typical of the human being as *Dasein*. Both Chauvet and Boeve therefore broadly accept

postmodernism as a Lyotardian "condition" of rational thought: a placing of limits, the deferral or suspension of the drive to know absolutely. Both embrace Heidegger's fundamental conviction that metaphysics represents a bankrupt onto-theological hermeneutics. And both therefore conceive the task of Christian thinking in generally "postmodern" terms, as an exercise in post-Heideggerean hermeneutics. Our task is thus to consider Christian narrativity in general, and sacramental presence in particular, "after Heidegger." What follows in this introduction is a more systematic outlining of what we intend to cover in this book.

"Sacramental presence" is something of a hermeneutical term. The term is undeniably broad and ambiguous, although at its heart it tends to evoke the image of the seven sacraments and the communication of grace there. Consonant with this first evocation, for one theologian it may elicit classical ontological terms related to the economy of grace, such as "sign," "cause," "causality," "channel," or "efficacy." For another theologian, it may fit most comfortably with terms such as "mystery," "liturgy," or "symbolism." For another, it may evoke more contemporary anthropological terms, such as "symbol," "ritual," "language," "performance," or "mediation." For still another, it may prompt words such as "nuptiality," "gift of self," "body," "love," etc. For those not drawn immediately to the ecclesial dimension of grace, the term may invoke a more cosmological image. It may simply refer to the strongly experienced sense of otherness in the experience of cosmological beauty. Or, more philosophically, it may arouse a more reflective and deductive conviction that all that *is* participates in a greater reality, and in that sense, is "sacramental" inasmuch as it points us to and/or participates in this said reality.

To somehow bring these diverse intuitions about the meaning of sacramental presence together, one could begin by considering the two separate words in the phrase. First, the word "sacramental" attests to the supernatural and ecclesial reality of the phrase. It evokes "sacrament" (*sacramentum*), classically defined as "*signum sacro sanctum efficax gratiae*,"[1] administered by and through the Church, through which is "caused" or communicated saving grace[2] made possible by the power of Christ's passion.[3] Etymologically, "sacrament" developed from the Greek word *mysterion* (μυστήριον), a word borrowed from pagan mystery cults[4] that has roots in the Old Testa-

1. "A sacrosanct sign producing grace."

2. *ST* III q. 62, a. 1.

3. Ibid., q. 62, a. 5.

4. Van Roo, *Christian Sacrament*, 31–33; Ratzinger, "On the Meaning of Sacrament," 29.

ment[5] and that refers to a secret or an oath among the initiated: "*mysterion* came to be used for religious initiations whose secret must be kept; it was forbidden, in fact, for the meaning of the rite to be disclosed to the non-initiate."[6] In an article written well before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger points out that in its Old Testament usage, "*mysterion* means simply: something hidden."[7] He goes on to note that in the later writings of the Old Testament (Daniel, Wisdom, Sirach, Tobias, Judith, Maccabees 2) *mysterion* attested to a further revelation "veiled beneath symbols" that was in an important sense associated with ultimate reality. For Ratzinger, New Testament usage of *mysterion* was characterized by its injection with specifically Christian content, namely, it's linking to the mystery of the crucified Christ: the *Christian mysterion* "sweeps aside all the 'mysteries' because it delivers what they promise but do not have: entry into the innermost thinking of God, which at the same time finds the innermost foundation of the world and of man."[8] *Mysterion* thus came to refer to the specific doctrinal reality attested to by faith, and in this sense, Jean Borella highlights the specificity of the term in its Christian usage.[9] But Ratzinger also points us to its typological continuity with the Torah, emphasizing how the Christian usage of

5. Jud 2:2; Wis 2:22; Dan 2:27. See also John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 489, no. 88 (93:5). Numbers in parentheses in my references to *Man and Woman* refer to John Paul II's own headings, as included in the Michael Waldstein translation of the text.

6. Piault, *What Is a Sacrament?*, 41. In the parlance of its pagan background, *Mysterion* expressed knowledge of a path to wisdom or an extra-worldly meaning outside of common experience that only those "in the know" could access, a reference to a reality that was more generally referred to as *gnosis*. While *gnosis* today generates mainly negative connotations thanks to its linkage to the pejorative meaning evoked by the term "Gnosticism," Jean Borella argues that very early on *gnosis* was appropriated by patristic writers who sensed that it well articulated the uniqueness and irreducibility of the mystery attested by Christianity, where "true knowledge is also *the* knowledge par excellence, that unique knowledge which, for this reason alone, must have reserved for it the term *gnosis* . . ." Borella, *Secret of the Christian Way*, 10.

7. Ratzinger, "On the Meaning of Sacrament," 29.

8. Ibid., 30.

9. Borella, *Guénonian Esoterism and Christian Mystery*, 227–28. "Although Paul uses *mysterion* to name that knowledge, received by revelation, of the transcendent and operative reality of Christ, he employs no other term from the vocabulary of pagan mysteries. We find in him neither *telete* nor *muesis* (initiation), neither *telesmenos* nor *mustes* (initiate), nor *hierophantes* (initiator), nor *epopteia* (contemplation). In short, outside of *mysterion*, the ritual and liturgical terminology of the mystery cults is absent in St Paul, as elsewhere in the body of the New Testament" (228). For St. Paul, the "*mysterion* is the eternal counsel of God which is hidden from the world but eschatologically fulfilled in the cross of the Lord of glory and which carries with it the glorification of believers." Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary*, 617.

the word in light of the all-encompassing mystery of Christ gathers up and fulfills Jewish understandings of word, historical events, and creation, rather than simply standing alone[10] All of these realities, understood typologically in the light of Christ, are understood to be signifiers that collaboratively point to His mystery.

Ratzinger's account of the early Church's fundamental notion of sacrament, then, is quite broad: there are "word sacraments, event sacraments, and creation sacraments," all of which, read typologically, refer to the mystery fulfilled in Christ. *Mysterion* is thus the inchoate totality of word, event, and creation that Christ recapitulates. The Christian sacraments are in this sense neither Hebrew nor Greek, but Christian. They signify the concrete saving action of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. But they do so, not as mere recollecting markers of a past event, but as dynamic events in which Christ's work is communicated within the fabric of time to present-day believers. Ratzinger argues that this was brought on by deepening awareness that the "New Testament rites are no longer simply 'sacraments of the future,' outlines of what is coming; rather, they are descriptions of the present, expression and fruit of the life, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ that have occurred."[11] In other words, the sacraments, derived from and linked to the unrepeatable historical action of Christ, come to be seen as actually participating in and communicating this action through the mediation of the Church.

The Latin term *sacramentum*, with its various (admittedly secular) connotations of "initiation into a new form of life," "unreserved commitment," and "faithful service even at the risk of death,"[12] would eventually come to be seen as a supplementation of this new Christological understanding of *mysterion* in the Christian economy of salvation.[13] In this context, St. John Paul II points to St. Augustine's role in the development of "sacrament," how he underlined that "sacraments are sacred signs, that they have in themselves

10. Ratzinger, "On the Meaning of Sacrament", 31. And in this sense, it forbids us from seeing in the Christian adoption of *mysterion* an extra-biblical, Hellenistic interpolation.

11. Ibid., 32.

12. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 490, no. 88 (93:5).

13. "The military sacrament's rich set of implications was converted readily to a Latin Christian self-understanding. Through the Christian sacrament, one enters upon a new set of relations and responsibilities with Christ, with one's fellow Christians, and with the enemies of Christ." Van Slyke, "*Sacramentum*," 205. Van Slyke points out that one of these implications was the conviction that the military sacrament, once uttered, "clearly implied a weighty change in the status of the individual" (173). This can be verified in the fact that slaves were forbidden to utter the oath because once uttered it meant a whole new privileged identity.

a likeness with what they signify and that they confer what they signify."[14] *Sacramentum* would express this "visibility" of the mystery in Christ[15] and would provide a necessary distancing from any pagan connotations implied with the use of *mysterion*.[16] *Sacramentum* does not mean a loss of the esoterism and mystery implied by *mysterion*,[17] but represents a supplementary development in relation to the former's "concrete realization through the seven fountains of grace, today called the sacraments of the Church."[18] Thus, in the most general terms, the first word in the phrase "sacramental presence" attests to the sacramental cast of salvation history and creation, "the realization of the eternal divine plan for the salvation of humanity" in the death and passion of Jesus Christ, and the way the grace of this divine action is made operative through the sacraments of the Church.

The second word in the phrase introduces us more thematically to questions about the way that Christ is present in the sacramental reality attested to by *mysterion* and *sacramentum* and the way that grace is communicated. "Presence" derives from the Latin *præsentia*, which has various connotations of presence, presence of mind, effect, power. In this, it is an undeniably generic term that underlies more specific explanations of the sacramental mystery. When paired with "sacramental," presence could be said to merely refer to the way in which the reality attested to by *mysterion* and *sacramentum* makes itself known to us, enters our horizon, and in some sense makes itself "seen." Presence naturally seems a comfortable fit with "sacramental" because it is of the essence of sacramentality to pertain to that which is visible and inasmuch as it underlies the Church's conviction that the reality attested to by *mysterion* and *sacramentum* is substantial or efficacious; that when the correct form and matter are in place, "something happens" over and above common reality which instantiates a new reality. There is thus an economy of visibility via corporeal mediation and a reality attested to and instantiated through this reality that is aptly named by the term "presence."

14. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 490, no. 88 (93:5).

15. "In later usage the term *sacramentum* emphasizes the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation which was indicated by the term *mysterium*." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 774.

16. Van Slyke cites Christine Mohrmann's conviction "that the earliest Christians preferred *sacramentum* to *mysterium* precisely because the former was free of the pagan cultic connotations that plagued the latter." Van Slyke, "*Sacramentum*," 204. See Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens texts chrétiens."

17. Borella, *Guénonian Esoterism and Christian Mystery*, 301, 303.

18. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 490, no. 88 (93:5).

The most well-known and exalted form of presence that first comes to mind is the doctrine of the so-called *realis præsentia* of Christ in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine. What is referred to here is clearly the culmination of the sacramental economy, insofar as what is attested to in eucharistic presence is "*the whole Christ . . . truly, really, and substantially contained*."[19] This profound instantiation of presence stands as the paradigm of what could be called properly "*ecclesial presence*." By this phrase we simply mean the kind of sacramental presence operative in a narrow sense in relation to *mysterion* and *sacramentum*—and therefore the mediation of the Church—specifically, that of the seven sacraments. Ecclesial presence names a presence that transcends and exceeds any and all "common" notions of presence in experience. This is the case, whether one is referring to the "real presence" in the Eucharist, where one can speak of an intimate and personal presence through which grace is imparted, or a more secondary sense in which grace is communicated in the form of the ritual and the recipient itself, that is, as the action of words and the pouring of water (*sacramentum tantum*) in baptism impart a "character" to the soul of the recipient (*res et sacramentum*), thereby effecting the interior justification of the sinner (*res tantum*).[20] In baptism, (as in the remaining five sacraments) there is therefore no direct or personal reception of the personal presence of Christ. In such secondary instances, what is present is not the fullness of the presence of Christ himself, but his mediated presence through the effects of the actions of the agent administering the sacrament and the recipient receiving them. Our point is that although there is clearly a more unique presence involved in the Eucharist, the other six sacraments exist in the same class inasmuch as they admit access to a sphere of reality over and above common experience by virtue of their principal agent, Christ, and the secondary or instrumental agents.[21]

Alongside the ecclesiality of presence is a kind of presence that has sometimes been spoken of in terms of "general sacramentality" or the "sacramental principle" which can be summed up with the phrase "*primordial presence*." This is the assertion that cosmological and symbolic reality is capable of signifying a truth beyond the immanent *telos* of its own natural

19. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1374.

20. Dauphinais, "Christ and the Metaphysics of Baptism," 17.

21. *ST* III q. 64, a. 1: "There are two ways of producing an effect: first, as a principal agent; second, as an instrument. In the former way the interior sacramental effect is the work of God alone . . . . In the second way, however, the interior sacramental effect can be the work of man so far as he works as a minister. For a minister is of the nature of an instrument, since the action of both is applied to something extrinsic, while the interior effect is produced through the power of the principal agent, which is God."

essence; that created forms can shine forth a splendor that speaks of and carries the glory of God.[22] This is simply the intuition of a natural theology that sees creation as the product of an exemplary causation that thereby contains the image or trace of the Creator as an imprint on it. St. Thomas could speak of created forms being an inchoate sign of God, insofar as they are effects of this causation.[23] St. Bonaventure referred to creation as a mirror through which God could be seen in his traces. "Taking perceptible things as a mirror, we see God THROUGH them—through his traces, so to speak; but we also see Him IN them, as He is there by His essence, power, and presence."[24]

The implication of this was clear for sacramental theology. For it implies that the reality attested to by *mysterion* and *sacramentum* and realized through what we have called ecclesial presence does not name something that is operative extrinsically outside of space and time to which the believer is somehow magically transported. Rather, "sacrament" or "sacramentality" points us to a presence that in some sense enters the primordial symbolism of our world, becomes a part of it, and is communicated through it.[25] The sacrament therefore "works" within the "things"—the forms and symbolisms—of the natural and human world.[26] The prime example of this is in the hypostatic union, where God becomes *flesh* and unites himself with the Church. Underwriting this event is the belief that there is something in the natural and human forms of the world that make specific things in them apt vehicles to carry, contain, signify, and "cause" the presence of Christ, and therefore, communicate grace. "The Incarnation, therefore, does not lead

22. See, for example, Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*.

23. Rudi A. te Velde notes that "the form of the created effect does indeed express something of God; it contains a certain 'likeness' of God; not a perfect likeness through which we can see the divine essence in itself, but nevertheless a likeness in which the cause is present in an intelligible manner." Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 77. Thus, on the basis of this principle, Thomas could say that "creatures of themselves do not withdraw us from God, but lead us to Him; for *the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made* (Rom. 1.20)." *ST* q. 65, a. 1, ad. 3.

24. Bonaventure, *Mystical Opuscula*, 18.

25. "The representation of God does not mean the substitution for the one who is absent (or, still more, a replacement), but indicates the real, and not only the imaginary or intellectual, making present of the one who in and of himself cannot be visible in our human dimension." Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 13. And this is why Matthew Levering can describe transubstantiation as "a bodily change whose structure still belongs recognizably within the basic patterns in which we locate 'bodily changes.'" Levering, *Sacrifice and Community,* 148. This helps to ground Levering's rejection of more other-worldly or eschatological theories of eucharistic presence such as Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov's theory of transmutation.

26. See Sherry, "The Sacramentality of Things."

to the disappearance of natural sacredness, but to its metamorphosis. This sacredness, in spite of all its deficiencies and even its distortions, remains in man the stepping-stone to the Incarnation."[27] In this way, one can thus speak of a "primordial" presence in things themselves that the properly "ecclesial" presence of Christ in the seven sacraments in some sense participates or passes through. To speak of sacramental presence is not simply to speak of the extrinsic, nominal, isolated presence of Christ, but to speak of a mode and dynamic of presence that is intrinsically related to and passes by way of the media of the created order.

In the past fifty years or so, the relationship between primordial and ecclesial presence has been conceived much more fluidly. Where the classical or "premodern" approach to presence took a more top-down approach and looked at the sacraments from the divine pole of the hypostatic union, the period following the Second Vatican Council saw a greater emphasis on the human pole, stressing the sacramentality of the world through an interpretation that emphasized a fundamental correlation between primordial and ecclesial presence that could begin in the former, and that could in a certain sense be efficacious for those outside of the institutional Church. A shift takes place here, from a narrower emphasis on the seven sacraments as the only source of grace, to a conviction of an inchoate experience of grace in primordial presence, understood to be guaranteed by the universal, all-encompassing nature of Christ-as-sacrament and Church-as-sacrament as the fulfillment of all natural symbolism.[28] Since the Council, there has therefore been a distinct focus on sacramental presence in the widest possible context, a focus that has birthed a markedly anthropological approach to presence, whether this be via historical, linguistic, symbolical, or phenomenological constructions. More recently, however, there has been another shift from this "modern" period, to a "postmodern" approach that calls into question the strategy of correlating primordial presence with ecclesial presence and proposes a dramatic re-reading of presence that attempts to overcome the reading of presence in both the classical and modern periods. It is at this point that we take up more directly the theme of this book.

27. Bouyer, *Rite and Man*, 11. Bouyer stands within a class of twentieth-century thinkers who made it their task to show the intrinsic connection between human symbolizing and the sacraments, Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx being foremost among these.

28. Karl Rahner is an important figure here. See especially *Spirit in the World* and *Hearers of the Word*.

Main Objective and Narrative

Our general object is to consider the ontological narrative that underwrites and provides the hermeneutic for primordial and ecclesial presence, what one might call the "ontology" of sacramental presence. For if the dynamic of sacramental presence is of its essence a complex interrelation between the event of Christ and the created forms of this world, as we have above suggested, then it stands to reason that shifts in ontological discourse will dramatically affect the understanding of sacramental presence. This, in a nutshell, is our working thesis: that the conceptual scaffolding underwriting the complex dynamic of sacramental presence is a key factor in how the latter is perceived and understood, and further, in how the very shape and figure of faith is conceived. Specifically, we will look at and evaluate the effect that the so-called "overcoming" of metaphysics has had on both the primordial and ecclesial dimensions of presence through the respective theologies of French theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet and Dutch theologian Lieven Boeve, theologies deliberately patterned on what has come to be called "postmodernism." In what follows here, we will expand this thesis with more determinate content related to this postmodernism and these two thinkers.

The famous German philosopher Martin Heidegger is the central figure behind the kind of postmodernism that Chauvet and Boeve employ to construct their theologies; hence the title of this book. His powerful genealogy asserts that Being has been forgotten by Western metaphysics, occluded by what he calls onto-theology:[29] a false ontology, deduced from the purported essences of beings, and held together by recourse to the appeal to a notion of God as *causa sui* as its guarantor. For Heidegger, this fatal combination of the "onto" and the "theo" inaugurates a kind of metaphysical thinking that does violence to the historicity and temporality of existence. The essence of things and persons is defined outside of their given phenomenality and historicity by an ontological fiction superimposed extrinsically, that simply excludes the phenomenological and historical dimensions. The result of this is that "the whole history of metaphysics has refused to abide the unknowable."[30]

29. "Overcoming" metaphysics as onto-theology has become its own philosophical and theological industry. For a small and diverse sampling of this theme in contemporary scholarship, see Westphal, "Overcoming Onto-theology"; Sweeney, "Seeing Double"; Zabala, "Pharmakons of Onto-Theology"; McCumber, *Metaphysics and Oppression*; Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings?*; Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*; Thomson, "Ontotheology?"

30. Rubenstein, "Dionysius, Derrida, and the Critique of 'Onto-Theology,'" 729.

It is this genealogy that thus underwrites an alleged bankrupt, bastard form of ontological presence that has then ostensibly become the basis for an equally bankrupt, bastard form of primordial and ecclesial presence in sacramental theology. Following Heidegger, Chauvet, Boeve, and others claim that an onto-theological form of presence has imposed itself upon the narrative structure of the Christian faith and thus determined its contents onto-theologically. In relation to sacramental theology it is claimed that the metaphysical structure upon which classical sacramental theology is thought to be built is in fact more reliant on onto-theological presence then it is on an authentically Christian notion of presence. For example, Graham Ward explains this onto-theological form of presence as a co-opting of the analogical structure of sacramental discourse by a univocal language instantiated in the Nominalism of Scotus and Ockham, where the "real" is emphasized as the visible in a spatial location.[31] This could be described as a collapse of any "layering" of reality, such that essences are no longer symbolic referents more constituted by *relation* than *substance*. The collapse of an analogical imagination helps to usher in the secular order and therefore a secular metaphysics, based on the real as the visible. This process is explained by Catherine Pickstock with the word "spatialization"—"[w]ithout eternity, space must be made absolute and the uncertainty of time's source and end must be suppressed"[32]—and inaugurates the distinct mode of presence in modernity that postmodernism will undertake to deconstruct.

Far from being a merely academic or superficial concern, Ward believes that the very language of presence used by the Church in sacramental theology is complicit with the kind of presence espoused by this modern paradigm. He notes that Christian theologians such as Augustine and Thomas in fact never used the Latin *præsentia* as a precise description of sacramental reality, and Ward suggests that this is because they understood that linking sacrament to the present risks fetishizing the spatial "now," thereby obscuring the eschatological destination of the sacrament.[33] Sacraments were in this sense stressed as the mediating middle of the temporal and eternal. At least in some sense echoing Henri de Lubac's concerns voiced in the mid-twentieth century,[34] Ward sees the post-medieval rise of the language of *præsentia* as indicative of the breakdown of analogy and the subsequent drive to prove and rationally safeguard the efficacy of the

31. Ward, "Church as Erotic Community," 172–77.

32. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 62.

33. Ward, "Church as Erotic Community," 172–75. Similarly, Jean-Yves Lacoste suggests that Thomas avoided speaking of "presence" on the grounds that it "would bind the Body Eucharistic in place." Lacoste, "Presence and Parousia," 395.

34. See Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*.

sacraments by secular categories. This led to a fatal linking of *realis* and *præsentia* to describe the mystery of the Eucharist. The danger of this linkage, for Ward, is that it fosters "an idolatry of the visible, a reification, a commodification quite at odds with the understanding of the creation and the sacrament in Augustine and Aquinas."[35]

Similarly, André Haquin criticizes the customary approach to sacramental presence in the *De Sacramentis in genere* mode of presenting sacraments, where presence is effectively hardened within a closed, "architectural" system.[36] Here, Haquin suggests that anti-Protestant polemics provoked an exaggerated emphasis on the sacraments' institutional and visible aspects, as well as their efficacy and relation to individual salvation.[37] He also notes a fixation on the validity of the sacrament, drawing attention to how this fostered an attitude of "minimum requirement" (e.g., what is the least that needs to be accomplished for a sacrament to be valid?), the effects of which "obscured the dimension of gratuity" from the sacraments. Further, he points to how causality was degraded to the point that it came to be understood mechanically, as "a force that produces its effect in an inescapable way."

What we have called "postmodernism" attempts to overcome the notion of presence outlined above. In the context of sacramental theology, postmodern insights are often used in an effort to outwit or reinterpret modes of *sacramental* presence thought to be complicit in the false ontology of the onto-theological tradition. But this is not to say that there is consensus about *exactly* how this idolatrous kind of presence arose, what exactly it is, and therefore about what the solution for its overcoming just might be. There are many divergent and crisscrossing narratives and genealogies here. For example, Ward eschews a Heideggerean genealogy insofar as he does not understand the problem to be with the "onto" or the "theo" themselves, but with their instantiation in modernity's reification of space and time. Thus, he espouses a rehabilitated Christian metaphysics built on the principle of analogy as a way of overcoming spatialized presence. By contrast, Chauvet and Boeve follow Heidegger more closely in seeing the problem of presence as linked specifically to an onto-theology in which Thomas in particular is implicated.[38] Their take on what constitutes the overcom-

35. Ward, "Church as Erotic Community," 177.

36. Haquin, "Vers une théologie fondamentale des sacraments," 28. Translation is mine.

37. Ibid, 29.

38. Speaking of postmodern theology in general, Bernhard D. Blankenhorn summarizes the implication of this kind of intuition: "The Church Fathers, scholastics, and contemporary theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger (in

ing of false presence is thus far more wholesale than someone like Ward, featuring an overcoming of metaphysics itself and a return to a symbolic and linguistic phenomenology thought to belong to a more authentically Christian heritage. In Boeve, this anti-metaphysical impulse will culminate in a wholesale rejection of the notion of Christianity as a privileged "master narrative," whether this is conceived in classical or modern terms.

By virtue of their embrace of the Heideggerean genealogy, Chauvet and Boeve stand as proponents of a new vision of faith. By embracing certain key ideas of this genealogy, they try to instigate what could be called a postmodern turn in Christian theology by applying these ideas to Christian narrativity in general, and its sacramental theology in particular. It will be our specific task in the first part of this book to 1) give account of the significant moments that have led us to the postmodern milieu, showing its relation to the milieu that preceded it; 2) understand Chauvet and Boeve's relation to this milieu, in particular, their relation to Heidegger; 3) disclose their subsequent understanding of the ontological foundation and form of the Christian narrative; and 4) make clear how the positions taken up above colors their understanding of sacramental presence, both "primordial" and "ecclesial." The second half of this book will consider 1) further developments and effects of Chauvet and Boeve's theorizing in the territory of contemporary sacramental theology, and 2) a critical engagement with their theses via a confrontation with the paradigm of Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Themes and Figures

As we have already suggested, the above task, far from locking us in the intramural world of sacramental specialists, will take us much further afield into the very foundations of discourse on presence, into the realm of metaphysics and theology proper. However, our intention is not to thereby simply leave the intramural concerns of the world of sacramental theology behind. We want rather to attain insight into their fuller disclosure. In the very first paragraph of this introduction, we noted the broad range of intuitions about what sacramental presence refers to, from sign to cause, ritual to liturgy, etc. On the one hand, there can be no question that there is room

his personal theology) are thus critiqued for having violated the mystery of God by reducing him to a being or first cause, for having misunderstood being as presence, or for having interpreted the sacraments according to a human model of mechanistic production, all the while ignoring the human being's profoundly corporeal and historical nature in the attempt to bypass the mediation of culture." Blankenhorn, "Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments," 256.

within the complex dynamic of sacramentality to accommodate a multitude of perspectives and insights. On the other, we need to see if there is a unifying thread that somehow ties all of these discrete intuitions together. Otherwise, there is danger of one perspective occluding others and claiming too much for itself, or of one's hermeneutic being too restrictive or ideological. A concern of this thesis, therefore, will be to always show the concrete effect that the infrastructural level has on sacramental theology, with an eye to discerning the latter's unifying principle.

The title of this book—*Sacramental Presence after Heidegger*—indicates the central place Heidegger will have in our discussion. We suggest that he stands as *the* central figure behind so-called postmodern sacramental theology.[39] And generally speaking, there is consensus that Heidegger—love him or hate him—should be taken seriously by Catholic theology, for as Fergus Kerr points out, "Catholic philosophers and theologians in mainland European traditions now take for granted Heidegger's history of Western philosophy as a history of 'forgetfulness of being.'"[40] This does not mean, however, that this will be a specialist dissertation about Heidegger. We are not intent on any exercise of *Heideggerese*, nor are we pursuing a definitive statement about the shape and figure of his complex array of ideas. Rather, our interest in Heidegger stems from the way in which his ideas are made productive by other thinkers; in this case, how Chauvet and Boeve make them productive in relation the questions being considered in this book. In this, our conversation with Heidegger will be largely a mediated one; a critical discussion of how he is interpreted by Christian theologians, and the implication of these interpretations for a theology of presence.[41]

Another provoking figure in this book must be St. Thomas Aquinas, though for similar reasons, he is not a direct object of study here. Clearly,

39. Kenan B. Osborne argues that Rahner's notion of sacrament and symbol is strongly influenced by Heidegger. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, 37. He also suggests a Heideggerean link from Rahner to Edward Kilmartin. Heidegger is a substantive figure in Chauvet's sacramental theology, as we will see, and also in that of Jean-Luc Marion. See Power, "Postmodern Approaches." He is also prominent in the sacramental theology of Ghislain Lafont. See Blaylock, "Ghislain Lafont and Sacramental Theology." Blankenhorn lists Osborne, David Power, and Glen P. Ambrose as three American theologians influenced by Heidegger. Blankenhorn, "Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments," 256.

40. Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 86. Just a few examples of others who reference Heidegger as an important figure in relation to theology in general are von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 5:449–50; Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 240; Williams, "Heidegger and the Theologians," 258; Hankey, "Theoria versus Poesis," 387; Rowland, *Benedict XVI*, 1.

41. Of course, this task cannot prescind from taking an at least implicit position in relation to Heidegger's identity. But this implicit position will only be made thematic indirectly.

however, he in some way stands behind nearly everything that is said in sacramental theology (and in metaphysics and theology in general, for that matter), and will therefore be another important conversation partner in this thesis. Thomas was instrumental in codifying and clarifying key aspects of the sacraments' operation, especially in providing an explanation of the efficacious operation of the sacraments through an Aristotelian-inspired (but highly original) recourse to causal categories, showing how grace is not merely an extrinsic or dispositive act of God outside of the media of the sacraments, but is "channeled" in and through them. Using the notion of principal and secondary (or instrumental[42]) causality (themselves derived from his general metaphysics, which we will encounter later), Thomas could argue that because the latter was "moved" by the former, one could thereby speak of grace being actually "caused" by and "contained" in the operation of the sacrament.[43] Historically, this has been considered as one of Thomas' lasting and important achievements. Bernhard D. Blankenhorn applauds the way that Thomas' sacramentology is thereby able to do full justice to the hypostatic union, by showing how the sacraments correspond to a genuine efficacy of Christ's human body. The sacraments are not merely the external, dispositive, or nominal occasion of grace, whether this is by way of merit, satisfaction, or exemplarity, but correspond to the "divine and direct salutary efficacy" of Jesus' human actions.[44] Even a Baptist theologian sees value in Thomas' principle of causality. After noting the common Protestant objection to sacramental causality as fostering the impression that grace is somehow at our disposal, John E. Colwell asserts that Thomas himself is "wholly innocent of this distortion; his insistence that God alone is the efficient cause of grace in the sacrament preserves him from this failing by maintaining the freedom of God within the sacrament, by maintaining grace as grace."[45]

In more recent years, however, the common Protestant objection noted above has gained more traction, and not just in Protestant circles. The effects of not only Heidegger, but also the famous Barthian criticism of analogy and causality[46] have reverberated throughout the Catholic world,

42. "In Scholastic theory, an instrumental cause is a subordinate efficient cause." Walsh, "Divine and the Human," 336.

43. *ST* III q. 62, a. 1. Van Roo posits that "the instrumental causality of the sacraments is simply part of the mystery of divine-human symbolizing. God is acting in and through them. They really play a part, and the gifts which God gives through them are most real." Van Roo, *Christian Sacrament*, 189.

44. Blankenhorn, "Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments," 276.

45. Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, 9.

46. See Spencer, "Causality and the *Analogia entis*."

and caused many to question the adequacy of Scholastic categories for describing the efficacy of the sacraments. At the theoretical level, this is expressed as concern that the general analogical structure of Thomas' ontology binds God to a causal scheme that is actually based on our own idolatry.[47] In sacramental theology, this leads to a mechanization of presence, and the impression that in the sacraments God is put under our control. Piault sees this mentality as the product of the growing separation of the categories of sign and cause, where a forgetfulness of the mystery represented by the sign led to a excessive emphasis on "practical working of the rite . . ."[48] When this happens, "a pragmatic element enters: a sacrament *causes* grace, it will then be emphasized, and its power of enabling us to participate in the mystery of Christ which it signifies will be lost from sight." While Piault and Colwell read this as a distortion of Thomistic theology, Chauvet and Boeve will be far less forgiving, seeing in the very essence of causality the ineliminable workings of a desire that seeks to define and control the very essence of God and grace. They will thereby seek a reinterpretation of some of the key elements of Thomas' theology in order to accommodate a more "symbolic" or "mediated" approached to the sacraments. Thomas therefore becomes an important conversation partner in this book.

Karl Rahner is also an important background figure of this thesis, and to a lesser extent, Edward Schillebeeckx. Rahner has been *the* name in the recent decades of sacramental theology, being especially associated with its development within the parameters of a general anthropology that grounds Revelation in the *a priori* categories of transcendentality, specifically, in the supernatural existential[49] via the mediation of consciousness. This grounds his notion of *Realsymbol*, which in turn supports his shift to the symbolic, formal dimension of sacramentality as a way to keep in check the instrumental causality and the efficient causality that stands behind it.[50] The efficacy of the sacraments is for Rahner an intrinsic, symbolic one, based on the paradigmatic symbolism of Christ and the Church, as the culmination of *Realsymbol*.[51] Similarly, Schillebeeckx sought to show the intrinsic

47. See Marion, *God Without Being*.

48. Piault, *What Is a Sacrament?*, 12.

49. "Rahner conceives of the existential as a moment constitutive of transcendental subjectivity (though not participating in its 'essence'), anticipating grace not only formally, but materially." Ouellet, "Paradox and/or Supernatural Existential," 268.

50. See Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol." See also Fields, *Being as Symbol*, especially ch. 3; D'Costa, "Church and Sacraments," 262–63.

51. Rahner, *Church and the Sacraments*, 39. In Rahner, this symbolic dimension does not mean that presence is therefore any less "real" in terms of, for example, the Eucharist. His disciples, by contrast, will increasing develop the symbolic dimension of presence in a direction away from metaphysical realism.

dimension of sacramentality by developing the personalist character of the categories of causality at work in the sacraments so as to avoid the dangers of mechanism.[52] Rahner and Schillebeeckx provide the stimulus for the paradigm shift to a correlational framework in which presence is increasingly focused upon outside of the institutional Church. While Chauvet and Boeve will argue that this kind of correlation is in many respects too facile and naïve, they will nevertheless understand their own theological programs to be in a fundamental continuity with it. No matter how you look at it, the ideas of Rahner and Schillebeeckx crop up constantly in conversations about sacramental presence.

The final major figure that emerges as a key focus of this book is Hans Urs von Balthasar. If Thomistic theology focuses on causality as a key to sacramental theology, Rahnerian theology on symbol, von Balthasar relies on aesthetic and dramatic categories to illuminate his strong Christological and Trinitarian emphases in the territory of sacramental presence.[53] Regis A. Duffy calls von Balthasar's starting point "the exact opposite of the anthropological" and states that "the sacraments are placed against the background of the reality of the Word Incarnate, in the mystery of his Incarnation, kenosis or self-emptying, and glorification."[54] Against the correlational tendency to dissolve particularity in universality, von Balthasar stresses the particularity of Christ as the absolute and universal "form"[55] of love that gives definitive meaning to all universality. It is this form of love that grounds all primordial sacramentality, and fulfills it in the ecclesial form of the sacraments. "Nature's forms spring forth from creation, rising up and opening themselves in spirit and love to the infinity of fructifying grace; they thus receive from above their ultimate form, which recasts everything natural and reorders it."[56] Von Balthasar's approach to the sacraments is thus

52. See Walsh, "Divine and the Human," 336. Schillebeeckx's position can be seen in his *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter With God*.

53. None of this is to say, however, that von Balthasar has done systematics in sacramental theology as has Rahner. Von Balthasar is *not* a sacramental theologian, and any appropriation of his corpus for the task of a systematic sacramental theology must be a work in progress.

54. Duffy, "Introduction," 664.

55. "Form" (*gestalt*) is an important concept in von Balthasar's theology, and bespeaks the close relationship that exists between beauty and glory. Mark Miller explains that form "is not the object or even the 'form of the object' in an Aristotelian sense. It is more the interior meaning and reality glimpsed via the exterior." Miller, "Sacramental Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," 50, no. 3. In von Balthasar's own words, to speak of the form is to "raise the question of the 'great radiance from within' which transforms *species* into *speciosa*: the question of splendor." Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 1:21.

56. Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 126.

intrinsically formed by his approach to Revelation as a whole, understood as a distinctive form not capable of being explicated "from below," outside of the concrete encounter with the event of Christ in the Church (pace Rahnerian tendencies); an approach, it should be added, that nevertheless still includes metaphysics as an important component.

Like Thomas, von Balthasar sees an important role for the metaphysics of causality, seeing the former's "real distinction" as an absolutely important principle for preventing the glory of the world from being transcendentalized.[57] However, von Balthasar's emphasis on aesthetic form is meant to offset any tendency to interpret this philosophical distinction without Christ at its center. Philosophy is only made fruitful when it is accompanied by the prior glimpse of the form of love in Christ. Metaphysics is in this sense posterior to the glory already attested by the event of Christ and, in the light of the glory, finds itself called to new, unexpected tasks. Any approach to the sacrament that gets lost in the "structure" of sacramental grace (i.e., how it "works") has already lost sight of (or indeed, *never* caught sight of) the glory of the mystery of redemption in Christ. Miller suggests that "von Balthasar shows a strong reaction to the neo-scholastic focus on the elements, their form and matter, and the distancing from the encounter between God and the believing community."[58] In this book, von Balthasar will be used as an alternative to the position developed by Chauvet and Boeve. In particular, we will explore his version of a rehabilitated metaphysics in response to Heidegger's critique, and see how this allows for a different reading of sacramental presence than that offered by Chauvet and Boeve, one neither strictly "postmodern" nor "scholastic." Von Balthasar is thus an important conversation partner, and the recent explosion of interest in von Balthasar helps support this conviction.[59]

These four figures—Heidegger, Thomas, Rahner, and von Balthasar—stand at the forefront of any conversation about the ontology of sacramental presence, especially a "postmodern" one, each representing a unique set of stimuli for reflection on the relationship of postmodernism and Christianity. But there are other (most of them more contemporary) conversation partners who will also be of importance. To name a few, these include Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann, who supplies us with an important Orthodox perspective on sacramentality; Jean-Luc Marion, who stands at the forefront of contemporary discussions "after" metaphysics, and who

57. Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 4:393.

58. Miller, "Sacramental Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," 56.

59. See, for example, Walker, "Love Alone"; Howsare and Chapp, *How Balthasar Changed My Mind*; Schindler, *Love Alone Is Credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar as Interpreter*; Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar.*

attempts to think God "without Being," without for that matter opting for a transcendental reduction; David L. and David C. Schindler, contemporary Balthasarians whose work centers on the convertibility of being and love; Hans Boersma, who, from an ecumenical perspective, offers a creative recovery of the sacramental ontology of the "Great Tradition"; Laurence Paul Hemming, who offers an important non-transcendentalist reading of Heidegger; the Radical Orthodoxy School (John Milbank, Graham Ward, Catherine Pickstock) who supply important genealogical information and a creative re-appropriation of the Tradition; and finally, Pope John Paul II, whose catecheses on marriage and celibacy (which became the *Theology of the Body*) remain a watershed moment for the consideration of sacramentality. These figures and their thought will represent an important foil through which conversation with von Balthasar, Heidegger, Chauvet, and Boeve will take place.

One final thought for this section. Without a more specific focus, discussions of presence tend to become abstract and unhinged from their actual significance in relation to doctrine and practice. For this reason, we will approach two of the seven sacraments as case studies for sacramental presence: marriage and the Eucharist. The first is clearly related to primordial presence, inasmuch as it is rooted in the created forms of masculinity and femininity. But further, it is of even more interest in that its primordial dimension is organically united with ecclesial presence in the relationship of Christ and His Church. In this sense, marriage straddles this world and the next, making it an intriguing site for the application of theories of presence. In particular, marriage feels the effect of the postmodern "turn" in relation to the deconstruction of the specificity of gender.

The Eucharist, as already noted, is the most pure example of properly ecclesial presence: it is after all "the source and summit of the Christian life."[60] It is therefore an important site for the conversation about the idolatrous and the iconic: the way grace "works" and the way in which Christ discloses himself, and the effect that this has on the community of believers is very much dependent on the question of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Thus, through marriage and the Eucharist we will attempt to show what is at stake in conversations about sacramental presence.

Chapter Overviews

In order to clearly understand the impact that Heidegger has had on the development of postmodernism and its relationship to the Christian narrative,

60. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

we devote chapter 1 of this book to a general genealogical review of the series of "turns" that have led us from the theology of the Fathers and Scholastics to the theology of Chauvet and Boeve. This will provide us with a backdrop with which to situate the claims that Chauvet and Boeve make. Key areas of concern here are philosophical questions relating to metaphysics, and the effect of the breakdown of the medieval synthesis in relation to the Christian narrative.

Chapter 2 is a sustained study of the theology of Chauvet. Our first interest here is his overt criticism of Thomas' theology of the sacraments via Heidegger's fundamental critique. We detail his shift to a symbolic, linguistic, and hermeneutical framework, and show the account of sacramental presence that emerges in this context.

Chapter 3 is a sustained study of the theology of Boeve. Unlike Chauvet, Boeve is not a sacramental theologian *per se*, although he has offered his opinions on the theme of presence. His theology is deliberately constructed from within the grey area between theology and philosophy, focused on questions of Christian narrativity, and it is in this sense primarily that he is an ideal candidate for a study on the ontology of presence. Boeve pushes Chauvet's fundamental convictions even further, forcing them out of any "metanarrative" certainty and into the uncertainty of Christianity understood as an "open" narrative. Boeve thus radicalizes Chauvet's hermeneutics, rendering the sacramental sign and cause of presence into an even greater indeterminacy through his more radical embrace of history and temporality.

Chapter 4 shifts gears to a focus on the praxis of sacramental presence, via a more concrete look at presence in the Eucharist and in marriage. As Chauvet is more the sacramental theologian than Boeve, our focus is primarily on the former (although we remain cognizant of the way in which Chauvet's conclusions can be pushed by theorizing such as Boeve's). We engage Chauvet's theory of presence with the alternative readings of Hemming, Pickstock, Ward, Marion, and von Balthasar, identifying areas of tensions, disagreements, and implications. Further, we interact with the burgeoning field of "queer theology," identifying this approach as a key example of the shift to time in the territory of sacramental presence in marriage.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter, and it is centered on the possibility of a metaphysics that makes possible the overcoming of the aporias of presence without either fetishizing or "symbolizing" presence. Von Balthasar's metaphysical structure is examined, and it is claimed that his theology and metaphysics remains a source of a viable ontology capable of doing full justice to both primordial and ecclesial presence. In particular, his notion of the mother's smile becomes the paradigmatic source of this inspiration.

Chauvet and Boeve are critiqued in the light of von Balthasar's theology and metaphysics.

Our conclusion seeks to unify and summarize the themes looked at in this book, and offers a tentative conclusion about what sacramental presence might look like "after Heidegger" and his instantiation in Chauvet and Boeve.