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Christ, the Meeting Point of Sacramental and Trinitarian Theology

by

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A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology·Seminary of
Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Liturgical Studies

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY·SEMINARY
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

March 25, 2014

This paper was written under the direction of

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Christ, the Meeting Point of Sacramental and Trinitarian Theology

Description:

This paper explores the relationship between the liturgical life of the Church and the operation of the Trinity in the economy of grace through the work of Fr. Edward Kilmartin. Kilmartin sought to better explain how humanity's relationship with God through prayer and the sacraments was established. For him, theologians' understanding of the Trinity in what has become known as the procession model allowed for the katabatic flow of grace to humanity but failed to explain the anabatic flow of grace from humanity back up to God. This paper looks at the complementary model, the bestowal model, that Kilmartin developed to explain how liturgy, the sacraments, and ultimately a life of grace is a participation in the life of the Trinity.

This paper may not be duplicated.

March 25, 2014

Christ, the Meeting Point of Sacramental and Trinitarian Theology

At the heart of liturgical and sacramental theology is the operation of the Trinity in the economy of grace. The prayer life of the individual and the sacraments of the Church are concerned with bringing the human person into relationship with the Triune God. In fact, “the reduction of the theology of liturgy to the theology of the Trinity is not only possible, it must be the goal of any theology of Christian worship.”¹ The way in which one’s prayer life and participation in the sacraments make them participants in the life of the Trinity is a mystery to be explored more deeply, a mystery which has radical implications for the way we understand humanity’s relationship to God. Fr. Edward Kilmartin, in reflecting on liturgical and sacramental theology, became concerned about the way we explain how our relationship with God through prayer and the sacraments was established. For him, our understanding of the Trinity in what has become known as the procession model, allowed for the katabatic flow of grace to humanity, but failed to explain the anabatic flow of grace from humanity back up to God. This model asserts the proper anabatic movement back to God, but fails to articulate why it occurs. Because of this, the Church could be made in the image of Christ but could not return to the Father, and theology lacked a way for the individual Christian to stand in the sonship of Christ. It is for this reason that Kilmartin develops a complementary model, the bestowal model, to explain how it is that liturgy, the sacraments, and ultimately a life of grace is possible. Kilmartin’s bestowal model allows for one’s liturgical and sacramental life to be a participation in the life of the Trinity, but first it must be shown how this model mediates between the understandings of personhood and unity in the Christian East and West, and then how it provides for the anabatic flow of grace in a way which complements the processional model of the Trinity.

¹ Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 102. Henceforth cited as *Christian Liturgy*.

This paper will begin by looking at the classical understanding of consubstantiality and personhood with an eye to Eastern and Western emphases. In so doing, the Eastern emphasis on the three-ness of persons and the Western emphasis on consubstantiality will be understood as complementary. This does not, however, negate the tension between the two. It will become clear that each perspective has ramifications for not only the inner life of the Trinity, but for the way in which the Trinity interacts with the economy. Because of this, Kilmartin sees the need to re-contextualize the Western *ad extra* axiom in light of concerns pertaining to the economy of grace. Once it is established that the *ad extra* axiom can allow for more than a mere appropriation of actions to the persons of the Trinity, Kilmartin is able to recover the mission of the Holy Spirit and thus develop the bestowal model. This model comes from David Coffey and is based in Augustine's triad of the lover, loved, and love. It is this model which Kilmartin thinks can overcome Eastern and Western disputes on the procession of the Spirit and allow for the katabatic and anabatic flow of grace. It is this movement in grace which allows humanity to be united to the Trinity and sanctified. Finally, Kilmartin sees the sacraments as the concrete meeting point of Trinitarian dialogue. Therefore this paper will show that sacramental theology is always Trinitarian.

Kilmartin is well versed in the classical understandings of consubstantiality and personhood in the East and the West as well as classical theology's attempt to maintain the simplicity and immutability of God amid the three-ness of persons. An example of the classical understanding of consubstantiality, in light of concerns about divine simplicity, is stated by Gregory of Nazianzus, who represents the Eastern camp: "All that the Father has, is the Son's and *vice versa*. Nothing belongs only to one, because all things belong to both; even existence

per se, though it comes to the Son from the Father.”² The Father begets the Son, who shares in the substance of the Father. Later in the same treatise, Gregory explains how the Holy Spirit shares in the same substance of the Father and Son as well. The Holy Spirit cannot be a creature because He proceeds from the Father, nor is He a Son because He is not begotten, but He is God “to the extent that procession is the mean between ingeneracy and generacy.”³ In the West the concern for divine simplicity and immutability is expressed in Augustine’s understanding of consubstantiality. While trying to understand the distinctions of the persons in the Godhead, Augustine writes: “Although being Father is different from being Son, there is no difference of substance, because they are not called these things substance-wise but relationship-wise; and yet this relationship is not a modification because it is not changeable.”⁴ The unity of the Godhead is seen as a substantive predication, while the three-ness of persons in the one substance of the Godhead is a relational (relative) predication.

While the East and West both assert the three-ness and absolute consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity, Kilmartin is well aware of the distinction in their method. While the *filioque* is seen as the central dividing issue between Eastern and Western Trinitarian theology, the larger disagreement is their starting point. The East begins with the three-ness of persons and from there develops an understanding of consubstantiality. Because of this the personal missions of the Son and Spirit are emphasized. However, the West begins from a different perspective. It begins with the consubstantiality of the three persons and then works towards their distinction. Thus, the East focuses on “persons” and the West focuses on “one in being”. This has important ramifications for explaining the anabatic movement of the human person towards God in grace.

² Gregory of Nazianzus, Frederick Williams, and Lionel R. Wickham, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 101.

³ Gregory, 122.

⁴ Augustine, Edmund Hill, and John E. Rotelle, *The Trinity* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2012), 192.

Kilmartin points out that the issue of the *filioque* stems from this larger problem:

These two views [on the procession of the Holy Spirit] begin from different starting points: the Eastern version with the distinction of persons; the Western version with the unity of the divine essence. They cannot be made to coincide...[T]he bestowal model provides a way of speaking about the procession of the Spirit in which the ‘through the Son’ [of the East] and ‘and the Son’ [of the West] are complementary ways of conceiving the origin of the Spirit.⁵

The axiom which lies at the heart of Eastern and Western differences is the *ad extra* axiom in the West. Kilmartin must re-contextualize this axiom before articulating how the anabatic flow of grace occurs. Augustine classically articulates the *ad extra* axiom as meaning that “just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably.”⁶ This becomes even more problematic, as Rahner points out, when the workings of the persons of the Trinity in the economy of grace are seen merely as appropriations to the persons. Rahner writes:

[T]his same anti-trinitarian timidity has induced theologians to conceive the relation brought about by grace between man and the three divine persons as one based upon ‘created grace,’ a product of God’s efficient causality, merely ‘appropriated’ differently to the single persons...[T]oday’s theology hardly ever sees any connection between the Trinity and the doctrine of creation. This isolation is considered legitimate, since the ‘outward’ divine operations are ‘common’ to the three divine persons, so that the world as creation cannot tell us anything about the inner life of the Trinity.⁷

Kilmartin agrees with Rahner on how deeply problematic and anti-Trinitarian this is. In fact, he attempts to solve the problem by implementing what he will call the bestowal model. Creation as created by the Triune God, ought to be deeply Trinitarian itself. Creation not only should, but does in fact mirror the Creator. Because of this the conceptual isolation which theology has established between the Trinity and creation is illegitimate. The *ad extra* principle should be re-contextualized in a way that allows for creation and the Trinity to be brought together again. This requires that one see a deeply Trinitarian structure in the ordering of creation in order to allow

⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 139.

⁶ Augustine, 70-71.

⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad Pub, 1997), 13-14.

for the *reditus* of creation back to God.

In his work to re-contextualize the *ad extra* axiom, Kilmartin agrees with Rahner that a treatment of God which does not refer to salvation history becomes a useless theology. It does not explain how it is that we participate in the inner life of the Trinity and thus obtain the possibility of salvation promised to us by God. For this reason, Kilmartin embraces Rahner's axiom that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.⁸ Kilmartin, it seems, uses Rahner's observation about the Incarnation to show that there can be, and is in fact, a proper mission of the Spirit. Rahner writes: "Hence we assert that, in principle, the incarnation may be considered as a dogmatically certain 'instance' for a (theoretically at least not impossible) economic relation, proper to each person, of the divine person to the world...therefore the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity."⁹ Rahner's attempt to further re-contextualize the *ad extra* axiom becomes important for Kilmartin as well: 1) While an activity may be common to all persons, but appropriated to one, it is possessed by each person in a unique way which is proper to their person; 2) "Not-appropriated relations of a single person are possible when we have to do, not with an efficient causality, but with a quasi-formal self-communication of God, which implies that each divine person possesses its own proper relation to some created reality."¹⁰ Rahner is trying to explain that a proper relation between something in creation and a single person of the Trinity is possible through a rich notion of God's self-communication through creation. In this communication, which Rahner describes as "quasi-formal," each divine person discloses himself in a uniquely historical and temporal relationship with created reality, which in turn constitutes a unique relation.

⁸ Rahner, 22; Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 114.

⁹ Rahner, 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

Using Rahner to re-contextualize the *ad extra* axiom to allow for more than a mere appropriation of actions to divine persons, allows Kilmartin to recover for the West the mission of the Spirit, so invaluable to the East, and to then in turn develop his bestowal model. In recovering the mission of the Spirit, Kilmartin develops a model which allows for the *reditus* of humanity to God by creating a space in which Eastern and Western concerns are held in constructive tension. Kilmartin draws his inspiration for the bestowal model from David Coffey who begins with Augustine's triad of lover, loved, and love.¹¹ In this triad of love, the Holy Spirit is seen as "a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son."¹² The Holy Spirit is the bond that unites the Father and the Son, creating a circle of bestowal and return. The Holy Spirit is the love by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. This communion of the Holy Spirit is what allows the Trinity to be self-sufficient and utterly simple despite a three-ness in person. Furthermore, it explains how relative predictions about the Trinity fit into its utter simplicity.

Augustine expounds on this triad later in the *De Trinitate*. In doing so, Augustine provides a more detailed explanation of the role of the Holy Spirit as the bond that unites the Father and the Son within the Trinity. He writes:

Therefore the Holy Spirit too takes his place in the same unity and equality of substance. For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness, it is clear that he is not one of the two, since he is that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter.¹³

In explaining this passage and incorporating it into his bestowal model, Kilmartin ties this passage to two other quotations from Augustine. The first affirms that the Holy Spirit proceeds

¹¹ David Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Manly: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979).

¹² Augustine, 199.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 210.

from the Father and the Son acting as one principle: “But the Son is born of the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father principally, and by the Father’s wholly timeless gift from both of them jointly.”¹⁴ The second asserts that because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as one principle, the “[Holy Spirit] suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and the Son love each other.”¹⁵ This allows Kilmartin to affirm that the manner of procession of the Holy Spirit “is that of mutual love, i.e., as the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father.”¹⁶ It is this mutual love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father which creates a circle of bestowal and return within the life of the Trinity. In continuing his look at this triad of love from Augustine, Kilmartin points out that “when speaking of the fact of procession, [Augustine] says that the Spirit proceeds *a Patre Filioque*. When he refers to the manner of procession, he says that the Spirit proceeds as the love of Father and Son acting now not in unison but distinctly, i.e., in loving each other.”¹⁷

Kilmartin asserts that Coffey “has drawn out the consequences [of this insight] by integrating the fact of procession and the manner of procession of the Spirit into what he calls ‘the bestowal model.’”¹⁸ This model serves as a bridge between the Eastern and Western understandings of the Trinity “which have been preoccupied with the fact but not the purpose of the procession of the Spirit.”¹⁹ In this model the Father begets the Son. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and is bestowed on the Son as the object of the Father’s love. The Spirit is then in turn bestowed by the Son on the Father as the object of the Son’s love. This allows Kilmartin to assert that “thus, as the mutual love of Father and Son, the Spirit proceeds from the Father *per Filium*

¹⁴Augustine, 439.

¹⁵ Ibid., 421.

¹⁶ Edward Kilmartin, “The Active Role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Sanctification of the Eucharistic Elements,” *Theological Studies* 45, no. 2 (1984): 246. Henceforth cited as “The Active Role.”

¹⁷ Kilmartin, “The Active Role,” 247.

¹⁸ Ibid., 247.

¹⁹ Ibid., 247.

and also *Filioque* in such a way that the perichoresis is established: the interpenetration of the divine persons.”²⁰ By overcoming the *filioque* disagreement, it is my opinion, that this has allowed the Eastern starting point of “three persons” to complement the Western starting point of “one in being.” The integration of the two allows for the theological emphasis of “three-ness of persons” found in the East, and the “oneness of being” found in the West, to interpenetrate one another. The goal of each theology is *perichoresis*; however, the emphasis of what that means is different for both. For the East it is the three persons in an interweaving dance, for the West, it is the wholeness of the dance itself. Both are required.

For Kilmartin an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit which takes into account Eastern and Western Trinitarian sensibilities, begins the discussion of the bestowal model. By showing how the inner life of the Trinity is one of bestowal and return, Kilmartin can now extend the life of the Trinity into the economy. Having established the role of the Holy Spirit in the imminent Trinity, Kilmartin asserts that

When applied to the economic Trinity, it has the advantage of being able to integrate a descending and ascending Christology in a completely consistent way. The processional models of the immanent Trinity derive from the revelation of the mission of the Incarnate Son and the Spirit. From this revelation the Fathers of the Church concluded that the Incarnation is a prolongation of the procession of the Son in the Trinity and that ‘grace’ is a prolongation of the procession of the Spirit.²¹

The mission of the Spirit now becomes accessible to Western Trinitarian thought. It is the absence of the mission of the Holy Spirit, which Kilmartin sought to retrieve from the East for the West, so that the West could develop a theology which allows for the anabatic flow of grace. In other words, for Kilmartin, “the self-communication of the Father, outside the inner-

²⁰ Kilmartin, “The Active Role,” 247. Kilmartin depicts this model in *Christian Liturgy*, 132.



²¹ Kilmartin, “The Active Role,” 247.

Trinitarian life, always includes the communication of the Word and the Spirit.”²²

Having reclaimed the Holy Spirit in the bestowal model, Kilmartin then moves into how the bestowal model allows for both the katabatic and anabatic flow of grace. The ultimate thrust of his argument is as follows: While the Church can be made in the image of Christ in the procession model, it cannot be returned to the Father in that model. Furthermore, our participation in the humanity of the Word, is predicated upon the humanity of the Word’s participation in the Trinity. If the humanity of the Word did not participate in the life of the Trinity, the humanity of the Word would not be revelatory and, therefore, not salvific. The humanity of the Word must participate in the inner dialogue within the Trinity whereby the Holy Spirit moves between the Father and Son. If the humanity of the Word was just an appendage to the Son, the humanity of the Word would not disclose to us God’s self, which God is seeking to reveal through it. For the economy of grace to reflect the inner movements of the Trinity, the Church and individual Christians must participate in the movement of the Spirit which is eternally bestowed on the Father and Son by one another. The humanity of the Word of God becomes the access point to the Trinity only when we are drawn into it through the power of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit which unites it to the Word of God. In this way, the Holy Spirit unites us in our humanity to the humanity of Christ so that we can be united through his humanity to the Word and so participate in the inner life of the Trinity.

The point of the bestowal model is to show that the Holy Spirit plays a role in the Incarnation and thus can also play a role in making us the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit helps us take on the role of the Son. This is first alluded to when Kilmartin says that “the Logos Christology grounds the procession model of the Trinity; the Spirit Christology grounds the

²² Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 101.

bestowal model of the Trinity.”²³ The first accentuates the Son-Christ relationship, the second accentuates the Spirit-Christ relationship. The first provides a descending Christology whereby the access point between the Trinity and man is established, i.e. the hypostatic union of Christ. The second provides the means by which this is possible, i.e. the Holy Spirit who 1) binds the humanity of Christ to the Son and 2) binds us to the humanity of Christ. In looking at the procession model, Kilmartin returns to the procession of the Holy Spirit. For Kilmartin, the understanding of the Holy Spirit as the bond of love is not in any way meant to suggest that the Holy Spirit is not a person. Here he discusses in scholastic terms the two understandings of the manner of procession. There are two ways in which procession can be understood: 1) *processio operati* and 2) *processio operationis*. The first, *processio operati*, is an operation which produces an immanent term which is a person; the second, *processio operationis* – procession of the operation, is an operation which produces a relationship which is a person.²⁴ In regards to the Holy Spirit, Kilmartin’s bestowal model seems to support the understanding that the procession of the Holy Spirit is that of a *processio operationis*, whereas, the procession of the Son is a *processio operati*. In defense of this, Kilmartin turns to Aquinas via Lonergan and points out that

In the first place, the concept of person, as applied to the Trinity of persons, is not univocal. The Father, Son and Spirit are not precisely person in the same way. Second, it is not necessary to conceive the Spirit as immanent term in the Trinity in order that the Spirit be conceived as immanent in the Trinity. The immanence is secured because the Spirit is identically the divine essence.²⁵

Thus all three persons are consubstantial, but are persons in virtue of their relations: the Father as the unbegotten, the Son as the begotten, and the Holy Spirit as the, bond, or spirated love between them. The procession model asserts the fact of the procession of the Holy Spirit from

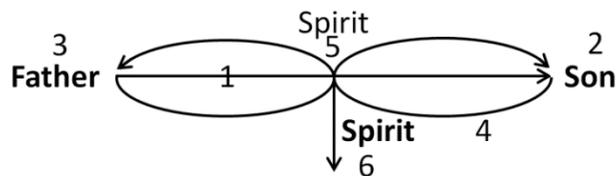
²³ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 125.

²⁴ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 126-128.

²⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 128; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 201-210.

the Father *per Filium* (Eastern) or *Filioque* (Western) without going into the manner of procession. The bestowal model, on the other hand, “distinguishes the fact of the procession of the Spirit from the manner of procession...the Spirit proceeds as the mutual love of Father and Son.”²⁶ While expressing the fact of procession, *per Filium* and *Filioque* do not describe the manner of proceeding. Rather, the manner of proceeding is explained by the bestowal model which advocates a bestowal of love from the Father on the Son, and from the Son on the Father.

For Kilmartin, “the procession of the Spirit closes the circle of presence-to-self and presence-to-other of Father and Son. But the Spirit is not to be conceived as a ‘bridge’ between Father and Son. The Spirit does not obstruct the immediacy of Father and Son to each other. Rather the Spirit is the bond of communication of Father and Son.”²⁷ The Spirit is the love which flows from the Father and is bestowed on the Son, and subsequently flows from the Son and is bestowed on the Father. In this way the Spirit creates a circle of communion between Father and Son. In other words, the *exitus* of love from the Father to the Son is complemented by the *reditus* of love from the Son to the Father. Below is Kilmartin’s diagram of the immanent Trinity.²⁸



- 1) Represents the Father begetting the Son.
- 2) The procession of the Spirit from the Father to the Son (bestowal of love from the Father on the Son)
- 3) The Spirit is returned by the Son to the Father (bestowal of love from the Son on the Father)
- 4) The curves represent the Spirit as bond of eternal communion
- 5) The intersection of the lines show that a) the Spirit is the bond of union between Father and Son, and b) the infinite distance between Father and Son is not closed by the Spirit

²⁶ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 131.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 132. The text given is a paraphrase from Kilmartin’s explanation of the diagram.

- 6) The possibility of the Trinitarian life communicating itself to the world as the mutual love of Father and Son, the Holy Spirit.

Several important things can be gleaned from this diagram and its explanation. First, the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity by being a relationship, which in no way negates the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Second, the language of bestowal removes the controversy surrounding whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *per Filium* (Eastern) or *Filioque* (Western). In a sense it is both. This model shows how the Holy Spirit proceeds, instead of trying to find a way to say that it proceeds. In this way “through” and “and” are not relevant distinctions. Third, the Holy Spirit is what holds the Father and Son apart from one another. Without the Holy Spirit, without a bond between the two, they would collapse into themselves. Thus, for Kilmartin, the procession and bestowal models are complementary. The latter provides an explanation for the purpose of the procession of the Holy Spirit not given in the former.²⁹

The ramifications of the procession model for the sanctification of human persons is crucial. Kilmartin thinks that the Trinity can come into relationship with human persons:

The notion of personal causality is applicable to the instance of Trinitarian self-communication to fully constituted, adult human persons. The communicator offers self for interpersonal communion, and the recipient does the same. The mutual giving of self realizes this personal communion...At the interior of the transformation, which is God's work, God communicates self in the totality of his divinity. This communication takes place through the communication of the Holy Spirit. But, by virtue of the *perichoresis*, the being in-one-another of the Father and Son and Spirit, the human being is united with the Son and the Father.³⁰

In this way, the Holy Spirit becomes a bond of unity which incorporates human beings into the Trinity. This incorporation of the life of the person to God is not one merely appropriated to the Holy Spirit, but actually the mission of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the real relations that the Trinity forms through the Holy Spirit with human beings do not imply dependence of God on creation.

²⁹ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 133.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

In order to understand how this is possible, Kilmartin makes a distinction between God's action in the order of creation and God's action in the order of grace. He writes:

The proper way of addressing the dilemma of change in the unchangeable God in the order of grace is to begin with the implication of the economic Trinity. The fundamental distinction that must be introduced is the one between the order of creation and the order of grace. God is simply unchangeable in the order of creation. At this level God remains as Father, the one who is eternal, omnipotent, the unchangeable pure act (*actus purus*). However, in the order of grace, in the economic Trinity, the Father determines himself to receptivity and historicity through the mission of the Word and Spirit.³¹

We can distinguish between God's action in the order of creation *ad extra*, and God's action in the order of grace in the personal missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. In the order of creation, God acts as Creator, unchanged by us. However, God's acting in the order of grace requires a personal relationship with human beings. In this way, God's sending of His Son and the Spirit into the world with personal missions requires in the economy of grace that the persons of the Trinity be receptive and based in time and space. The Incarnation of the Son shows God's willingness to enter into real relations with human beings. The mission of the Son and Spirit call for a real relationship with God: "We learn from the economic Trinity that God, unchangeable according to his natural being as Father, has freely determined himself, in his Word and Spirit, to receptivity and historicity. The unchangeable God has made himself open to determination by finite, free rational creatures...he has made himself open to the receptivity of human love."³² It is God's opening up of self in love to us, and His willingness to accept our love for Him, which allows us to enter into relationship with Him. Furthermore, God's willingness to accept love shows that in the economy of grace, God is changeable.

This understanding of God's receptivity has important ramifications for grace. Kilmartin

³¹ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 145.

³² *Ibid.*, 146.

writes that “this theology ‘from above’ has enabled modern Catholic theologians to recognize more clearly that the real form of grace is uncreated grace, namely, God’s self-communication in the missions of the Word and Spirit.”³³ This form of grace anticipates the beatific vision in which God’s self-communication will be given to us in the fullness of our capacity. Grace is seen as a free gift of relationship with God. It is in the role of Christ as mediator in heaven between humanity and God in the Spirit that “the missions of the Word and Spirit reach their completion.”³⁴ For this reason, Kilmartin asserts, unity with the Word is the goal of human existence. In the Spirit, unity with the Word, through the Word’s unity with the humanity of Christ, allows us to become sons and daughters of God. For this reason, “if the Spirit can be shown to be the Spirit of sonship in the case of the Incarnation, one can see why the highest form of the determination of humanity is that in which it becomes united to the Word in unity of person, and lesser actualizations union of human persons with the Spirit.”³⁵ The humanity of the Word of God performs, even in heaven, a unique mediating role between humanity and the Trinity. However, it is the Spirit who must bind us to the humanity of the Word of God, which is itself bound to the Word of God in the same Spirit.

It is in realizing the role the Spirit must play in the configuration of human beings to Christ that the limitations of the procession model become apparent. Kilmartin summarizes the limitation of the procession model as follows:

Much of the theological reflection...ordered by the procession model and its accompanying descending Christology, views the incarnation simply as the assumption of a concrete humanity by the Word. The Spirit is often depicted as the one who anoints the humanity of Jesus that has already been assumed by the Word... However, this explanation runs up against the problem of the reversal of the order of correspondence to the Trinitarian procession in the case of the sanctification of ordinary people. Here the order...is the bestowal of the Spirit by which the justified person is brought into union

³³ Ibid., 153.

³⁴ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 153.

³⁵ Ibid., 155.

with the Son and made son or daughter of the one Father. What is the basis *in the immanent Trinity* for the reversal of the procession model in the event of sanctification of ordinary people?³⁶

In other words, how is it that the Holy Spirit can bind us to Christ, who brings us into relationship with the Trinity, when the Holy Spirit seemingly has no role in the binding of the humanity of the Word of God with the Word of God in the Incarnation? While the procession model accurately articulates the steps of return in bringing the human being into the sonship of Christ, the procession model does not provide an explanation for why this is the case. This is where the bestowal model becomes so important. Kilmartin points out that

[W]hen pneumatology is introduced into the process of the assumption of the humanity by the Word, a new insight is made available. The way is opened to understanding the Holy Spirit as the one who sanctifies the humanity of Jesus, created by the Godhead as such, elevating that humanity to union with the Word who assumes it. This same Spirit, sent by the risen Lord from the Father, unites ordinary persons with the Son and thus makes them sons and daughters of the Father in the unique Son. Here the grace of Christ, the grace he shares with the justified human persons, is identified as the one Holy Spirit.³⁷

The role of the personal mission of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation allows us to explain the way in which humanity is able to participate in the Trinity through Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit in elevating the humanity of the Word and binding it to the Word, allows for the reversal of the procession model. Kilmartin points out that this radically revises our understanding of grace: “If the real grace of sanctification, the grace by which human beings are divinized, corresponds to the way in which the Godhead exists in itself, it must be thought through in terms of the Father’s self-communication in the mission of his Word and his Spirit.”³⁸ This is why the role of the Holy Spirit as articulated in the bestowal model is so important. Only the bestowal model can model grace in the inner life of the Trinity in such a way that it will function in both

³⁶ Ibid., 160-161.

³⁷ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 161-162.

³⁸ Ibid., 162.

the downward and upward directions when translated into the economy. The Holy Spirit as the sustainer of the relationships of the persons in the Trinity to themselves, must also be the sustainer, or grace, by which we are able to be brought into relationship with the Trinity as well.

For this reason, the function of the Holy Spirit in regards to the love of Jesus for the Father has important implications for the rest of humanity. Kilmartin points out that “the love of Jesus for the Father corresponds to the love of the Word for the Father in the immanent Trinity, in the same way that Jesus’ human knowledge corresponds to the knowledge of the Word in the immanent Trinity.”³⁹ Jesus would not be a source of our salvation if His love of the Father did not correspond to the love of the Word for the Father. In other words, Jesus’ love for the Father must be the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the Father, which is the love the Word shows the Father. This is because of the central role the Holy Spirit plays in communication within and within-without of the Trinity. The fact that Jesus’s love for the Father corresponds to the love of the Word for the Father, and the fact that Jesus became incarnate, provides for the incarnation of the Holy Spirit in Christ: “Since the Holy Spirit is the identifiable source of the acceptable response of love of all ordinary human beings to the Father, it is but a short step to conclude that the Holy Spirit is received and returned in a human way, while remaining himself, by the divine Son in his humanity.”⁴⁰ The Holy Spirit becomes that which Jesus returns to the Father, and through Jesus becomes what we are able to return to the Father as well. Furthermore, because in looking towards the Father, all of that which is known and loved by the Father is also seen, “the Spirit, incarnate in Jesus’ human love, is the twofold love of God and humanity. Hence the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost by Jesus Christ is Jesus’ love for his brethren, an essential

³⁹ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 168.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

dimension of his love of the Father.”⁴¹ In sending the Spirit to creation, Christ was simultaneously showing His love for the Father. In this way, humanity becomes incorporated into the movement of the Holy Spirit from Father to Son and Son to Father in the Trinity.

Returning to the correspondence of the bestowal model to the procession model, Kilmartin writes:

The divine sonship of Jesus is acquired by the bestowal of the Spirit, who sanctifies and unites the humanity in unity of person to the Word. Here the order of the procession model is inverted. But it is not an inversion of the procession model. Rather, it corresponds to the manner of the bestowal of the Spirit by the Father on the Son in the immanent Trinity.⁴²

Thus, as articulated earlier, the procession model is not simply being inverted but is being supplemented by the bestowal model. It is because the Holy Spirit is returned to the Father by the Son that the humanity of the Word, united to the Word by the Holy Spirit, can unite those bound to it in Spirit with the Father. This means that “the sending of the Spirit by the risen Lord is a prolongation of the inner-Trinitarian answering love of the Son for the Father.”⁴³ It is in the sending of the Spirit to the Church that the inner-Trinitarian life is prolonged in creation. This prolongation of the bestowal of love from the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father is what allows for the incorporation of humanity into the life of the Trinity. The mission of the Spirit makes those united to Christ in that same Spirit present to the life of the Trinity.

Kilmartin’s bestowal model has tremendous implications for sacramental theology. It allows for the recovery of a more robust pneumatology for Western liturgical and sacramental thought. Kilmartin writes:

As acts of Christ, word and sacrament correspond to the bestowal of the Spirit by the Son on the Father in the immanent Trinity; as acts of the Father, they correspond to the bestowal of the Spirit on the Son in the inner-divine life. As acts of the Father, word and

⁴¹ Ibid., 169.

⁴² Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 170.

⁴³ Ibid., 171.

sacrament have the purpose of drawing people into union with the one Son, making them children of the Father in the beloved Son. As acts of the risen Lord, word and sacrament have the purpose of drawing believers into divine sonship so that they will love the Father with a love of sons and daughters in the Son.⁴⁴

It is here that the Trinitarian underpinnings of the sacraments reveal themselves. The sacraments are a concrete meeting point of Trinitarian dialogue. In the sacraments as acts of Christ, we have the movement of the Spirit from the Son to the Father. Additionally, it is in the sacraments that the Father wills through the Spirit that we be drawn into union with the Son so as to become His sons and daughters. Likewise, they are the place where Christ Himself identifies us with Himself so that we can love the Father like the Son. Thus, the sacraments are the chief places where we are able to be loved by the Father with the same love He has for His Son, and also be united to Christ so as to be able to return the love of the Father with the love of the Son. In the sacraments the Church believes that Trinitarian incorporation is made most concretely visible.

It is in this train of thought that Kilmartin explains the High Priestly role of Christ. For Kilmartin, Christ's role as High Priest must be understood as one of mediation.

This means that the 'eternal intercession' of the High Priest before the Father for humankind is the full incarnation of the Spirit, by which the risen Lord loves all humanity, as an essential dimension of his love of the Father. Therefore, 'in the Spirit' his eternal intercession, which is one single act of love—an act in which his whole being is concentrated—is always heard. As a consequence, the Father always responds by offering the Spirit to enable the response of faith, in and through which the Father bestows the Spirit of sonship by a purely divine act.⁴⁵

In other words, the High Priestly role of Christ is the point of contact between the Trinity and humanity. Christ acts eternally in this High Priestly role, even in the beatific vision, so we may share in the life of the Trinity vis-à-vis Himself. Furthermore, because the Father always hears Christ through the Spirit, and because Christ has chosen to hear us in the same Spirit, we are able

⁴⁴ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 172.

to have confidence that the Father hears us. The Father always responds to our prayers because He responds to Christ's and Christ has chosen to impart our prayers to the Father through the same Spirit by which He Himself is heard by the Father. Because of this the Father always sends the Spirit to us so as to draw us into Christ so we may become His sons and daughters.

Kilmartin further articulates how the prayers of the faithful are heard and respond to by God in his treatment on the prayers of the just. He writes:

The prayer of the just, as acceptable prayer, results from the mediation of Christ on the ground of his redemptive work. Christ both intercedes for the one who is praying and sends the Spirit in an activity that is sacrament of the bestowal of the Spirit by the Father. As a result of this bestowal, there is the immediate union between the Father and the justified person. In Christ the just have ontological and psychological union with the Father, through the bestowal of the Spirit.⁴⁶

Through our unity with Christ in the Spirit, we the faithful can have the assurance that our prayers are heard and answered by the Father in love. This holds true also for the Church. The Church endowed with faith in the Spirit knows that it will always be heard. Kilmartin writes, "the ground for this confidence is the belief that it is made through, with, and in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷ In his work on the Eucharist Kilmartin touches on the role of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of the elements, and the sanctification of the communicants. He writes: "The Holy Spirit 'anoints' the prayer of the Church and 'anoints' the participants of the liturgy so that, through the medium of the prayer, Christ comes to the assembly [through the sanctification of the gifts] and the assembly to Christ [through the sanctification of the communicants]."⁴⁸ The Holy Spirit makes possible the sacraments and our sanctification.

Kilmartin concludes his section on the prayer and liturgy of the Church with the various

⁴⁶ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 173.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁴⁸ Edward J. Kilmartin and Robert J. Daly, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 330-331.

sacramental formulas. He writes: “It is a prayer of the Church made in union with Christ in the power of the Spirit, petitioning the Father to send the Spirit of sanctification. *It is this personalistic explanation of the efficacy of the sacraments, ex opere operato, that accounts for the dialogical structure of the liturgy and the essentially Christological-Trinitarian dimension of Christian liturgy in all its forms.*”⁴⁹ It is in the proclamations of the sacramental formulas that Christ stands in our place and prays to the Father, so that we are able to stand in the place of Christ and make His prayer to the Father our own. In the proclamation of the sacramental formulas we can be assured that we have been heard by Christ and that Christ has interceded for us to the Father. Furthermore, we can have faith that the Father has heard our prayer on behalf of Christ and will respond in grace. This union with Christ does not, however, stop solely with Him, but moves us into the inner-Trinitarian dialogue of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, Kilmartin’s theology bridges the gap between the different emphases of the East and the West. In doing so, he develops a Trinitarian theology that explains how our sacraments make us participants in the life of the Trinity. Kilmartin bases his work on Augustine’s triad of the lover, loved, and love, as the model which best explains God’s reaching out to the world. The Augustinian concept of the Trinity as a communion of the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with Rahner’s re-contextualization of the *ad extra* axiom, allows for the development of the bestowal model. This model explains how humanity is incorporated into the Trinitarian communion through its unity with Christ in the Holy Spirit. This is possible through the union between the Word and the humanity of Christ in the Spirit, and *our* unity with the humanity of Christ in the Spirit as well. Fundamental to Kilmartin’s work is an understanding of the sacraments which sees them as the chief place for our incorporation into the life of the

⁴⁹ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 174. Kilmartin’s italics.

Trinity. At the beginning of this paper, it was noted that Kilmartin sees the need for all liturgical theology to be reduced to a theology of the Trinity. It seems appropriate to end with a quote from Kilmartin on the intersection of Trinitarian and sacramental theology.

Through the bestowal of the Spirit by the risen Lord from the Father, the heavenly liturgy is extended to earth. The Spirit, who grounds the heavenly liturgy as the transcendental love of the risen Lord for the Father and the source of the loving response of the blessed for the Father's gift, is the one who enables the return of the earthly assembly of believers to the Father through Christ. The earthly liturgy is the sacramental accomplishment of the heavenly liturgy, the foretaste of an anticipated reality...a real participation in the heavenly liturgy.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 190.