

CHAPTER NINE

The Eschatological Dynamism of Our Sacraments

OUR SACRAMENTS ARE, as we have shown, a personal encounter of communion with the Christ of glory and his eternalized redemptive mystery. This encounter takes place in the visible Church of Christ through the visible signs of salvation which she offers us. The sacraments which unite us to Christ also bind us inseparably to the mystery of the Church; they have ecclesial and social value. But the Church, plodding along here below, far from the Lord, is always tending toward the glorified Christ, her Spouse, whom she will reach unobscured at the end of time, at the consummation of the Kingdom of God.

The Church is eschatological. On the one hand she sees here below, at least in part, the last realities; on the other, she tends toward their full accomplishment. As a result, her sacraments are likewise eschatological. In order to understand better the eschatological dynamism of the sacraments we must first of all situate the Church herself in the dimension of the Kingdom of God. We shall examine successively:

- (1) The Church in the eschatological Kingdom of God;
- (2) the Church and the eschatological dynamism of the sacraments in general;
- (3) the eschatological dynamism of the various sacraments.

I. THE CHURCH IN THE ESCHATOLOGICAL KINGDOM OF GOD

“Until John came there were the Law and the Prophets; since then the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it” (Lk. 16:16). Matthew is even more precise: “For all the Prophets and the Law have prophesied until John” (11:13). In the desert of Judea, the Baptist preached the coming of the Kingdom: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at

hand" (Mt. 3:2). Referring to the prophecy of Isaia (40:3-5), the Precursor announced that "all mankind shall see the salvation of God" (Lk. 3:6). Now the Messia, who is this salvation, announced first of all, as did John, not the presence of the Kingdom but its imminence: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15).

The theme of the Kingdom or the Reign of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, remained for a long time at the center of the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles, and it is still a question of a kingdom to come, no matter how imminent it may be. At the time of the mission of the twelve whom he associated to his mystery, Jesus enjoined them: "And as you go, preach the message, 'the Kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt. 10:7). Later he gave the same message to the seventy-two disciples: "Say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you'" (Lk. 10:9). Nevertheless there are texts which state clearly that the expected kingdom had already come. "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God," said Jesus to the Pharisees, "the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt. 12:28). The seventy-two disciples returned happy from their mission saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name" (Lk. 10:17). Even then the Master exercised a true, divine domination which he bequeathed to his disciples.

On another occasion, "and on being asked by the Pharisees, 'When is the kingdom of God coming?' he answered and said to them, 'The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, *Behold, here it is, or Behold, there it is, for behold the kingdom of God is within you*'" (Lk. 17:20-21).

These two texts, which we must neither magnify nor minimize, do not detract from the character of the Kingdom as a reality still to be fulfilled. They simply affirm that this reality is already operating in the person of the Messia, although it is not yet fully revealed. The kingdom of God remains an eschatological grandeur, but one which is already efficient in the coming of Christ and which remains so in the mission of the disciples.¹ At the time of his baptism by the Precursor, Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit precisely for his mission of inaugurating the Kingdom of

¹ R. Schnackenburg, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich* (Freiburg/Br., 1959), 88-98.

God and of undermining the kingdom of Satan. That is why he told the seventy-two disciples on their return from their mission of evangelization: "I was watching Satan fall as lightning from heaven. Behold I have given you power to tread upon . . . all the might of the enemy" (Lk. 10:18-19).

Already the Kingdom of God is there, begun; it is still not definitively established. Already it is radically implemented in the person of Jesus, but it is not yet *declared in a decisive manner*. The Kingdom has come in Jesus; nevertheless he asks us to pray that it will come: "Our Father . . . Thy kingdom come" (Mt. 6:10). Even on the eve of his Passion, the Kingdom is still expected, not by the apostles only (Mt. 20:21) but by the Master himself (Lk. 22:18), who knows very well that he is incarnating the kingdom. Father Francis Durrwell wrote very appropriately:

The Kingdom was, as it were, incarnate in Christ, and its lot was linked with his. It came with Christ (Mk. 11:10); to see the Son of Man coming was to assist at the arrival of the Kingdom (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1); the words "Christ" and "Kingdom" seem interchangeable (Mt. 19:29; Lk. 18:29); by following the one one enters the other, and anyone rejected by Christ is by that fact expelled from the Kingdom (Mt. 25:34, 41). "The least" in the Kingdom are identified with Christ, for he is the whole Kingdom.²

It remains that even until the morning of Easter, the Kingdom is in Christ, as in the "servant of Yahweh" who, in the weakness of

² *Op. cit.*, 153. "The coming of the Incarnate Word is the supreme eschatological event. Because the Eternal become present in time, the 'first times' are accomplished, the last days are inaugurated, the covenant is sealed for all eternity. It happens this time not between God and men but between God and the Man-God, representing all men before God, representing God to men. All the possible events of the history of salvation, including the Parousia, unfold in the interior of this unique event. . . . In this radical sense, eschatology is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ, in whom is accomplished the total mystery of salvation because he is the 'Savior of the world,' the same yesterday, today and forever" (Jean Mouroux, *op. cit.*, 93-94).

And again, speaking of the Kingdom of Christ in his consciousness, Jean Mouroux says: "This kingdom is already present, but in Christ; it is still to come, but also in Christ. And if this last is, by title of the individual man, the germinating cell of the kingdom, it is the one beginning of the kingdom, and, finally, the kingdom itself, by title of the universal man, of the Son of Man and of the second Adam. And that is why, by taking cognizance of all his personal dimensions, Christ takes cognizance of all the dimensions of the Kingdom: past, present and to come." (*Ibid.*, 116). See also Paul Benoit d'Azay, *A travers la Bible* (Paris, 1962), II:31.

his flesh, suffers for the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God which was destroyed by sin.

With the resurrection, the kingdom is definitively established in the person of Christ, king of glory and Son of God in the power of his universal Lordship (Rm. 1:4; Phil. 2:11). In the spirit of the Apostles, the inauguration of the Kingdom was bound to the glorification of their Master: "Grant to us that we may sit, one at thy right hand and the other at thy left hand, in thy glory" (Mk. 10:37), ". . . in thy kingdom" (Mt. 20-21). Our Lord reveals to them only the modality of his coming; his entrance into glory and the inauguration of the Kingdom will be accomplished in his resurrection from the dead (Mt. 17:9-13), in a triumph emerging from a profound humiliation. At the time of his last trip to Jerusalem, those in his entourage thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at that very instant (Lk. 19:11); he compared himself to that nobleman who goes to a distant country to obtain for himself a kingdom (Lk. 19:12). The Kingdom is then still in perspective; it is not definitively founded. It will be, though, soon.

"When Jesus appeared before the tribunal of the Sanhedrin, the High Priest questioned him: 'I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Thou hast said it.' Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming upon the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:63-64). Jesus acknowledges himself categorically here, not as the traditional human Messia expected by the Jews, but as the Lord of Psalm 110 and the mysterious personage of heavenly origin glimpsed by Daniel (7:13-14, 27). His kingdom is now imminent since the Jews will see him from this moment on only in his glory, through the triumph of his resurrection, manifesting himself in his Church. It is the prophecy of Daniel which henceforth will be realized in him; the prophecy of a kingdom which will know no decline and to which the Risen Lord will associate his followers, the holy people of God.

One like a son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven.

When he reached the Ancient One

and was presented before him,
He received dominion, glory, and kingship;
nations and peoples of every language serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed (7:13-14).
Then the kingship and dominion and majesty
of all the kingdoms under the heavens
shall be given to the holy people of the Most High,
Whose kingdom shall be everlasting:
all dominions shall serve and obey him (7:27).

After the resurrection, Christ will exercise his royalty that is now forcefully inaugurated: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18), he said to his disciples. He knows that he has "power over all flesh" (Jn. 17:2). He meets his disciples "of the Kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3), which he will establish on earth with their collaboration. He corrects their erroneous concept of the messianic kingdom which is not that of their dreams, but a spiritual kingdom which will be developed under the movement of the Holy Spirit: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses for me . . . even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is indeed under the impulse of the Spirit that the Apostles continue to promote the Kingdom of God, the concept of which will remain the great theme of their preaching (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 31).

The royalty of Christ grasps all those who by faith and Baptism attach themselves to him; they are called "out of darkness into his marvelous light"; they are "the people of God" (1 Pt. 2:9-10); God has "rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). Nevertheless, this Kingdom, displaying itself throughout the world, still awaits its consummation which will not take place until the end of time: "They will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty" (Mt. 24:30). The day of the glorious coming of Christ will dawn, said St. Paul, "when he delivers the kingdom of God the Father, when he does away with all sovereignty, authority, and power. For he must reign until he

has put all things under his feet . . . when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be made subject to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

However, there is no hiatus between the Reign of God inaugurated at Easter in the body of the risen Jesus and the final parousia, for since the first Easter, the parousia with the judgment of the Son of Man is latent in the midst of the world, precisely in the Christ of glory who dominates our era and judges it. The Offertory of the Mass of Easter must not lead us astray: "The earth trembled . . . the earth feared and fell silent when God arose in judgment." The judgment is inaugurated with the paschal inauguration of the Kingdom; it will be completed only at the consummation of the world. *Christ will not cease to save us and judge us.* Let us quote Father Durrwell once more:

Thus, from the moment of his glorification, Christ's *parousia* has been in the world. It overtakes different men at different times, some soon, some in the distant future; in the course of history it will be multiplied, but in itself and in the mind of Christ it is a single reality and already present. . . . Christ's resurrection and the manifestations of his glory together with his final coming form a single mystery of the *parousia*, revealed gradually in the course of history. Time, which for us flows continuously between Christ's resurrection and the *parousia*, is, as it were, contracted in Christ's exaltation; . . . it shows one by one the effects of the *parousia* of Christ which will eventually be revealed as a whole.³

There are, then, no successive parousias, but successive and multiple manifestations of one and the same Parousia. Of these manifestations, the most brilliant will be that of the last day. Jean Mouroux tells us:

Envisioned from Christ's point of view, the Resurrection and the Parousia are one and the same mystery; envisioned from the view of the world, they are the two manifestations which open, close, and then measure Christian time in its cosmic passing, in its spiritual density, in its redemptive significance.

Between the two is installed, then, in a definitive manner the time of salvation. . . .

³ *Op. cit.*, 254-55.

What determines the eschatological time is the Risen Christ in his personal, active, and sovereign presence.

Now the Risen Christ is comprehensible only in a triple relation: his relation to the Cross and death (Apoc. 1:18); his relation to the Parousia, the accomplishment of the general resurrection, the fulfillment of humanity and of the resurrected universe; his relation with humanity to come, to whom he communicates always through the Spirit his own life of Risen One. This is the "hidden Parousia" which forms his own body here below. The eschatological time is, then, a knot of relationships (vertical and horizontal); it is integrally Christ-oriented because it is referred necessarily to the mystery of the Cross-Resurrection and to the Parousia, through the transcending and basic presence of Christ in the eternal act of redemption.

That is why the time is essentially redemptive, paschal, and parousial. It implies an interior tending toward the *Parousia*. The principle of this thrust is the Holy Spirit given as the "pledge of the blessed redemption."⁴

It remains only to place the Church in this dimension of the Kingdom of God realized in Christ. According to St. Luke, the time of the Church is the third period in the history of salvation. The first is the time of Israel, characterized by the Law and the Prophets, and the messianic promises. It lasts until John the Baptist. After that there is the announcement of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 16:16). The Precursor makes the bridge between the first period and that of salvation (Acts 13:24-25) in which Jesus, the Messia, anointed by the Spirit (Lk. 4:18 ff.) accomplished his salvific work. It is the middle of time, "*die Mitte der Zeit*."⁵ It is this "middle period" that the third epoch of salvation, that of the Church, follows. The time of Jesus has passed, the time of the Church begins. St. Luke puts the time of the Church and of her mission here below between the Ascension of Christ and his last coming (Lk. 9:51; Acts 1:2, 11). From the first words of the Acts, the Evangelist casts a retrospective glance at the work and the doctrine of the Master and detaches thus clearly the time of Christ from the time of the Church. The time of the Church will not cease until the final Parousia. "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall come in the same way as you have

⁴ J. Mouroux, *op. cit.*, 164-65.

⁵ H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1960), 89-127.

seen him going up to heaven" (Acts 1:11). During this period, the Church, in which the Spirit of Christ came, is the domain in which the Royalty of the Lord is manifested; it will be the organ of the glorified Christ, his pleroma, even to the last coming, to the end of time.⁶

The Church is an eschatological grandeur; already she inhabits the heavens, and likewise in her existential mode here below she knows that she is a stranger upon earth, in exile, far from the Lord (1 Pt. 2:11; Heb. 11:13; 2 Cor. 5:6). This is her paradox. "The Church rises and is eternalized in the measure in which she is at each instant created in Christ Jesus."⁷ With Christ, God "raised us up together, and seated us together in heaven" (Eph. 2:6; Col. 1:13). The faithful are already "glorified" (Rom. 8:30). Christ by the oblation of his paschal mystery has consummated for always those whom he has sanctified (Heb. 10:14). The believer "tastes" already the "powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5).

However, the Church who touches the end of time (1 Cor. 10:11), who by the blood of Christ has been snatched "from the wickedness of this present world" (Gal. 1:4), is yet found to be kept existentially in this present world of which it is true that "we see it passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31). Wherefore the incessant recommendations of the Apostle not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2), to "use this world as though not using it" (1 Cor. 7:31), to take advantage of the present situation "because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). These are all exhortations addressed not only to a few isolated faithful, but to the Churches themselves, to which these faithful belong (1 Cor. 1:5-8; 5:2, 6-8; 11:30-32). Even where the Church is presented to us as an ideal eschatological grandeur, the idea does not lack meaning for our wicked world. Thus the Church of the Epistle to the Ephesians must struggle against "the wickedness of men in craftiness, according to the wiles of error" (Eph. 4:14), and against the assaults of the devil (Eph. 6:11 ff.).

The Johannine communities knew that they were of God (1 Jn. 5:18-20) and that their faith had triumphed in the world (1 Jn.

⁶ See R. Schnackenburg, "Wesenszüge und Geheimnis der Kirche nach dem Neuen Testament," *Mysterium Kirche* (Salzburg, 1962), I:97-101.

⁷ See J. Mouroux, *op. cit.*, 174.

5:4). They did not let themselves be troubled by many antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18) and pseudo-prophets (1 Jn. 4:1). The strangers of the Dispersion, to whom St. Peter wrote his epistles, "exult with a joy unspeakable and triumphant" in the faith of their salvation (1 Pt. 1:6, 8-9). The apostle exhorts them to keep this joy during the trials which they will have to endure and which they must consider as normal (1 Pt. 4:12 ff.), "knowing that the same suffering befalls your brethren all over the world" (1 Pt. 5:9). The Epistle to the Hebrews declares that the repose of the seventh day is reserved "for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9), that the faithful must "hasten to enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11), because the road toward that rest is strewn with trials and sufferings (Heb. 1:32-39; 12:4-11). Zeal and perseverance (Heb. 4:11; 6:11; 10:36; 12:1) are necessary to take possession of the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" which is already theirs (Heb. 12:28).⁸

The simultaneous existence of the Church in the world of the heavens and on earth is explained by Father Durrwell as the Church's delay in achieving the full resurrection of her head. "She leads a mysterious, heavenly existence and she is also a visible, empirical reality. Her visible life on earth is related to her delay in achieving the full resurrection of her head."⁹ It is only in her visible ecclesial body that Christ can still have a history. The implication in history constitutes for the Church an imperfection, in this sense that she has not yet attained in plenitude the Christ of glory, delayed as she still is in the sphere of the flesh. And this imperfection is, in short, only the sign of the non-fulfillment of the redemption in her. If the Church is still retained in the sphere of the flesh, it is because she is not, in the strong and particularly exclusive sense, the Kingdom of God and of Christ. And it is in this light that R. Schnackenburg's point of view, which differs very little from that of Father Durrwell, becomes attractive. It is not the Church, it is the Kingdom of God which is the last end of God's salvific plan. The Church continues to pray, as the Master has taught her, "thy kingdom come." Certainly from now on she possesses the "forces of the world to come." But she has not attained all the splendor of the consummated Kingdom of God; she still belongs to the time of increase and maturation. If we

⁸ R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, 160-61.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, 270.

neglect this aspect, we risk making her only an *Ecclēsia gloriāe*, a concept irreconcilable with the data which the New Testament reveals to us about her.

St. Paul refers to the Church "in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle, . . . without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). She is that because of the work of Christ in her and in his intentions. This does not prevent her from being composed of sinful members. The beautiful definition of St. Ambrose, "*Ex maculatis immaculata*,"¹⁰ will always be applicable to her. St. Augustine is only translating the meaning of the faith when he writes: "The whole Church, as long as she remains here below, says 'forgive us our sins' (Mt. 6:12); she is not then here below in all respects without spot or wrinkle; but by all that she receives here below she is led to that glory and perfection which are not from here below."¹¹

If we must not identify the Church with the Kingdom of God, it would be equally, if not more, erroneous to eliminate or lessen the intrinsic relationship of the Church with the Kingdom of God to come. She is an *Ecclēsia crucis*; but she is not only that. She shares with her Lord his passion and glorification, his death and resurrection. But now already she sees and acts under the sign of the resurrection of her Master. All the strength and virtue of the Risen Christ operate in her in view of the future Kingdom. She has received the "keys of the Kingdom" in order to give access to it to her children (Mt. 23:13), through the remission of sins (Mt. 18:18; Mk. 2:10; Jn. 20:23). She received the mandate of the apostolate, evangelization, baptism, and direction of souls (Mt. 28:18-19). She lives by the gift of the Spirit; she knows that the Christ of glory is with her until the end of the world (Mt. 28:20). Her ordering to the Kingdom of God is manifested in an impressive manner in the eucharistic celebration. And it is Christ himself who gave to the institution of the Eucharist this eschatological significance (Mk. 14:25; Mt. 26:29; Lk. 22:16, 18, 30).

The Eucharist is the new covenant in the blood of Christ. The Church, the new people of God to whom, in the eucharistic celebration, is promised the salvific virtue of the blood of Christ (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:24) belongs to this new covenant. All those who celebrate the Eucharist with the Church receive all the

¹⁰ *In Luc.* 1, 17, PL 15:1540-41.

¹¹ *Retract.*, 1, 7, PL 32:593.

animating forces which enable them to share in the Kingdom of God. The celebration of this mystery is like a ritual anticipation of the eschatological repast with the Lord in glory (1 Cor. 11:26).

At the Parousia, the Church, the itinerant people of God, will be enter for always into the sabbatical repose of God and will be reunited with the community of "many thousands of angels and to the Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in the heavens" (Heb. 12:22-23). This will be for her the assumption into a higher unity.¹² We understand that the Church, the eschatological grandeur, living in the existential situation far from the Lord, has felt deeply the nostalgia of the Parousia. This Parousia was awaited as imminent. The formulas which announce this coming hardly vary at all: "The Lord is near" (Phil. 4:5); "the night is far advanced; the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12); "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pt. 4:7); "it is the last hour" (1 Jn. 2:18); "he comes with the clouds" (Apoc. 1:7); "And, behold, I come quickly!" (Apoc. 22:7; 22:20).

But this expectation of an imminent Parousia is not an expectation *with a definite end*; it is rather a *permanent* expectation of the last coming of the Lord who we know with certitude is approaching.¹³ Wherefore the multiple recommendations on the behavior to be followed when it happens: "Vigilance" (Mk. 13:34-37; 14:38; Lk. 12:35 f.; Mt. 25:13; 1 Thes. 5:6; 1 Cor. 16:13; Apoc. 16:15); "constant readiness" (Lk. 12:40; Mt. 24:44); "sobriety" (1 Thes. 5:6, 8; 1 Pt. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8); "constancy" (Lk. 8:15; 21:19; Rom. 5:3 f.; 8:25; 1 Thes. 1:3; Heb. 10:36; 12:1; Apoc. 13:10; 14:12). These are all virtues of expectation, called prayer, and are fulfilled by it (Mt. 14:38; 1 Thes. 5:17; Eph. 6:18).

Within the Church, that which has falsely been called the delay of the Parousia, has engendered a crisis, but only on its fringes. There the scoffers at the last days cry out: "Where is the promise of his coming? . . . all things continue as they were from the beginning" (2 Pt. 3:4). St. Peter refutes them (2:3; 5-8) and gives to the faithful they are seeking to overthrow the teaching which

¹² R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, 160-61, 189-95; R. Grosche, *Pilgernde Kirche* (Freiburg/Br., 1938), 42 f.; L. Certaux, *La théologie de l'Église saint Paul* (Paris, 1942), 262 ff.

¹³ "Diese Naherwartung ist eher eine *Stetservartung*." H. Schürmann; see also R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, 141.

baffles all apocalyptic computation: "One day with the lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pt. 3:8). It is the divine mercy which explains the supposed delays of the Parousia. This latter will come unexpectedly: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief" (1 Pt. 3:10). In short, in the New Testament, it is with difficulty that we shall feel a diminution of the eschatological tension.¹⁴

II. THE CHURCH AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DYNAMISM OF THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

Christ's Church still in pilgrimage is betwixt and between: between the Synagogue on the one hand and the perfect Kingdom on the other hand. There is a continuity between the material Israel of the Old Testament and the spiritual Israel of the New; and there is continuity between the Kingdom of God inaugurated on earth in the Church and the perfected Kingdom in the heavenly Jerusalem. But these continuities are not of the same nature. From the Synagogue to the Church there is a continuity between the figure and the reality; between the Church of the earth and the heavenly Jerusalem there is a continuity between the two forms of the same reality. The Old Covenant with its institutions was simply a sign of the New Covenant, of the Church of Christ. The Church on earth with its institutions is the efficacious sign, the eschatological sacrament of the heavenly Jerusalem, one which prepares us efficaciously for our ultimate achievement in the Christ of glory. The Church of the earth

lives already the definitive realities which are heavenly; she is in continuity not only of annunciation but of reality with the Kingdom. But she is still engaged in an exile far from the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6); by that she is related to the Synagogue and must put into operation a whole mechanism and instrumentation, a whole order of means. She sees some last realities and already she holds them more in expectation and in hope; but she holds them only in part (1 Cor. 13:9-12), in pledge, as St. Paul says, "through a mirror, in an obscure manner," and not in the full light of day.¹⁵

As an institution, the Church is the sacrament of our passage in

¹⁴ R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, 141.

¹⁵ Y. Congar, "L'Eucharistie et l'Eglise," *Les votes du Dieu vivant* (Paris, 1962), 197; see also F. X. Durrwell, *op. cit.*, 271.

Christ, to the Father; she is not terminal, she is not an end in herself, but a means. She remains for us the efficacious sacrament of Christ and his redemptive mystery. She maintains us in perpetual tension toward the clear development of this mystery. It is in this perspective that we must place the sacraments of the Church. "The sacramental element in the Church, being adapted to our temporal condition, is destined to disappear in the face of the definitive reality which it effectively signifies; but this should not be thought of as one thing's effacing another. It will be the manifestation of sacramentality's own proper truth; a glorious epiphany and a consummation."¹⁶ Our sacraments, which are mysteries of salvation, have a triple reference according to the very dimensions of our salvation, that is, to the mystery of the Passion and the Resurrection of our Lord, a mystery accomplished in the historical past of Christ, and, in that sense, irreversible. In the present that we are living, they are the efficacious signs of participation in the redemptive mystery such as it is eternalized in the holy humanity of the glorified Christ and the graces of sanctification which obtain this participation for us. Finally, for our eternal future, they are signs which prepare us efficaciously for our definitive communion with the Christ of glory.¹⁷

Here below, no matter how great the realities of our sacraments, they remain veiled under the sign. They will be fully revealed when the signs which hide them will have vanished. This is true of the sacraments as of the faith through which we see here below the mysteries revealed only in a mirror and in an obscure manner—*per speculum et in aenigmate* (1 Cor. 13:12). It is at the end of this terrestrial existence that we shall contemplate them without veils, in an eternal "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). And just as our faith here below holds us in tension toward the beatific vision, and our hope toward the full possession of the Kingdom, so the sacraments remind us constantly that we are pilgrims on the earth, en route towards the true promised land, toward the sabbatical rest of God (Heb. 4:9 ff.).

But there is more and better. The sacraments not only make us

¹⁶ See H. de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, tr. by Michael Mason (Sheed and Ward, New York, 1956), 42.

¹⁷ See St. Thomas, *op. cit.*, III, q. 60, a. 3.

take cognizance of our itinerant condition, they are all, each one in its own manner, viaticums of our terrestrial pilgrimage. They sustain us in our march toward the definitive Kingdom. Our passage from this world toward the heavenly Jerusalem is accomplished in communion with the Christ who has passed through death into the glory of his Father. Our sacraments are efficacious signs of our communion with Christ who died and rose again. Nevertheless, the fact that they are signs of communion with the death of Christ is more perceptibly marked than the fact that they are efficaciously the heralds of our final triumph with the Lord.

Our sacraments are not heaven on earth; even the Eucharist is not this. But they orient us effectively toward that supreme reality where the glorified Christ awaits us. St. Paul describes our glorification as already achieved in principle in Christ Jesus our Head (Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1-4). It remains for all his members to actualize it for themselves.¹⁸ As for the Eucharist, it is already, as we say, a mysterious realization of the eschatological Kingdom.

III. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DYNAMISM OF THE VARIOUS SACRAMENTS

An eschatological dynamism operates in all the sacraments of the Church since they are all institutions of salvation proper to our itinerant condition here on earth. They orient us efficaciously toward the Parousia. This dynamism, however, is more clearly discernible in some sacraments, less obvious and apparent in others. While taking into account this difference, which effects no basic change in the sacraments, it will not be without interest to indicate the special eschatological character of each sacrament.

Baptism is a plunge into Christ and his mystery of death and resurrection. "Do you not know that all we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized unto his death? For we were buried with him by means of baptism unto death, in order that, just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we

¹⁸ See Michael Schmaus, *op. cit.*, IV, 106.

shall be so in the likeness of his resurrection also" (Rom. 6:3-5).

Re-created in the risen Christ and having become in him a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), a "new man" (Eph. 2:15), we have also entered with Christ into glory. In his letters from captivity, St. Paul considers the resurrection and the triumph of baptized Christians as a reality already mystically acquired.

"God . . . brought us to life together with Christ . . . and raised us up together and seated us together in heaven in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:12; 3:1-4). By the fact of our resurrection with Christ through holy Baptism, we are already dead to the life of the present world and our own life is *henceforth* hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3-4). Consequently, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear in his last coming, then we also, full of glory, shall appear with him (Col. 3:4; 1 Jn. 3:2).

There is, then, an intrinsic continuity of the life of the baptized person in the life of Christ, of his glory in the glory of Christ. There is an appeal of one to the other. Nevertheless, not only our soul, but our body also has entered through Baptism into the mystery of the risen Christ. The Apostle tells us, "we ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit—we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). This plenary redemption is not expected as a contingent reality; it is a certitude—as certain as the resurrection of Christ. "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ risen" (1 Cor. 15:13) and then the whole mystery of the redemption entered into by the baptized person would only be a snare (1 Cor. 15:17). The mystery of our Baptism will be fully realized then, in fact, at the time of our corporeal resurrection in Christ. All those who are dead in Christ shall live again in Christ at the moment of the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:23). Thus Baptism is at the root of our eschatological hope.

By confirmation, the baptized Christian has received—and this is the special grace of this sacrament—the Spirit of Pentecost, in order to be the intrepid witness of the risen Christ before men. The Acts of the Apostles, which describes for us the history of the primitive Church, is not so much the Gospel of the Spirit as the Gospel of the Resurrection of Jesus, proclaimed with the power of

the Spirit (Acts 4:33).¹⁹ Indeed, the Spirit does not give glory to himself but to the risen Christ. Christ was the faithful witness of the Father (1 Tm. 6:13); the Spirit is the faithful witness of the Son (Jn. 15:26).

Confirmed persons who are under the direction of the Spirit will bear witness in the Church to the risen Christ and will obtain from the Christ of glory the recompense for their fidelity at the time of the final judgment. "Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Mt. 10:32; Lk. 9:26). In the Apocalypse, the witnesses of Christ are held in honor. "And there came . . . the time for the dead to be judged and for giving the reward to thy servants, the prophets . . ." (11:18), those who have triumphed over the Dragon "through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their witness" (12:11).

One of the aspects of the mystery of the redemption is that it was a triumphal judgment exercised by God over sin. Christ has assumed the sin of humanity into his own flesh, and it is in the flesh of his own Son that God has judged and condemned sin.

By love and filial obedience Christ submitted to this judgment of condemnation of sin (Is. 53:10; 53:11-12; Jn. 14:30-31). And it is from this submission that Christ's victory over sin and Satan, his triumph of Risen One and his universal Lordship have arisen (Is. 53:10; Jn. 12:28-32; Phil. 2:8-9); from this submission, liberating salvation has also come to us.

If the faithful person who has obtained his liberation from sin by Baptism, the sacrament of regeneration, has relapsed into sin and is separated from the Lord, through Penance, the sacrament of the second conversion, he will have to communicate with Christ the Redeemer in the mystery of his voluntary submission to his Father's judgment over sin. Through the paschal sacrament of reconciliation Christ attracts the penitent Christian to this submission eternally actualized in his glorious humanity. In return, God the Father makes this repentant Christian share in the Lordship

¹⁹ See Divo Barsotti, *Vie mystique et mystère liturgique* (Paris, 1954), 207-208.

of life of his risen Son, according to the fervor of his penitential acts.

Envisioned in the light of the integral mystery of our redemption, namely, death and resurrection in Christ Jesus, the sacrament of Penance is like an anticipated and merciful résumé of the judgment which God through his Son will exercise at the end of time. In the sacramental act of Penance there is something of the glory of the last judgment, something of the last act of that judgment which God through his Son does not cease to bear on the sinfulness of men.

It is Jesus Christ, the judge of our heart—and he alone, operating in the soul by his Spirit of penance—who renders us perfect penitents; it is he who judges us invisibly in the priest, in whom he is present as he is present in the bosom of his Father where he forgives all sins, as he said in the Gospel (Mt. 18:18): "Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." Confession is a judgment advanced on us, which will exempt us from the judgment of horror and confusion in which God will one day pronounce our condemnation in the face of everyone.²⁰

It is an outstanding grace for the penitent Christian to go before this judge at the time of God's patience to be pardoned by him through the mediation of Christ. Freely submitted to Christ's tribunal of reconciliation, he is authorized to await in joyous confidence "the blessed hope and glorious coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Ti. 2:13).

Theologians who regard the sacramental Anointing of the Sick as a consecration of Christian death (*Todesweih*) have no difficulty in marking the eschatological character of this sacrament. Indeed, they see in the dying person a replica of Christ passing from the humiliation of the weak flesh into his Father's life and glory. Thus, for the dying Christian, Extreme Unction is the realization of the paschal mystery inaugurated at Baptism, a realization which will not, however, be complete until the resurrection of the dead.

²⁰ See J. J. Olier, *Instructions sur la vie chrétienne et sacerdotale* (Paris, 1937), 167-68.

We have adopted the perspective of St. James (5:14-16) and of Tradition up to the Middle Ages, that is, that the Anointing is the sacrament of the sick and not exclusively of the dying; it is a sacrament instituted to restore spiritual and corporal vigor to the infirm Christian. But then, should we not renounce every eschatological perspective of this sacrament? That is to be seen.

Since sickness is a result of sin, the purpose of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is to exorcise the illness of the attachment to sin. Now the liberation of the sick person from the attachments to sin that is ordained by the sacrament is the beginning of a definitive liberation, and the vigor of health recovered by the sacrament is a beginning of definitive sanctity. Just as in the Eucharist there is a seed of immortality, there is in the sacrament of the sick a supernatural power of the physical order looking to the future resurrection, revealing itself already in our corporeal life. Thus, in the main, the sacramental anointing of the sick is a positive beginning toward the total deliverance from the attachments to sin which will coincide with our death, and toward the perfect health of our body when it will be glorified in the image of the glorious body of Jesus our Head. "We eagerly await a Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of his glory by exerting the power by which he is able also to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

The union of Christian spouses is taken up through the sacrament of marriage into the order of grace (Eph. 5:22-32). It is, for those concerned, as we have explained above, a sacramental "ramification" of the union of Christ and of the Church. But it is that only during the earthly life of the married couple.

In the ancient Church, the marriage of widows was not very highly esteemed. To symbolize more perfectly the union of Christ and the Church, even after the death of one of the spouses, it was thought that the survivor, in his widowhood, had to remain faithful to the memory of the deceased spouse. And then, in the eyes of certain of the Fathers, second marriages were an indication of incontinence. Without reproving them positively as Tertullian did, they advised against it. Thus St. Ambrose; "non prohibi-

bemus secundas nuptias, sed non probemus saepe repetitas."²¹ St. Jerome, to whom some cited the concession of St. Paul, answered: "*Aliud est quod vult Apostolus, aliud quod cogitur velle.*" In other words, the Apostle permits a second marriage only reluctantly; he does not wish it, he tolerates it because of the incontinence of those who seek it.²²

But, to tell the truth, even the first marriage does not represent perfectly the indissoluble union of Christ and the Church. Only virginity, the total gift of self to the risen Christ, attains these heights. St. Augustine, who defends the sanctity of marriage, says in regard to virgins: "Those who have vowed to God their virginity are for all that not without marriage. Although they enjoy a higher rank of honor and holiness in the Church, nevertheless they share in the nuptial union with the whole Church in which Christ is the Spouse."²³ They participate in greater measure because they are totally vowed to the Lord. Nevertheless, as Barsotti observes, "Baptismal consecration demands in its perfection that the soul be not divided, but that it be reserved completely for its Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-34), and consequently it tends naturally to virginity."²⁴ It is through the virginity toward which it tends that the marriage is properly eschatological.²⁵ "The children of this world," said our Lord, "marry and are given in marriage. But those who shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor take wives. . . . For they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Lk. 20:34-36).²⁶

Let us compare this evangelical text with that of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "The time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none; . . . for this world as we see it is

²¹ *De viduis*, XI, PL 16:267-68.

²² *Epist. ad Ageruchiam*, PL 22, 1050; see also Schuster, *Liber sacramentorum*, I:233.

²³ *Tract. in Joh.*, 9, 2, PL 35:1459.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, 424.

²⁵ See Durrwell, *op. cit.*, 278-79; see also his *In the Redeeming Christ*, especially the chapter on Christian virginity, pages 169-89 (translated by Rosemary Sheed [New York, 1963]).

²⁶ In a gathering of ecclesiastics, there was talk of a family of ten children, eight of whom had become religious. Whereupon one of the priests present said: "At this rate, the world will soon come to an end" and one of his confrères replied, "It really couldn't end in a better way."

passing away" (1 Cor. 7:29-31).²⁷ Christian married couples should not remain tributaries of the flesh to the point of forgetting to the Lord to whom they belong, both of them, before belonging to each other! They will realize this ideal in the risen Christ. "For all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

The eschatology of the sacrament of Holy Orders hardly needs to be pointed out. It is inscribed in all the functions of the priest which are functions of the ministerial mediation and ordained to the progress of God's Kingdom in the Church. Of this Kingdom the priest must announce the splendors and the exigences; of this Kingdom he has received the keys, as minister of the sacrament of Penance; these keys he holds in virtue of the Holy Spirit through the mandate of the risen Christ, the merciful Judge, and he uses them *in persona Christi* (Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:23). All his pastoral activity consists in guiding the souls confided to him in their passage from this life to the Christ of glory. In the eucharistic celebration he is bound to the eternal oblation of the risen Pontiff, since the sacrifice of the Mass is the sacramental actualization of the redemptive mystery eternalized in the glorified humanity of the eternal Priest.

²⁷ When St. Paul asks Christians "to use this world as though not using it," he does not condemn the world, God's creature; he merely denounces its insufficiency and wishes us to use it with detachment.

The liturgy frequently reminds us to look at earthly things from above: *terrena despiciere*;—that does not mean to despise creation, but to open it to the redemption. It is to love it so much that we summon it to total salvation in Jesus Christ.

"It is this necessity of opening all terrestrial reality to the grace which brings the Christian the aforementioned attitudes of 'detachment.' He uses this world with detachment, not because the created world is not good but because it is not sufficient. This deficiency situates it in a whole which surpasses it. It is seized in the law of the cross (Lk. 14:33)."

"This renunciation does not mean despising created things, but arranging them in their uses. It is, finally, the only manner of truly enjoying them; to seek what they cannot give is to be disappointed and end up in disgust. To ask them to give us what they can give is to know how to use them. The joy of creation set into its place arises for the Christian from the cross which dominates it." (L. Lochet, *Le Fils de Dieu* [Paris, 1963], 389).

The danger of the created world is in its insufficiency. To engulf oneself in created things is the sin of the modern world.

The Eucharist is the perfect realization of the Church here below. It is this sacrament especially, as we have said before, which makes the Church. In no other sacrament is the eschatological dynamism so manifest as in the Eucharist, that dynamism to which Scripture as well as the liturgy attests so highly. St. Luke places the institution of the Eucharist between the last Jewish paschal meal which Jesus took with his Apostles and the repast of the Parousia which he will take with his own in his Kingdom. "And when the hour had come, he reclined at table, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said to them, 'I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you that I will eat of it no more until it has been fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' And having taken a cup he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and share it among you; for I say to you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes'" (Lk. 22:14-18). This is the repast of the Jewish Passover and of the Old Covenant, the farewell meal with his disciples which the ritual repast of the New Covenant, more than a farewell meal, will now follow. "And having taken bread, he gave thanks and broke, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In like manner he took also the cup after the supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you'" (Lk. 22:19-20).

The Eucharist remains the memorial repast of the redemptive passion of Jesus, but it is a memorial which renders sacramentally present the whole redemptive mystery through which Christ remains united to his own, even to the accomplishment of the Kingdom in the communion of the definitive eschatological repast. The Eucharist opens not only an eschatological perspective; it is itself a ritual anticipation of the future Kingdom, a sacramental preparation of the familial repast which has disciples will take with him in his Kingdom (Lk. 22:30). St. Paul, who relates the Last Supper in almost the same terms as St. Luke, adds: "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The finale of the text of St. Paul, "until he comes," signifies

without doubt that the Eucharist will cease with the last coming of the Son of Man; but in the eucharistic celebration is actualized also the very mystery of the parousia. The apostle notes expressly that "whoever eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27); he "eats and drinks judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29), for he eats and drinks the Christ who judges him.

The Eucharistic sacrifice not only renders the act of the death of Christ sacramentally present, although this presence may be particularly marked by the sacramental signs, it also renders present his resurrection and the mystery of the parousia which is implied in the mystery of the resurrection.²⁸ Consequently, the eschatological dynamism of the Eucharist is not exercised from this sacrament only, it is exercised from the very interior of the sacramental mystery. As Father Durrwell says, "The ritual meal, which is the perfect realization of the Church on earth, bears within it all the eschatological force that belongs to God's people on earth. It is a meal of the end of time, taken with the risen Christ in whom is the end of the world. The presence of Christ means the arrival of the *parousia*; until then, the Savior comes, as it were, incognito, but it is a real coming, similar in all essentials to the final one."²⁹

If, according to the *Unde et memores* of our Roman Mass, the Eucharist is the memorial of the "blessed passion, the resurrection from the dead and the glorious ascension of Christ" it is because the glorified Christ actualized in it his whole saving mystery,

²⁸ See Barsoffi, *op. cit.*, 203-209.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, 328-29. "In the Eucharist, Christians proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes—without knowing when. The certitude and the mystery form a unit in the affirmation of the faith. The result is known as unknown. Christ is the beginning, the center and the end of time; but we hope that even that mystery may be revealed to us some day."

"What is most important for us is to know that he who measures the time of salvation is truly present to us and that he lives in his own people, in his body. It is this presence which constitutes the eschatological character of our time. He who has come, he who must come, he is present to us and lives among us. In this presence of the eternal Savior the eschatological time finds at once its *foundation*, because it is Christ who opens it, sustains it, and closes it; its *efficacious significance* because Christ makes it the mediation of his presence and his salvation; its definitive structure because it is constituted by a presence in which the redemptive past and the redemptive consummation are always operating in the bosom of a sinful world, unfaithful, called, and yet, if it consents, saved." (J. Mouroux, *op. cit.*, 167).

eternalized as it is in his risen humanity. The parousia of the Lord is integrated to this mystery.

This is what the oriental liturgies reveal. The liturgy of St. Mark enumerates, in the *anamnesis*, all the mysteries of the redemption: "Announcing the death of your only-begotten Son . . . and confessing his blessed resurrection from the dead after three days, and his ascension, and his sitting at the right hand of you, God and Father, and awaiting his second coming, terrible and awesome, . . ." ³⁰ The Coptic liturgy of St. Gregory the theologian prays: "And now, Lord, we celebrate also the memory of your coming down to earth, of your vivifying death, your burial for three days, your resurrection from the dead, your ascension into heaven, your sitting at the right hand of the Father, and your second coming."³¹

In the enumeration of the steps of the redemptive mystery, the *Apostolic Constitutions* of the fourth century insist particularly on "the future second coming in which he [Christ] will come with glory and power to judge the living and the dead and to render to each one according to his works."³² In a goodly number of *anaphoras*, the authors are not satisfied merely to quote the words of the Master: "Do this in memory of me." They amplify them and, enlarging upon them, they place on the lips of Jesus the declaration of St. Paul (1 Cor. 11:26). Thus an Egyptian *anaphora* of the fifth century, inserted into the Ambrosian liturgy of Milan, states: "Each time that you do this, do it in memory of me; profess my death, announce my resurrection, hope in my coming until I come again from the heavens to you."³³

We see that these oriental *anamneses*, more than those of the West, have remained faithful to the eschatological spirit of the first Christian generations who expected at each "breaking of the bread," in an increasing tension, the triumphal coming of the Savior at the end of time. *Maranatha*, Come, O Lord!

From numerous secret and postcommunion prayers of our

³⁰ See Brightman, *Liturgia sancti Marci*, 133; A. Croegaert, *Les rites et les prières du saint sacrifice de la Messe* (Malines, 1948), III: 199-200.

³¹ See A. Croegaert, *op. cit.*, 200.

³² *Constitutiones apost.*, I, 8, c. 12, 38; see also Croegaert, *op. cit.*, 200.

³³ See Croegaert, *op. cit.*, 200; also Le Brun, *Explication de la Messe* (Paris, 1943), II: 180.

of our sacraments introduces us, cannot leave us indifferent. As Father Teilhard de Chardin put it: "Expectation . . . is perhaps the supreme Christian function. . . . Successors to Israel, we Christians have been charged with keeping the flame of desire ever alive in the world. Only twenty centuries have passed since the Ascension. What have we made of our expectancy?"⁴¹

⁴¹ *The Divine Milieu*, 134-35; see also H. de Lubac, *La pensée religieuse du Père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1962), 37.

Roman Missal it is evident that the Church of the West does not look upon the Eucharist as heaven already installed upon earth. In spite of the intimate union which this sacrament realizes between the communicant and the Lord of glory, or rather, by very reason of this union, the Church does not cease to ask that the Eucharistic mystery make us participants of the eternal life, of the eternal redemption.

"We ask you, almighty God, that we may receive the effect of that salvation of which we have received the pledge in these mysteries."³⁴

"Through the reception of your sacrament, grant us, O Lord, to advance more and more toward eternal redemption."³⁵

"O Lord, we ask you to grant that we who have received the pledge of life everlasting may yearn for it and so be able to attain it."³⁶

"O Lord, we bring you the gifts to be offered. May they be a sign of your support now so that we may not despair of the promises of life eternal."³⁷

"Almighty God, we ask you that by ever celebrating these holy rites we may be found worthy to gain the gifts of heaven."³⁸

"O Lord, we pray that your sacraments bring about in us what they contain. May we inwardly obtain what is now signified in outward signs."³⁹

The evening Masses introduced into our Christian communities must sharpen in the faithful the eschatological meaning of the eucharistic communion. François Mauriac wrote in *Figaro littéraire*: "Now that there are evening Masses, I can prepare myself for communion before going to sleep, a preparation which does not resemble that of the morning; it prefigures our last communion. This evening I am going to 'go to sleep in the Lord,' without, however, dying; at least, unless it is my time to die."⁴⁰

In any case, the eschatological tension in which the dynamism

³⁴ Postcommunion for the fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

³⁵ Postcommunion for Thursday of the second week of Lent.

³⁶ Postcommunion for Friday of the second week of Lent.

³⁷ Secret for Tuesday of Passion Week.

³⁸ Postcommunion for Tuesday of Passion Week.

³⁹ Postcommunion for Ember Saturday in September.

⁴⁰ *Figaro littéraire* (April 13, 1963), 22.

The
DYNAMIC POWER
OF OUR
SACRAMENTS

BY

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