

# Wine, bread, and water, between doctrine and alternative. Norms and practical issues concerning the Eucharist and baptism in thirteenth-century Europe

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**Abstract.** Guillaume Durand's *Rationale divinarum officiorum* was a liturgical encyclopedia which soon became the most important work of its kind, and thus represents an invaluable resource for the study of various aspects of liturgy and ritual in late thirteenth-century Europe. This contribution focuses on norms featured in the *Rationale* regarding two Christian sacraments - the Eucharist and baptism - for they were held to originate from the same source (the wound on Christ's side caused by the spear thrown by a Roman soldier). Both of these sacraments required elements for the administration (wine, water, bread) which had to meet specific characteristics, and this generated several issues, mainly concerning their availability and other practical issues. This study analyzes such characteristics and occasional proposals to replace the aforementioned elements by contextualizing Guillaume's work within a wider intellectual and normative context, including Thomas Aquinas and earlier canon law. The intention is to show: 1) how fundamental a role normativity played in drawing the line between liturgy, heresy, and desecration; and 2) that normativity had to take practicality into account.

**Keywords.** Guillaume Durand; Eucharist; baptism; medieval canon law.

## 1. A key figure in canon law tradition: Guillaume Durand

Émile Durkheim said that there is no religion without ritual, because there cannot be religion without practice (Durkheim 1995: 33-35). At the same time, there cannot be religion without community, for "individuals derive their religious beliefs from the way in which the sacred force is created in ritual" (Barberis 2013: 217). In the words of Dutch linguist Jan Koster, "there is plenty of ritual without religion, but there is no religion without ritual" (Koster 2003: 222). Rituals elicit deep emotions in the

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followers and engage them, generating what Durkheim called “collective effervescence”. This is true for all religions, and for Christianity *in primis*. First of all, because at the core of Christian faith and liturgy is an extremely thorny concept: God offers his body and his blood everyday, at Mass, for believers to eat and drink. The power of this concept is clearly double-edged and displayed its pros and cons since very early Christian times (Rordorf 1976; Kelly 2006: 211ff.; Bradshaw 2012). On the one hand, it conveniently annihilates the distance between followers and deity, and thus results remarkably appealing (McKenna 2009: 140; Astell 2006). The problem is that it literally throws said deity to the people, with all related issues – such as accusations of religious cannibalism (McGowan 1994; Grant 1981; Henrichs 1970; Rives 1995; Price 2003: 26, 31). Since the age of the Fathers, a number of treatises addressed this aspect of Christian faith and explained that this was no figure of speech, and that God was truly present in the elements of the bread and the wine (Brouard 2002; Snoek 1995; Kilmartin 2004; Maraschi 2017: 211; Izbicki 2015; Rubin 1991). But then, in turn, this implied that any malicious - or simply “superstitious” - follower could take advantage of the presence of God in the elements for magical purposes, for instance (Maraschi 2017). This represented a concrete danger, and several references can be found in penitentials, *exempla* and other Christian texts from all over medieval Europe.

The example of the eucharistic liturgy has the sole aim of introducing the matter of how critical normativity was in the establishment of the correct Christian doctrine, and in avoiding dangerous misuses of sacred elements of the liturgy<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the present contribution focuses the attention on a key figure in the (re-)formulation of norms and prescriptions in the Western Christendom: that of Guillaume Durand. The Bishop of Mende, in Provence, was a civil and canon law scholar, and is best known among other things for the composition of the *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, or “Rationale for the Divine Offices”, which was brought to completion

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<sup>2</sup> Starting from the twelfth century, the Church defined the seven sacraments and their respective rites and characteristics. The process was stimulated by Gratian’s invaluable effort, that is, the publication of the *Decretum* (ca. 1140). With the *Decretum*, canon law became a discipline in the schools of Bologna, Paris and more, even though it did not immediately answer to many contemporary problems of its time (Izbicki 2015: 1-20; Pennington and Müller 2008: 121-122; Levy 2012). A specific section of the *Decretum*, the *Tractatus de consecratione ecclesiae*, addressed the central rites performed in churches, including the Eucharist and baptism (Izbicki 2015: 2). A fundamental passage in the development of canon law after Gratian was represented by the Lateran councils, especially the fourth (1215), convoked by Innocent III. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, canon law’s main sources were papal decretal letters, later collected by Gregory IX in the *Liber extra* (1234) (*ibidem*).

in the years 1294-96. The *Rationale* was part of the genre of *Expositiones Missae* (Jungmann 1986; Reynolds 1986; Vogel 1986), that is, texts which explained the meaning of liturgical ceremonies. The tradition behind this genre began already in the fourth century and thrived in Carolingian times. Later, the *Expositiones Missae* were progressively incorporated into the canon law literature by the time of Guillaume Durand. French historian Charles Barthélemy, who translated the *Rationale* around the half of the nineteenth century, noted that it was a “useful and fundamental work for the understanding of all artistic and religious traditions of the Middle Ages” (*Rational ou Manuel des divins offices* 1854: viii)<sup>3</sup>, and held that the compilation represented “bread for all the people, from the child to the elderly, from the learned to the ignorant man” (*ibidem*). Durand’s liturgical encyclopedia was aimed precisely at helping Christians to grasp the very sense of ceremonies and rituals which were otherwise impenetrable.

The work is divided in eight books, each addressing different subjects concerning various aspects of liturgy: the characteristics of churches, liturgical art, the tasks of church ministers, the Divine Office, and so on. The *Rationale* was then meant to be a liturgical commentary which was aimed at defining and regulating a wide variety of aspects regarding worship, and thus joined a tradition of earlier similar works authored by intellectuals of the likes of Amalarius of Metz, Honorius of Autun, Hugh of St. Victor and others. As a matter of fact, Guillaume Durand is not an “original” source in the same sense as – for example – Burchard of Worms was when he wrote his famous penitential known as *Corrector*. He was not original because that was not his purpose: the *Rationale* had the precise intention of collecting, fixing, and explaining earlier norms (Thibodeau 2007: x). “I have industriously collected this work, like a honeybee”, Guillaume states at the end of his work,

“from various booklets and the commentaries of others, as well as from the things which the divine grace has suggested me. And, supported by the protection of God, I have offered this doctrine which contains a nectar, like a honeycomb, to those who are willing to indulge in the study of divine offices” (RDO 1995-2000, 140B, VIII, Ch. 14)<sup>4</sup>.

Guillaume’s plan was then to compile a *summa* of earlier liturgical

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<sup>3</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>4</sup> Translation mine.

allegorical commentaries, for the benefit of all those who wanted to delve into the study of Christian ritual and worship. In doing this, it was so efficient that it “superseded all previous liturgical commentaries within only a few years of its publication” (Thibodeau 2007: xxii; Guyg 1997, 1998), and soon became one of the fundamental commentaries of this kind in Western Europe. This is proven, among other things, by the massive number of copies – both manuscripts and printed books – which were made of this work in the following centuries, not to mention its vernacular translations.

The reason why such a kind of treatise was of major importance in the Christian world was due to the complexity of Christian liturgy itself, which required careful and detailed explanations – whether more or less allegorical. As earlier noted, the eucharistic liturgy was undoubtedly the central ritual around which worship and prayer orbited, one which – as appealing as it looked – entailed a series of problems that could surface depending on the situation. Guillaume Durand featured numerous norms concerning the Eucharist and the symbolic and ritual role of food in the *Rationale*, simply because they had been a fundamental concern until his time and would continue to be so for a long time. It could not have been otherwise. The analysis of such rules can represent a fruitful approach if one is interested in the macro-theme of religious normativity, for they cast light on: 1) a wide variety of issues connected with the core rituals of Christianity, and 2) alternatives that were proposed by European bishops and priests depending on the social, cultural, and economic context within which they lived. Consequently, it also allows to study the Church’s answer to such alternatives, which could be either positive or – most frequently – negative, for several reasons.

The eucharistic liturgy, its origins, and its role in early Christian worship have been studied by many eminent scholars (Goguel 1910; Keating 1969; Rordorf 1976; Richardson 1979; Feeley-Harnik 1981; Smith 2003), but most notably by Andrew McGowan (McGowan 1994, 1995, 1999, 2010, 2014), who has highlighted key aspects of the problem with great attention to the relationship between the eucharistic meal and other convivial practices in the late Roman age. As for the symbolic meaning of food in Christian ritual and sacraments, historiographic tradition is extremely wide (see, e.g., Henisch 1976; Bynum 1987; Reynolds 1999; Montanari 1999: 77; 2012: 157). On the other hand, universal messages imply the use of universal symbols, and in Jewish-Christian tradition these symbols corresponded to the Mediterranean triad of grain, oil and wine (Maraschi 2011: 561) - examples are countless (e.g., *Sermones inediti* 1865, 6, 835).

The aim of the present contribution is to analyze the cases of two

sacraments, the Eucharist and baptism, for they traditionally presented problems concerning the material elements necessary for the performance (bread, wine, water), and were thus widely addressed by medieval works of canon law. The intention is to show how fundamental was for Christian theologians and scholars – and, consequently, in Guillaume Durand's *Rationale* - to precisely describe the characteristics that said elements needed to match for the administration to be valid, and in order to avoid heresy, desecration, or misuse.

## 2. The eucharistic liturgy: wine and bread

Given the considerable symbolic and practical importance of food in Christian liturgy and ritual, it is no wonder that it represented a critical element in a cornerstone of religious normativity such as that compiled by Guillaume Durand. Nor is surprising that a wide section of the *Rationale* is dedicated to the basic elements for the administration of sacraments and to the eucharistic species. A critical factor at the basis of the matter is John's description of the crucifixion of Christ (Izbicki 2015: 37-40), where it is said that when the Romans soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, this brought "a sudden flow of blood and water" ("et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua"; Jn 19:34). Durand, quoting a passage from Pope Innocent III's *De celebratione Missarum*, hints at a key controversy concerning the second element - the water - which some theologians believed became "a humour which derives from water, that is, phlegm", instead (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). The issue was no triviality. In fact, Guillaume immediately explains that two liquids and two actual sacraments "flowed" from Christ's side: 1) blood, and the sacrament of the redemption in the blood; 2) water, and the sacrament of regeneration in the water. Indeed, "we do not baptize in phlegm, but in water", writes Guillaume (*ibidem*)<sup>5</sup>.

The Eucharist and baptism were then symbolically linked with each other, since the basic elements necessary for their administration derived from the very same source, from which they flowed simultaneously: the wound caused by the spear in Christ's side. Furthermore, water represented a critical factor in the transubstantiation process as well, namely when it was mixed in the chalice with the eucharistic wine, as was customary at the beginning of the ritual. Many centuries earlier, St. Ambrose had further justified the

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<sup>5</sup> "...non enim baptizamur in flegmate sed in aqua..."

addition of water to the wine by referring to the Old Testament's scene where Moses strikes a rock with his rod and water flows from it (Wawrykow 2012: 68; Saxon 2012: 99). The image is reprised in a letter to the Corinthians: "et omnes eundem potum spiritalem biberunt bibebant autem de spiritali consequenti eos petra petra autem erat Christus" (1Cor10:4: "for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ"). In 1202, Pope Innocent III addressed the whole matter in his highly influential decretal *Cum Marthae* ("De aqua vino admixta in sacrificio Missae"<sup>6</sup>, DS 1957, 193-194), which obviously Guillaume knew and quoted (Levy 2012: 441). Innocent was aware that scholars had various opinions about the problem (DS 1957, 193-194), because it was not clearly explained in the Scriptures how the water could turn into the blood of Christ along with the wine. Among such opinions, Innocent held that the more probable was that "the water, together with the wine, is changed into the blood": a mediating explanation that clearly wanted to dodge complications.

A few years before Guillaume, the Doctor of the Church Thomas Aquinas had commented on these very key matters in his *Summa Theologiae* (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. viii, 154), literally providing a summary of the fundamental positions around this and other issues. Some believed that the water did not change ("per se manet") when the wine was changed into blood; others held that, when the wine was turned into blood, the water was turned into the water "quae de latere Christi fluxit" (that is, in the water that flowed from Christ's side; *ibidem*). This nonetheless, Thomas endorses Innocent III's opinion.

The composition of the mix, that is, the balance between water and wine, was important too: "if one pours more water than wine in the chalice, the sacrament is invalid [*irritum*]", Guillaume states (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). This was a delicate aspect, for the Gospels seem to suggest that water and wine flowed from Christ's side in equal quantity (Grumett 2016: 64ff.; Izbicki 2015: 68). At the end of the thirteenth century, however, the official position of the Church remained that of Innocent III's decretal on the celebration of Mass. Priests who overlooked to add the water to the wine in the chalice may have been variously punished, depending on the cause: if they simply forgot to do it, it was considered a venial sin, but was deemed a mortal sin if the omission was due to negligence (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). In any case, the sacrament would result invalid.

Utmost care was to be dedicated to the bread, as well. "The bread itself,

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<sup>6</sup> "On the water mixed with the wine in the sacrifice of the Mass".

which is made of wheat”, notes Guillaume on the basis of Innocent III’s decretal, “cannot be consecrated in the Eucharist, if a grain of barley or oat is accidentally mixed with it” (ibidem). Indeed, as shown for instance in *exempla* tradition, the very baking of the Host was an extremely delicate process in itself (Maraschi 2017: 216-217). On top of this, if there was little doubt about the symbolic importance of bread (it suffices to think of Christ’s allegory “ego sum panis vivus qui de caelo...”, Jn 6:51; RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 41, 4), the Gospels were rather clear about the type of cereal that was to be used to bake it. “As for the rest”, Guillaume writes, “the bread must be made of wheat, and the wine must be wine of the grape” (ibid., 6), to which he attaches the parallels which Jesus famously made between himself and both wheat and wine. As will be shown later, these food allegories were perfectly sensible in a Mediterranean context such as that of first-century Galilea, but not so much in the continental and northern parts of medieval Europe. Consequently, even if the ritual structures remained the same, some of the elements that were necessary for their performance represented a problem in geographical areas where they were not as common as around the Mediterranean basin. Again, the solution was not as simple as it could look at first sight: *panis triticeus* was considered by the Church the more common (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. iii, 147), whereas other breads came into play “when this lacks” (ibidem). This idea reflects the reality of a good portion of the West (Maraschi 2019), but not necessarily of all areas of the West (as will be shown). “Some cereals resemble wheat, such as *far* and *spelta*”, writes Thomas, adding that in some regions these cereals did replace wheat for the use of the Eucharist (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. iii, 147). Furthermore, different opinions within the Church suggested that barley bread was the actual matter of the sacrament (Rubin 1991: 39; 2012: 452-453), due to the fact that it was *asperior* (“more bitter”; *Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. iii, 147), that is, less tasty, and that it was the kind of bread which Jesus famously multiplied in the Gospels (Jn 6). Nevertheless, the comparison which Christ himself made between him and a grain wheat (Jn 12:24) was embraced by the Church as the proof that only this cereal could be used for the making of the eucharistic bread.

Most importantly, the “recipes” and the proportions between “ingredients” could not be interpreted, as already stated by Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, in the early third century (*Epistulae* 1868, LXIII, 13, 711). Wine or water could not become the blood of Christ if not consecrated together in the chalice; likewise, simple flour alone could not become the body of Christ (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). Such alternative ways of celebrating the Eucharist were already known to Cyprian, and were

repeatedly mentioned and condemned throughout the Middle Ages (Carpin 1993: 35-37). Evidently, the issue was inherent in the liturgy, and was still common at the end of the thirteenth century (Walters et al. 2006: 135-136).

According to theologians, the water could not be consecrated without the wine, and the wine could not be transubstantiated without the water: this was due to the fact that both water and wine had flowed from Christ's side, as earlier observed (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). For the same reason, since Christ had clearly mentioned wheat and wine in his preaching, it was not possible to offer in sacrifice simple bunches of grapes or grains of wheat (ibid., Ch. 41, 6). This remark was fundamental. On the one hand, the Church opposed heretical positions (some of which had been already mentioned by Augustine and in councils many centuries earlier) that employed other elements as the *propria materia* of the sacrament: the flesh of animals, cheese and bread, infants' blood, etc. (*De haeresibus* 1865, 30-31; *Sacrosanta concilia* 1671-72, VI, 1135ff.; *Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. v, 151; Maraschi and Tasca 2018: 58-59). The official position of the Church was instead that, in Mt 26, Christ institutes the sacrament under bread and wine.

On the other hand, however, a problem was represented by the fact that such elements were not necessarily accessible in the whole oecumene in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries (more on this later). This objection was taken into consideration by Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 74, a. v, 151), who dismissed the issue by noting that wheat and wine could be easily conveyed to lands where these products were lacking (Chazelle 2012: 212). Between the lines, the message was quite meaningful in terms of identity: the body and the blood of Christ corresponded not merely to primary elements, but to final identity-marking products, which were the results of identity-marking activities for Mediterranean civilizations - agriculture, baking, wine-making.

Other important norms (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 6, 7-10) concerned: 1) salt, which was not to be added to the bread, contrary to what "certain heretics do" by misinterpreting the Scriptures; 2) the shape of the bread, which was to be *in modum denarii*, that is, "in the shape of a coin"; 3) and fermentation (the Roman Church wanted the bread to be unleavened, unlike the Church of Constantinople; see Schabel 2011). Such matters had already been largely addressed in earlier canonical works, and with particular attention in the thirteenth century by Innocent III and Thomas Aquinas in the aforementioned sources.

Besides, the process of transubstantiation implied that once the elements had turned into the blood and the body of Christ, they could not mix with

simple wine. “If, after the consecration of the chalice, one pours more wine into the chalice, it will not turn into nor mix with the blood, but instead it will blend with the accidents of the original wine, which has become the body of Christ, and will surround the consecrated substance, without however wetting it” (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 8). In other words, the Christian ritual changed the nature of the eucharistic elements, marking a neat separation from their transubstantiated form and their original nature as foods. The latter, however – that is, their accidents – still behaved as one would have expected them to do: “Nevertheless,” Guillaume observes, “the accidents appear to modify what is added to them, which then is consecrated because, if one pours pure water into the chalice, it contracts the taste of wine” (ibidem). Indeed, as explained by Ambrose of Milan almost one thousand years earlier, the species became a different thing (i.e., the Body) after the blessing (*De mysteriis liber* 1845, ix, 405ff.).

The quality of the wine did not play any role in the process, technically speaking. Whether priests used new and sweet wine (*nouum uinum, mustum*) or vinegar (*acetum*), the purity of the sacrament was not affected. The justification for this was that baptism could be conferred with any kind of water, and thus any kind of wine should be fit as the matter of the Eucharist. This nonetheless, it was preferable to use *optimum uinum*, “the best wine” (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 10), maybe a subtle reference to the wine that Christ obtained from water in Cana (Jn 2:1-11). Other variations such as *mixtum* (“mixed”) or *coctum* (“cooked”) wine, rosé (*rosatum*) or spiced wine (*speciatum*) were to be avoided. Church authorities were doubtful about the use of vinegar, however (e.g., the Quinisext Council of 692: *Sacrosanta concilia* 1671-72, VI, 1153-1156), and the reason was associated with the Hippocratic and Galenic framework concerning the properties of foods. Indeed, according to the *Regimen*, wine was considered hot and dry (Jouanna 2012: 177), whereas Galen held that vinegar was hot and cold at the same time (Bacalexi and Katouzian-Safadi 2015: 1). “Wine is hot”, Guillaume confirms, while “vinegar is cold”, and for this reason it was believed that “it cannot be consecrated, as in the case of verjuice” (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 10). A further reason was linked with Aristotle’s observation that vinegar is obtained via a corruption of wine, but wine cannot be obtained from vinegar (*Metaphysics* 1998, viii, 5, 247): in fact, corrupted wines and corrupted breads could not be used for the Eucharist.

As earlier observed, however, fixing such strict rules for such a large territorial entity as medieval Christendom entailed that they could not be

complied by all church ministers at all times. In fact, requests to the papacy for alternatives and exemptions are not rare in the sources.

### 3. Alternative solutions and exemptions in non-Mediterranean landscapes

The problem was not limited to wine and to its different varieties. As has been seen, the eucharistic liturgy and the administration of other sacraments implied the use of “instruments” such as wine, bread, oil, water, which also needed to meet specific requirements. In a vast and heterogeneous milieu such as that of European Christendom in the Middle Ages, it is not surprising that not all of said conditions could be met, nor that some of the aforesaid “instruments” could be lacking at certain times of the year or under certain circumstances. Hagiographic tales are an extremely useful source of information, in this sense, for saints’ miracles were often aimed at replenishing the supplies of wine, beer, oil, bread, and other foods for monasteries and churches, and not rarely for the sake of administering the sacraments (Maraschi 2011; 2013). When miracles did not occur, however, it could happen that local bishops asked the Pope to have special permissions. For example, in 1206, the archbishop of Norway Tore Gudmundsson asked Pope Innocent III permission to administrate the holy baptism with saliva rather than water, for the latter was scarce, but to no avail (*Gesta Innocentii PP. III* 1855: 812-813). Not many years later, in 1241, Pope Gregory IX received a similar request again from Norway and did not give permission to replace water with *cervisia* (“beer”; *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* 1847-1995, I, dipl. 26).

It is not hard to understand why in marginal lands such as northern Europe an essentially Mediterranean cult could represent a problem, from the perspective of ritual practice. Not only *cervisia* and other drinks (such as mead and even crowberry wine; see *Páls saga biskups* 2002, 311) could be more accessible than water and common wine, but breads made with lesser cereals (e.g., rye or barley) were undoubtedly easier to procure and make rather than wheat bread for the eucharistic liturgy (*Diplomatarium Norvegicum* 1847-1995, I, dipl. 10). As said, however, such requests were hardly welcomed by the papacy: the Roman Church would generally reply that the eucharistic liturgy required *panis de frumento et vini de uvis* (and if these were not available locally, they had to be imported; *ibidem*). Unsurprisingly, Guillaume did not fail to address the issue, and - via Gratian - recalled a late-antique decree

attributed to Pope Julius I (337-352), who stated that “some, moved by schismatical ambition, against the divine orders and apostolical institution, do consecrate milk for wine in the divine mysteries; some serve to the people the sacrament of the body moistened in the blood, as a perfect communion; others offer in the sacrament of the Lord’s cup the juice of grapes squeezed...” (*Decretum* 1879, III, dist. II, c. vii).

On multiple occasions the Church reiterated the ban on replacements of this kind: for instance, the Third Council of Braga of 675 prohibited the use of grapes and milk as substitutes for the wine (*Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* 1963, 372; see also Chazelle 2012: 212). Such deviations from the norm tell stories of adaptations, innovation for the sake of subversion or simply for need, and they indirectly explain why normativity was a major concern in Christian Europe. Doctrine and ritual had never been disputable, for – theoretically speaking – there was one correct doctrine and one correct form for rituals; the rest was the domain of heresy. On top of this, said requests ignited further theological discussion on their implications, and called for exemptions: “in case of necessity,” summarizes Guillaume, “[Pope Julius stated that] one can press a bunch of grapes and consecrate it, but he cannot communicate with a bunch that has not been pressed” (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 10). In other words, despite the Church considered emergency situations, it seems to have insisted on a fundamental continuity between the correct form of the ritual (based on wine) and its alternative, for what concerned both the nature (grapes) and the “phase” of the accident (liquid, juice).

Alternative forms of Eucharist and offerings in sacrifice to the Lord could consist of any kind of food and drink, on the other hand, and this represented a serious problem for the Roman Church. Guillaume condemns them by quoting another cornerstone of Christian religious normativity, Bishop Burchard of Worms (1000-1025). Burchard was the author of a fundamental collection of canon law known as *Decretum*, a seminal work before the later effort by Gratian around the half of the following century. In the fifth book of his collection, Burchard (*Decretorum libri viginti* 1880, V, vi, 754) reprises canon 3 of the fourth-century apostolic canons, and states that it was permitted to offer in sacrifice on the altar only wheat, grapes and broad beans (Rivard 2009: 52), alongside other essential elements for ritual such as oil and incense. More specifically, as Guillaume himself restates (*Decretorum libri viginti* 1880, viii, 754; RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 41, 6), it was not allowed to offer in sacrifice alternative foods and drinks such as honey, milk, cider (“sicera”; Archetti 2003: 307), legumes, birds or other animals.

## 4. Baptism

As has been shown in the case of thirteenth-century Norway, a specific problem was represented by baptism, which also was based on one of the liquids which flowed from Christ's side. According to the correct doctrine, the matter was as simple as it could get: "Baptism is administered in water, for this can be found in great abundance, and because we read that the Holy Spirit made it fertile in the beginning" (RDO 1995-2000, 140, VI, Ch. 83, 1). The first part of the sentence is no less important than the second one: water was largely available to priests and churches, which was hardly an irrelevant detail when one deals with the first fundamental step to become part of the Christian family. Baptism was to be administered with *uiua* and *pura* water, an absolutely necessary element. The reason for this had already been clarified by Augustine, who held that water was necessary in order to purify the baptized (*In Joannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV* 1841, 1511-12). He deduced it on the basis of Ephesians 5:25-26, where it is stated that the baptism of Christ coincided with a cleansing in the Word, and there could be no baptism without the Word or water (Duque 2013).

Thomas Aquinas provided a useful summary of objections to the idea that water was the *propria materia* of baptism. These proposed to replace water with, respectively, fire, wine, oil, blood, and common water (and thus not *exorcizata* or *benedicta* water, as in solemn baptism; *Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 66, a. iii, 65). In Thomas' opinion, however, water is indeed the proper matter of the sacrament, because – first and foremost – baptism is a *regeneratio* unto spiritual life, that is, a new birth, and water is the source of life of all living beings (*ibidem*). Secondly, water has the ability to cleanse the baptized due to its moistness (*ibidem*). Interestingly, Thomas also mentions the same practical reason that Guillaume reprised: "potest enim ubique de facili haberi" ("it can be easily obtained everywhere"; *ibidem*).

Even though this is only the fourth of the four main reasons why water was considered essential in the administration of baptism, its mere pragmatic justification catches the eye. One should never underestimate the importance of practicality when it comes to liturgy (McGowan 2014: 146), nor the fact that practicality implies the need to provide alternative solutions. In fact, circumstances may have not always allowed to abide by the rule, as earlier observed about the request by the archbishop of Norway to replace water with saliva in 1206. Norms were indeed rather strict, but several alternatives were considered, nonetheless. Depending on the circumstances, priests could use water obtained from snow, ice, or "tears

of the earth” (ibidem), to which Pope Victor I (ca. 189-199) added the sea, rivers, lakes or fountains, with the clear intention of allowing everybody to be baptized “at any place and at any moment” (*Decretum* 1879, III, dist. II, c. xxii). This nevertheless, it was essential that the sacrament be administered with water: it was not allowed to baptize in *aqua condita* (“artificial water”) such as *ceruisia* (“beer”) and *medo* (“mead”), nor with any another kind of *liquor* such as wine or oil (RDO 1995-2000, 140, VI, Ch. 83, 2). “Wine and oil are not commonly used for washing”, Thomas explains, for a certain smell is contracted when something is washed with them (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 66, a. iii, 65). This does not happen with water, and – not less importantly – “they are not so common and abundant as water is” (ibidem).

Yet, if water was added to these liquids, then its Divine essence would have prevailed, and the sacrament was valid. To demonstrate this point, Guillaume resorts to a strong, unsubtle example: the faithful do baptize in the sea, even though people urinate and spit into it daily (RDO 1995-2000, 140, VI, Ch. 83, 2). This very “cleansing” operation by the water’s Divine essence implied a contradiction, then. Its explanation is found in Thomas’ *Summa*: “*pura* and *simplex* water is not necessary for baptism” (*Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 66, a. iv, 66), writes Thomas, because plain water is hardly available, and Aristotle explained that seawater – for instance – always retains a considerable portion of earth (*Meteorologica* 1952, II, iii, 147). For these reasons, liturgical norms could be adapted to certain circumstances. Just as the water that flowed from Christ’s body was not pure (for no pure water can exist inside one’s body; *Summa Theologiae* 1906, q. 66, a. iv, 66), baptism could actually be administered with alternative liquids.

The criterion by which the purity of water could be assessed was to verify with which bodies water had come into contact. According to Thomas, water could cease to be pure artificially or naturally, by either being mixed with another body, or by alteration (ibidem). But, since man cannot prevail over nature’s ability to give substantial form to things (“*formam substantialem*”; ibidem), water’s nature cannot be changed by man’s intervention. Consequently, many types of water can be used for baptism because they are considered pure, with the exception of mud and diluted wine: in these cases, respectively, earth and wine prevail over water, because they are bodies “whose compound is something other than water” (“*quod compositum magis sit aliud quam aqua*”; ibidem), and the species of water is destroyed. The species of water is not destroyed in the cases of seawater, meat broth (but only after straining plain water from it), lye, bathwater (that is, sulphur

water), and rain water (*ibid.*, 67): these could be used for the administration. The species phlegm, animal blood, wine, and any liquid extracted from plants could not be used (*ibidem*).

It is to be borne in mind that exemptions of these kinds could mirror actual practices, and cast light on the difficulties of performing Mediterranean rituals in non-Mediterranean areas or in areas where – for many reasons – the necessary elements for the administration of sacraments were not available. It is no wonder that solutions such as the administration of baptism with beer and mead were practiced in continental and northern areas of Europe, whence the need by the Church to repeatedly ban them. On the other hand, it has been argued that abundant availability of water was not to be taken for granted in the past (Montanari 2012: 137-138), and miracle tales from the aforesaid biblical scene of Moses to medieval hagiographic tradition suggest that the need to replace it with other liquids could well be a frequent necessity.

## 5. Incidents caused by external and internal causes

Any swerve from the straight path of doctrine put into question the entire administration of sacraments, and – in the specific case of the Eucharist – the process of transubstantiation. Sometimes, deviations from the rule were not even due to negligence or dissidence, but to accidental external causes which could come into play (Levy 2012: 406ff.). There were a number of variables to take into account, as seen in the case of baptismal water: the same concerned the Eucharist as well. Said incidents had long been taken into account by the Christian Church (Rubin 2012: 467-468), and can be seen as the sign that the oecumene was geographically spreading towards areas of the West characterized by more severe climatic conditions. In some churches, the wine could freeze in the chalice in wintertime: in that case, the priest was allowed to melt it with his warm breath or, if this was not enough, by taking the chalice close to a fire (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 11). Guillaume does not need to add that such operations would not threaten the species of the wine, nor that – presumably – this was an ordinary chore in places where winters could be particularly harsh. In the second half of the tenth century, Folcuin - the abbot of Lobbes, Belgium - told that one day a priest of his abbey tried to pour the wine into the chalice during Mass, “sed vinum ita congelatum erat” (*De gestis abbatum Laubiensium* 1853, 582). He had to ask an altar server to thaw it with fire, but the task was taking too long, and the priest was preaching at length. Then, he casually looked back at the

chalice, and found it full of liquid wine, ready for the eucharistic liturgy. It is a miracle, and miracles always mirror specific needs (Maraschi 2011; 2018: 42).

Little animals could likewise threaten to jeopardize the ritual: if a fly or a spider fell into the chalice before the wine had turned into the blood, the priest must throw the wine into the *piscina* (the basin near the altar used for washing holy vessels) and replace it with other wine and water (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 12). But if an insect had fallen into the chalice after the transubstantiation, it was to be carefully removed and placed in a second chalice, where it was to be washed with wine (*ibidem*). Then, “with the greatest care”, the priest had to purify the chalice and burn the insect in the *piscina*. Similar accidents were probably less rare than one might suppose, for they were also addressed in sermons. In an *exemplum* by Caesarius of Heisterbach (ca. 1180-ca. 1240), a wafer repeatedly leaps off the altar, refusing to be consecrated. The reason was that a little worm had mistakenly been cooked inside the bread, and the Host refused to house the body of Christ (Maraschi 2017: 216-217).

Causes of corruption may have also been “internal”: nausea was surely one of the most dangerous, for it inevitably coincided with the desecration of the body of Christ (*ibid.*: 214). In case a faithful vomited the *corpus Domini*, the puke was to be burnt in a similar fashion (i.e., in the *piscina*; RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 12). A compromise between both of said occurrences could be found either if only a part of an insect (“hostie particula”) had fallen in the chalice (and the priest presumably vomited it), or if the *corpus Domini* was vomited by a sick person. In these cases, “one shall pick it up with great care and mix it with wine in the chalice; if one cannot pick it up entirely and if he feels loathing when he does so, he shall regard it as a relic” (*ibidem*; Maraschi 2017: 214).

As said, norms and penalties for negligence concerning such specific aspects of the liturgy were much older than Guillaume’s times: according to Gratian, some of them even dated back to Pope Pius I (ca. 140-154) (*Decretum* 1879, III, dist. II, c. xxvii). Among them were those regarding the unfortunate case in which drops of the transubstantiated wine (i.e., the blood) fell from the chalice (McNeill and Gamer 1990: 355; Rubin 1991: 48). The traditional solution was to lick the drops from whatever surface they had dripped on: wood, stone, or earth (RDO 1995-2000, 140, IV, Ch. 42, 15). Then, the priest was to carefully scratch and wash the surface, and place the resulting powder with the relics. In this sense, it is not surprising that by the twelfth/thirteenth century the wine became exclusive of the priest during

the eucharistic liturgy, whereas the faithful were given the Host only: this solution was probably aimed at preventing as many occasions as possible in which the elements could be spilled or dropped (Maraschi 2017: 225, fn. 39; Rubin 1991: 48).

## 6. Concluding remarks: Christ's wound and its dangerous consequences

The above were the main norms, precautions, remedies, and alternatives regarding the ritual elements necessary for the eucharistic liturgy and baptism at the turn of the fourteenth century: collected, summarized and commented by Guillaume of Mende, one of the undisputed protagonists in the codification of canon law in medieval times. The importance of the *Rationale* does not only lie in the role it played among other similar compilations – which, as said, was paramount –, but in the fact that it casts further light on the delicate connection between rituality and normativity, rule and context, performance and environment. Not only it fixed in time the fundamental rules of Christian rituality which were still at the basis of the administration of sacraments in the thirteenth century; it also crystallized the fundamental idea that Christian religion was founded on practical ritual performances, which in turn could have desirable/undesirable effects on much less practical aspects of the liturgy, such as the very body of Christ or the validity itself of the sacraments. Strict norms were meant to avoid heresy, desecration, profanity, while penalties were aimed at punishing priests who were guilty of ignorance, negligence, or even of having schismatic plans.

Back to Durkheim, it is now clearer why Christian rituality needed to be rigorously regulated: this assured the correct execution of the rituals, and consequently let the community of the faithful experience the “sacred force” which the social anthropologist deemed essential for the formation of religious belief. Guillaume’s industrious work, which he himself compared to that of a honeybee, did not only produce a delicious nectar, then. It also showed how other “supernatural” delicacies such as bread and wine were to be treated, in order to gain the highest nutritional value from them: that of salvation. As has been seen, the sets of doctrinal and liturgical norms collected by Guillaume deeply benefited from Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* and - via Thomas - from that “pagan virtue” (Decosimo 2014) that was mainly associated with Aristotle’s invaluable contribution in many fields.

Potential problems were not merely linked with the source of both

sacraments, that is, Christ's wound. They actually stemmed from an essential characteristic of the Christian faith as a universal calling: an ambitious vocation that addressed all the West, and that exported even to nordic areas cults and rituals which had Mediterranean features. Guillaume stood out for his essential role in pinpointing norms, alternatives and exemptions in an ever-growing oecumene.

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