

“That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

## CHURCH UNITY IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

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# Chapter One

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Ecumenism

The main focus of this thesis is that of how the sacrament of the Eucharist is essential for ecumenism, as the fellowship nature of the Lord's Supper can lead to great advancement in the ecumenical movement, eventually leading to a united church. To be one church unit is vital to both the church itself and the Christian movement, or in other words missions. Jesus is quoted in John Chapter 17 verse 21 saying: "21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." Church unity is not just an ecumenical movement initiated by the people of the church, but a desire and a command of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church is a representative of Christ, and thus the church should provide a united front. The ecumenical movement is a forum for achieving the goal of unity. It is a movement of the people in response to the will of God to once again be 'one body' in Christ. It is our faith and belief in the one savior Jesus Christ that draws us, the 'Church', together.<sup>1</sup>

The ecumenical movement is a movement of reconciliation; a reconciliation of the Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant churches. Divisions within the church and a desire for a unified church are not anything new. Already in the early church there were disagreements and seclusions. Now through this rediscovery of the need of a united church, the ecumenical movement has given the churches an open forum where they can come together, explain their practices and discuss their differences while at the same time realizing their similarities. Evidence of an ecumenical movement can be observed already in 1857 when the Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom was founded. This was a group of Christians from different denominational backgrounds that gathered together and

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<sup>1</sup> "The unity to which the followers of Jesus Christ are called is not something created by them. Rather, it is Christ's will for them that they manifest their unity, given in Christ, before the world so that the world may believe. It is a unity grounded in and reflects the communion which exists between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the ecumenical imperative and mission of the Church are inextricably intertwined, and this for the sake of the salvation of all. The eschatological vision of the transformation and unity of humankind is the fundamental inspiration of ecumenical action." Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement, An Introduction History* (Conneticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 1

The Joint Working Group, World Council of Churches-Roman Catholic Church.

prayed for the unity of the Church. The movement continued in 1910 when the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh brought to the surface the conflict of the competing churches out on the mission field. Again the movement progressed with the establishment of the Faith and Order movement and the Life and Work movement in the 1920's, wherein the churches started to be in contact with each other. These efforts eventually led to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

Although there have been many steps forward in the movement towards unity, there are also many complications and resistance within it. Not only are there theological/doctrinal issues, but there are also cultural and political issues tied in with the divisions of the church. These political and cultural divisions within the church have affected the social aspect of people's lives in various places across the world. They have caused divisions in governments, fellow citizens, communities and families. These divisions are problematic and destructive for the gospel. Jesus came with a message of reconciliation.

“<sup>18</sup>Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;<sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.<sup>3</sup>”

The message of reconciliation is clear and direct in the actions of Jesus Christ and in the words of the apostle Paul. But what does it mean for us to be reconciled as a church, and how can we achieve this reconciliation? I believe that there is a great need, even a must for a reconciliation of the Church. Being God's will that we the believers should be one body, it is important that we present ourselves as one Church. There is still a long road ahead for the ecumenical movement and its mission to reconcile the Church. With this thesis I would like to propose that we shift our focus to the fundamental practice of the Eucharist, and make an effort to be one body of Christ through the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the Lord's Supper, and when we gather at the Eucharist it should be a time where we as

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<sup>2</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement, An Introduction History*, 2

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 5:18-20, NASB

believers can come together as one body, and receive the one body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is God's gift of salvation to us all, it is not a place for us to build up walls of separation, but to tear down those walls revealing the kingdom of God in which we all are partaker's of, not by our own practices or works, but through the kindness and grace of God.

## **1.2 Eucharist**

The Eucharist is known and recognized by many names including the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Mass, Love feast, etc. The meaning of the Eucharist also differs depending on the church affiliation one belongs to. "The alternative titles seem to stress divergence and difference rather than unity."<sup>4</sup> The alternative titles suggest alternative positions as well as different attitudes and emphasis concerning the meal. "The Eucharist, on the other hand, expresses the appropriate attitude of Christians contemplating their grateful and joyful encounter with the crucified and risen Lord as the body of Christ."<sup>5</sup> Not only is it the term historically used by the Orthodox churches, but it is also the scholarly term used today.

Although we may disagree about the name and meaning of the Eucharist, we all agree on its importance in the life of faith for the Church. For the purpose of this paper, which is to help further along the ecumenical movement to reunite the church through the help of the communion nature of the Eucharist, I need to first explain what the Eucharist is and its function in the church. To do this one must understand and acknowledge the true meaning of the Eucharist. This is done by looking at the biblical text of when Jesus instated the Lord's Supper. What did Jesus say, and what was the meaning of His words; also how did the disciples and the early church understand the Eucharist, and how was it practiced? These questions will be examined and answered in the section dedicated to the historical background of the Eucharist.

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<sup>4</sup> Horton Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy, Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 17

"The Mass derives from the formal conclusion of the service with its instruction "Go, it is over", which says nothing about the nature of this central communal act of the church. The Lord's Supper, a favorite Protestant designation stresses the fact that it was instituted by Christ, which it was, but its emphasis is merely retrospective. Communion or Holy Communion, the favorite Anglican term for the Eucharist stresses the profound element of fellowship between God and Humanity past and present, but leaves other meanings of this service unexpressed." Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy*, 17-18

<sup>5</sup> Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy*, 18

This information is important for both defining the Eucharist and how it should be practiced today.

With this thesis I am not proposing that we lay aside all of our beliefs, and ignore truths involved in the practice of the Eucharist in trade for unity; but that we come together in a spirit of truth and openness to better understand the Eucharist and open up room for an inter-church communion within the Christian Church recognizing each other as fellow brethren in Christ, all contributing to the one body.

### **1.3 A United Christian Church**

One cannot speak about the Eucharist without entering into the realm of ecclesiology. To study the Eucharist is to study the Church, and what the Church is, and or should be. The Christian church as I see it today is a church that is connected through our faith in Jesus Christ but separated by our doctrines and practices. As for the future I do not see the people of faith ever fully agreeing about all parts of theology, that is why we have separations and denominations, and it is also the reason why today denominations are still breaking off creating new sectors in the church. Although some doctrines within the church cannot and should not be denied, others should be re-evaluated; this thesis is not about solving all doctrinal issues concerning the Church, or about creating a new church in which all details of theology are agreed upon, or in which all forms of worship and service are identical. I don't believe that worship has to be identical between the congregations; the Church and its people are full of diversity. This diversity should not be looked upon as negative, but as an addition enriching the life of the Church. Unity does not necessarily mean uniformity, but being accepting of, and permitting diversity. We are all created in the image of God, but at the same time, we as human beings are unique and different from one another. How we worship should reflect our uniqueness in a positive way.

What I am suggesting with this thesis is to come to a common ground where we focus on our common faith. The church needs a truce, we need to acknowledge the need for unity, recognize our own stumbling blocks and stop fighting against each other; and instead join together for the purpose of expanding the kingdom of God. The first step is through communication. This communication needs to be respectful, viewing all as equals in Christ. Respectful communication is possible if we focus on our Church's shared history, experiences, spirituality and interests.

The type of unity that I see fitting is that of full mutual recognition, where we recognize each others ministers and are able to partake in the holy sacraments together. Though this must be based on the agreement that the Gospel be rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, leading to the ultimate goal of visible unity in which the church recognizes all people of faith that are baptized with the true baptism of Jesus Christ, allowing them to partake in the Lord's Supper together, united as one body.

#### **1.4 Statement of Intent**

In this thesis I am drafting, and discussing the possibility of a unified Church by the partaking in the sacrament of the Eucharist together by all members of the Christian communities. This is what I believe should be the first step to reuniting the body of Christ, thus restoring the church to its original form and purpose. I chose this topic not only because it is of importance in the world of theology, but mostly because of its affect on the spiritual life of faith, affecting all believers in all denominations of the Christian church. Theologian Robert W. Jenson wrote, "That believers are one body because we eat of one loaf, belongs to the substance of our believing; where we cannot share the Eucharist, our very faith is in question".<sup>6</sup> It is a true tragedy that not all members of the Christian faith can share in the Eucharist together. There are many issues that are separating the people of faith in the Christian church, but in my opinion that of the current situation of the Eucharist is by far one of the most damaging for the church.

The main focus of this thesis is that of understanding the meaning and practice of the Eucharist and how it affects the church today, specifically directed towards the unity of the church and the work of the ecumenical movement. To understand the position the Eucharist has in the church and how this affects the ecumenical movement, one must first understand what the Eucharist was and what it meant for the disciples and the early church. The information gathered of the historical situation surrounding the Eucharist will better the understanding of how the church today should practice the Eucharist. I will also be looking at past dialogues within the church and between the denominations, as well as literature previously written on the

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<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Jenson, *Unbaptized God; The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 8

subject. I will then combine these two aspects to help identify the progress made by the ecumenical movement towards an inter-church Eucharist and the importance this has for the unity of the Church.

## Chapter Two

### HISTORICAL SITUATION

#### **2.1 Eucharist: Origin and Development**

The Eucharist, what is it, what does it mean, and why do we practice it? The answers to these questions are, and should be, found and based on biblical principles and the practices of the Early Church. The Bible is our main source for understanding the Eucharist. It is the source in which the Church draws its traditions and practices. The Bible is also a common ground on which the Church stands. It is here in the biblical accounts of the Last Supper that the quest for the true Eucharist begins.

#### **2.2 Christ Instates the Eucharist**

The Eucharist is commonly known as, and referred to as the Lord's Supper, because it was Christ himself who instated the practice of the Eucharist. The Eucharist originated with the Jewish tradition of the Passover dinner. The Passover stems from the Old Testament, found in Exodus chapter 12. The Passover was a sacrifice of a lamb commanded by God. The command was given to Moses during the Israelites captivity in Egypt. The Israelites were commanded to kill a one-year-old unblemished lamb, eat the meat and spread its blood on the doorposts of their houses so that when the Lord passed over he would spare them the plague that was to come over the Egyptians. Thus, the meal of the lamb came to be known as the Passover, and they were commanded to observe this sacrifice as a memorial and to celebrate it as a feast unto the Lord in remembrance of the Lord's sparing them of the plague in Egypt.

Mathew, Mark, Luke and Paul give an account of the Passover dinner in which Jesus instated a new pact, replacing the tradition of the Passover with what we now refer to as the Eucharist. Jesus and his disciples had gathered together to celebrate and eat the Passover meal. During the meal Jesus instated a new pact which was to replace the original pact given to the Israelites in Egypt.

The context of the Last Supper as a Passover meal is significant for understanding the background for the purpose of the Eucharist. "Particularly that he

(Jesus) made the ideas of sacrifice and memorial central.<sup>7</sup>” The Passover meal was a memorial meal. In this meal the Israelites were to remember God’s sparing act upon them through sacrifice. This was a way of allowing them to not only remember, but to realize the redeeming act of God in their own lives.

### **2.3 Institution Narrative**

The institution narratives found in Mark, Matthew, Luke and 1. Corinthians are similar but not identical. It is in these four narratives of the Last Supper that is also known as the Lord’s Supper in which the Church receives the tradition of the Eucharist.

During the meal Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to the disciples telling them to eat, and he explained to them that the bread is now his body, broken and given for them. Jesus then took the wine, passed it around for the disciples to drink, and explained to them that the wine is now his blood which is poured out for them and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus also says to his disciples that this is the new covenant and should be practiced in remembrance of him.

### **2.4 Mark’s Account of the Lord’s Supper<sup>8</sup>**

Mark wrote his gospel sometime around the year 70 A.D<sup>9</sup>. During the time while Mark was writing the gospel, the Christian community was experiencing a crisis. The church was being subject to persecution and hardships and there was unrest in the church for the second coming of Jesus. Also depending on how late the gospel was written, they might have experienced the fall of Jerusalem and the temple.

Mark’s account of the Lord’s Supper is believed to be the first written account of the Eucharist given in a gospel setting including the greater story of the life and works of Jesus<sup>10</sup>. His purpose of writing the gospel was to give an account of the life of Jesus, such to reassure the Christians of the time of their purpose, helping them to

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<sup>7</sup> Davies, *Bread of Life, Cup of Joy*, 4

<sup>8</sup> <sup>22</sup>”While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body."<sup>23</sup>And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup>And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.<sup>25</sup>"Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 16:22-25) NASB

<sup>9</sup> Eugene La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 46

<sup>10</sup> La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 49

regain a sense of hope. While describing the events of the Last Supper, Mark connects the Lord's Supper to his understanding of a meal and its function within a community, specifically in his situation, discipleship. The role of discipleship plays an important part in the overall theme of the gospel of Mark. Included in his role of disciple was that of missions. This is reflected in his account of the Lord's Supper, as Mark places the significance of the Eucharist on the missionary aspect of the meal. In verse 24, Mark accounts that Jesus' blood was poured out for many. For Mark these 'many' include those who the gospel has not yet reached, both Jews and Gentiles alike. By emphasizing the missionary aspect of the meal, Mark was encouraging the church to not grow weary and lazy in their waiting for the second coming; but to continue the work of the Lord.

## **2.5 Matthew's Account of the Lord's Supper<sup>11</sup>**

Matthew wrote his gospel account of the life and works of Jesus Christ around the year 85 A.D.<sup>12</sup>. The language Matthew uses and his descriptions of different events within the gospel show that Matthew was writing for those with a Jewish heritage. For Matthew the significance of the Eucharist must be understood in light of Jesus' death and resurrection. The new pact was that Jesus became the offer lamb for us, pouring out his blood to bring us forgiveness.

“In the Last Supper text, Matthew specifically has Jesus give the bread to the “disciples” and command them both to “eat” and to “drink.” The cup saying from Mark, “this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many” (Mark 16:24), becomes “this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Here Matthew has used a different preposition in Greek and added a phrase so that the saying now more clearly reflects Old Testament sacrificial theology.<sup>13</sup>”

Matthew's account of the Lord's Supper places an emphasis on the words: “for the forgiveness of sins”. By doing so Matthew is placing significance in the Lord's Supper on the new pact in Jesus' blood in which we receive forgiveness. Christ's sacrifice was “on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” “In taking and drinking

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<sup>11</sup> <sup>26</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."<sup>27</sup>And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;<sup>28</sup>for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.<sup>29</sup>"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. (Matt. 26:26-29)

NASB

<sup>12</sup> La Verdier, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 65

<sup>13</sup>Dennis E Smith and Hal E Taussig, *Many Tables, The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy*

the Eucharistic cup, the disciples participated in his “blood of the covenant. As they joined him in forgiving others, their own sins were forgiven, and the purpose of the Eucharist was fulfilled.<sup>14</sup>”

## **2.6 Luke’s Account of the Lord’s Supper<sup>15</sup>**

Luke is known as both a theologian and historian. The way in which he wrote his gospel is both an account of the life and works of Jesus as well as a way to introduce theology into the community. Luke wrote his gospel directed toward the Christians of Gentile origin. The Gospel of Luke was written around the year 85 ad. Luke drew upon the account of the Lord’s Supper found in Mark, as well as the Eucharistic tradition described by Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth<sup>16</sup>.

Luke’s interests in liturgy as a theologian and in his interest in history contribute to the uniqueness of his account of the Eucharist. “As a theologian, Luke included the Eucharist in Jesus’ farewell discourse at the Last Supper, inviting further reflection on their relationship. As a historian, Luke also distinguished the Eucharist from the Last Supper, inviting reflection on the difference between the two.<sup>17</sup>”

Luke wrote his gospel in a two volume work, (1) The Gospel of Luke and (2) Acts. It was in his first volume, The Gospel of Luke, where he describes the Lord’s Supper. Although he does not describe the Last Supper in the book of Acts, he does allude to the practice of the Eucharist. Luke describes this practice as “the breaking of bread” in Acts 2:42, 46 and 20:7, 11. Luke’s mentioning of the Eucharist in Acts 2:42<sup>18</sup> suggests that he understood the meal to be a “fellowship meal, a meal that has a horizontal dimension binding the disciples to one another and so should be partaken of with great regularity to reinforce that bond.<sup>19</sup>” The meal was eaten in the home

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today (London: SCM Press, 1990), 57

<sup>14</sup> La Verdier, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 66

<sup>15</sup> <sup>17</sup>And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, <sup>18</sup>He broke it and gave it to them, saying, <sup>19</sup>"This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."<sup>20</sup>And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. (Luke 22:17-20) NASB

<sup>16</sup> La Verdier, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 79

<sup>17</sup> La Verdier, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 80

<sup>18</sup> 42They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

<sup>17</sup> Ben Witherington 111, *Making A Meal Of It* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 31

(Acts 2:46<sup>20</sup>) giving it a more personal touch than the worship that took place in the temple. It is also following the example of Jesus and the original Lord's Supper.

## **2.7 Paul's Account of the Lord's Supper<sup>21</sup>**

Paul was passionate about the practice of the tradition of the Eucharist and it influenced his writings. Paul viewed himself as a link in the chain of the tradition of the Lord's Supper.<sup>22</sup> He writes in 1. Corinthians 11:23 that he received from the Lord that which he has passed on to them. Through his letter he is trying to reinforce for the church in Corinth that which he had taught them while he was with them. The Church was now the next link in the chain and it was important for Paul that the tradition of the Lord's Supper be practiced correctly.

Paul's account differs from the three other accounts in that his account is more of a liturgical narrative while the others are primarily considered gospel narratives. The Eucharistic tradition found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians is one of great importance not only because of its liturgical form, but also because it is the oldest written tradition the Church has.

For Paul, introducing the liturgical form of the Lord's Supper was his way of reinforcing to the Church in Corinth the importance of the meal. By remembering the Last Supper, and the reason for the meal, the meal regains its purpose.

## **2.8 Complementary Differences**

Looking at the four versions of when Jesus instated the Eucharist that are represented here, we find slight differences. These differences are not critical and should not be used against each other but rather in a way in which they complement each other, giving a more detailed version as to what really happened, and what Jesus said. Being that these accounts were not being recorded at the actual happening, it is only natural that the disciples would remember slight details apart from each other.

The similarities and the subject focus of these four different accounts is what are important for understanding the Eucharist and the tradition from which it came.

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<sup>20</sup> <sup>46</sup>Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, (Acts 2:46) NASB

<sup>21</sup> <sup>23</sup>The Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup>and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1. Cor. 11:23-25) NASB

The focus of the Lord's Supper is to be placed on the invitation of Jesus into a fellowship together with him. This fellowship represents the new pact in which the Church receives forgiveness of sins and salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The slight differences in the biblical texts concerning the Eucharist complement each other and help to give a deeper understanding of the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper which we currently practice within the Church. Just as the disciples placed slight focuses on different aspects of the Last Supper, so to do we experience slightly different emphasis within the Eucharist in the congregations of the present Church. A majority of the variations between the current practices of the Eucharist, when properly understood, are no longer a hindrance for an intercommunion, but should be looked upon as an enrichment, which enhances our experience at the Lord's Table leading to a greater understanding of the full practice of the Eucharist.

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<sup>22</sup> LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 31

## Chapter Three

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

#### **3.1 The Early Church**

Today the Bible is the most important source of Christian ideologies and teachings that the Church possesses. Other important and helpful sources are the writings, traditions and practices of the Early Church. The apostles and the Early Church are the sources that helped shape the understanding of the biblical traditions that the Church continues to practice today.

The first congregations, which we recognize as the Early Church did not have access to the Bible as we have today. The writings of the Old Testament (The Tanakh) were accessible and known by the Jewish community. The Old Testament was received and accepted by the Early Church as important prophecies about Jesus Christ. The New Testament was still in the process of being composed and gathered. Although during the time between the apostolic fathers and the apologist the “New Testament books were already in existence, there was as yet no officially sanctioned New Testament canon<sup>23</sup>.”

The tradition of the Lord’s Supper was being passed down to the Early Church through the teachings and stories shared by the disciples of what they had heard, seen and received from Christ in the Last Supper. As we read in the New Testament we can see that already in the first years of the church there were differences in the Eucharistic traditions.

#### **3.2 The Eucharist as a Meal**

Meals were an important part in the life of the Early Church because of the significance they held both in the Jewish community and in the life of Jesus Christ and the meals He shared with His disciples. The Jewish community celebrated religious occasions by eating sacrificial meals in fellowship. The earliest celebrations of the Eucharist were in the forms of a full meal eaten together by the Christian communities. This is not surprising considering the Lord’s Supper has its context from the Last Supper which was in the form of a full meal. The Eucharist was used as

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<sup>23</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black Publishers Limited, 1977), 31

both an initiation meal into the Christian community as well as a sacramental meal in the life of the church. When the Church ate the meal of the Eucharist together they were not only communing with the Lord, but also with each other. The occasion was one of bonding between the members of the Church, strengthening both their faith and their relationships.

### **3.3 The Eucharist Meal in Corinth**

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he writes to them concerning their practice of the Eucharistic meal. We can read and understand from his letter that the meal was a common happening in the life of the church. It is important to point out that the Church community in Corinth was mostly of gentile origin in which they were accustomed to the lifestyle and practices of their time, including the Greco-Roman dinner parties.<sup>24</sup> Paul first criticizes the meal form being practiced within the Church community, and then further explains how it should be properly eaten. He does not indicate any problems of eating the Eucharist as a meal; he is merely correcting the practice of how one should consume the meal. Paul in his criticism is also emphasizing the importance of community and fellowship within the church and with the Lord. Lastly concerning the Lord's Supper in Corinth, Paul is warning the congregation against eating and drinking themselves into judgment.

First, Paul wants the church in Corinth to realize not only the meaning of the Eucharist, but the difference between the Lord's Supper and the meals eaten in the pagan celebrations. Not only is Paul writing to explain the difference, but in 1Cor. 10:21<sup>25</sup> he is also warning them against participating in the pagan meals celebrated at the temples. His reason for this is of a spiritual concern, it has nothing to do with the actual meal of what is being eaten, but the problem lies in the spiritual context of the rituals performed unto the pagan gods surrounding the meals in the temples. Paul wants the community in Corinth to be purified, not indulging in the ceremonies at the temples taking part in the worshiping of other gods. The Church needed to understand the ritual behind the meal, thus understanding the importance of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was to be respected and held more important than a normal meal.

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<sup>24</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of it*. Chapter 3

<sup>25</sup> <sup>21</sup> "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." (1 Cor. 10:21) NASB

Secondly, when the congregation in Corinth gathered together to eat the Lord's Supper it was to be celebrated together as a fellowship and not in the Greco-Roman fashion as was occurring in some of the homes. In 1 Cor 11: 20-22<sup>26</sup>, Paul is criticizing the Church in Corinth for their practice of partaking in the Lord's Supper. He is upset at the fact that in the meal there are divisions within the community; the meal included the class system found in the Greco-Roman meal form. The wealthy would not only consume their meal first, but they would also consume greater amounts of food, filling themselves up and not considering the less fortunate at the meal who did not have enough to eat. There were some who were also abusing their alcohol consumption and getting drunk from the wine. The Church community in Corinth had completely misunderstood what Paul thought to be central for the Eucharist, and that was fellowship. This fellowship as Paul saw it was threefold: it was fellowship within the community at the sharing of the events at the Last Supper, it was fellowship with the risen Lord at the table, and it was fellowship concerning the sacrifice and salvation which the Church received through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church in Corinth had lost focus, and Paul wanted them to regain their focus by helping them understand the importance of fellowship. Explaining that the meal in which they are consuming is not an ordinary meal but one of remembrance, fellowship and hope.

Thirdly, Paul in giving his instructions was also giving the church a warning<sup>27</sup>. Not only is the church to practice the Lord's Supper in an orderly manner emphasizing fellowship, but each person partaking in the meal also has a personal reflection they need to make. It is up to each and every individual person at the meal to take a close look and evaluate themselves and their intentions before partaking in the meal.

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 20-22: Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. NASB

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 11: 27-29 "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly." NASB

### 3.4 The Eucharist Meal in the Didache Community

The Didache is the written form of the oral teachings of early church traditions and practices that were conceived between the time span of ca 50 to 100A.D. The Didache is a great example of the spiritual life of a Christian community in the Early Church. La Verdere identifies the Didache as a “kind of community rule or manual of discipline.”<sup>28</sup> It is a great collection of “early Christian traditions, sayings, instructions and prayers.”<sup>29</sup> Mention and description of the Eucharist is found in three sections in the Didache. First in section 9<sup>30</sup>, then again in section 10<sup>31</sup> and a brief mentioning in section 14<sup>32</sup>.

The Eucharistic meal described in the Didache takes a slightly different approach than that found in the New Testament gospels and in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. In the Didache community the blessing of the cup precedes the breaking of the bread. There is no direct mention of the Last Supper and the emphasis on the elements as representing the body and blood of Christ. There is also no reference to the connection between the Lord’s Supper and the death of Jesus Christ. Although the

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<sup>28</sup> La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 128

<sup>29</sup> La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 128

<sup>30</sup> “You shall give thanks as follows. First with respect to the cup: ‘We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your child, which you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be the glory forever.’ And with regard to the fragment of bread ‘We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge that you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever. As this fragment was scattered upon the mountains and was gathered to become one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom. For the glory and power are yours through Jesus Christ forever.’ But let no one eat or drink from your thanksgiving meal unless they have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For also the Lord has said ‘Do not give what is holy to the dogs.’” Witherington 111, *Making A Meal Of It*, 91

<sup>31</sup> “And when you have had enough to eat, you should give thanks as follows: ‘We give you thanks, holy Father, for your holy name which you have made reside in our hearts, and for the knowledge, faith and immortality/deathlessness that you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever, You O Master, Almighty created all things for the sake of your name, and gave both food and drink to humans for their refreshment, that they might give you thanks. And you graciously provided us with spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your child. Above all we thank you because you are powerful. To you be the glory forever. Remember your assembly O Lord; save it from evil, and perfect it in your love. And gather it from the four winds into your Kingdom, which you prepared for it. For yours is the power and glory forever. May grace come and this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If anyone is holy let them come; if anyone is not, let him repent Maranatha! Amen.’ But permit the prophets to give thanks as often as they wish.” Witherington 111, *Making A Meal Of It*, 91-92

<sup>32</sup> “On the Lord’s own day, when you gather together, break bread and give thanks after you have confessed your unlawful deeds, that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no one quarreling with his neighbor join you until they are reconciled, that your sacrifice mentioned by the Lord: ‘In every place and time, bring me a pure sacrifice. For I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is considered marvelous among the Gentiles.’” Witherington 111, *Making A Meal Of It*, 92

prayers do connect Jesus and the spiritual food of bread and wine, the emphasis of the meal is placed on that of community, social bonding<sup>33</sup> and thanksgiving.

“Food and meals were very important in the life of the community, as they were for Jews in general and for other Christian Communities.<sup>34</sup>” Many of the newly baptized lost their families, friends and workplace; the Eucharist would be their first meal with their new family. Like the church in Corinth, it is understood that the early tradition of the Eucharist spoken of in the Didache was also eaten as a whole meal, in the form of a community meal among Christians. This meal does not only represent a special initiation meal, but an initiation into the most sacred meal in the Christian church. In this meal, all outsiders, meaning non-believers, were excluded from the meal. The Eucharist was reserved for the baptized. The meal represented fellowship within the community, and there was an emphasis on unity within the community (“Let no one quarreling with his neighbor join you until they are reconciled.”) The document also introduces a new aspect into the practice of the Eucharist; the act of repentance: “On the Lord’s own day, when you gather together, break bread and give thanks after you have confessed your unlawful deeds”. They were to repent so that the meal, which they understood to be a sacrifice, would be pure and acceptable for the Lord. For the Didache community it was here at the table of the Eucharist that the community of the baptized got a taste of what is to come, namely the Kingdom of God, represented by the bread: “And with regard to the fragment of bread... As this fragment was scattered upon the mountains and was gathered to become one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom.”

### **3.5 Separation of the Eucharist from the Community Meal**

Evidence shows that the Eucharist was first practiced in the form of a community meal. The Church had examples of community meals both from the sacramental meals of the Jewish community and the symposium meals from the Greco-Roman tradition which was the fashion at that time. The majority of the Church today has not carried on the tradition of the community meal. The Eucharist for the most part is no longer eaten in homes and neither is it eaten in a meal form. Today the Eucharist is occurring mostly at houses of worship (chapels, church’s etc.), and eaten in a

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<sup>33</sup> Smith and Taussig, *Many Tables, The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today*, 66-67

<sup>34</sup> La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 138

ceremonial fashion in which the members receive a small portion of the ‘bread’ and ‘wine’.

Separating the Eucharist from the community meal changed the way the Church viewed the Lord’s Supper. The social character of the meal shifted from a communal meal to the sacrifice of the mass. The elements changed from a whole loaf of bread to wafers and in some denominations the reservation of the wine for the priests. As a result of the shift, the emphasis of the fellowship of the meal was lost.

### **3.6 The Practice of the Eucharist in the Early Church**

The practices, traditions, reflections and ideas of the Early Church have played key roles in transforming our views and forming our understandings in the field of theology. It is the writings of the apostles, apostolic fathers and apologists that are the foundation for our Christian confessions, rituals, liturgies and ethics. “The Apostolic Fathers witness to the important transition that the church made as it evolved beyond the roots of its fledging New Testament beliefs into an institution of faith.<sup>35</sup>”

Since the time of the New Testament the sacrament of the Eucharist has been a topic of discussion. What is evident in the Early Church, is that Christ, the Church and the Eucharist are intertwined and cannot be separated. It was a natural part of the worship of the Church. Indications in the New Testament suggest that the church partook in the celebration of the Eucharist regularly.

Already in the second century the Early Church was evolving from the times and practices of the New Testament Church. The church was faced with obstacles of power and purity concerning theological doctrines and church practices. Thus the Eucharist also changed form to better suit the needs and the situation of the Church at the time.

The Early Church recognizes that it was Jesus Christ whom instated the Eucharist; it is his body and blood that nourishes the church, uniting the body, joining them together as one. Two of the most important issues surrounding the Eucharist in the Early Church are that of the elements of the Eucharist and the unity of the church.

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<sup>35</sup> Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers, An Essential Guide* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005), 125

### 3.7 The Early Church's Views of the Elements of the Eucharist

The meaning behind the words of Jesus Christ, “this is my body... and this is my blood”, spoken at the Last Supper have long been a topic of discussion; as have the elements (bread and wine) used by Jesus to represent his body and blood. The Early Church received Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper and understood that Christ was present in the elements of the Eucharist.

Cyril in his thoughts on the Eucharist reflects back on the writings of the apostles. He first addresses the letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11: 23-25). Cyril emphasized that based on the words of Jesus at the Lord's Table, the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine are the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Cyril takes into account the story of Wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine, and encourages believers to accept the Eucharistic elements based on faith and not taste. Cyril accounts this transformation from bread and wine to body and blood by the Holy Spirit's power to sanctify and transform the elements<sup>36</sup>. Cyril also writes that it is “by partaking of the body and blood of Christ [that we] may become of one body and one blood with him. Thus we also become Christ-bearers, since his body and his blood are spread throughout our limbs.<sup>37</sup>” Not only do we become Christ-bearers, but we also receive the gift of the grace of God through the blood of Jesus which was poured out for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28)<sup>38</sup>.

In his letters to the church, Ignatius, is concerned about the Eucharist in relation to the true and right teaching (under the bishop) of the passion of Jesus, and the Eucharistic elements of Christ's flesh and blood<sup>39</sup>. He stresses “both the reality of Christ's incarnation and the reality of that same presence in the Eucharist.<sup>40</sup>”

At the same time that the Church was defending the elements of the Eucharist as Christ's body and blood, they were also defending the elements from those who took the understanding of the transformation too far. Affirming that it is not the earthly flesh and blood of Christ that is being consumed at the Eucharist.

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<sup>36</sup> Maurice Wiles, *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 192

<sup>37</sup> Wiles, *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, 188

<sup>38</sup> Wiles, *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, 189

<sup>39</sup> “ Now observe those who hold erroneous opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ which came to us... they remain aloof from eucharist and prayers because they do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, which the Father raised by his goodness.” William R. Schoedel *Ignatius of Antioch; A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 238

<sup>40</sup> Paul f. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 87

Along with the elements of the Eucharist concerning the body and blood of Jesus, The Church had also accepted the biblical elements as represented in the Last Supper. Both the apostles and the early church followed the example set by Jesus at the Last Supper and continued to use bread and wine as the elements of the Eucharist which represented the new pact, symbolizing the Lord's body and blood.

Cyprian rejected the use of water to represent the blood of Christ. "Cyprian states that "in the wine Christ's blood is shown"... In choosing the term "is shown", therefore, he is not hinting that the wine merely symbolizes the sacred blood. His point is simply that wine is an essential ingredient of the Eucharist, since numerous Old Testament texts point to it as a type of the precious blood."<sup>41</sup>"

### **3.8 Unity and Fellowship in the Eucharist**

From the very beginning the Eucharist represented unity and fellowship within the church, this fact is represented in both the writings of Paul and in the Didache. Thus it is not surprising that unity and fellowship were also important factors within the practice of the Eucharist for the church in the second century as well.

"The earliest Church father, Ignatius, took special notice of the unitive function of the Eucharist."<sup>42</sup> He wrote seven letters to the church. These letters were written during a critical period of crossroads in the church; the first century teachings of christianity were being brought together and evaluated in light of the oncoming second century where theological confrontations and uncertainties were being examined and brought to the forefront<sup>43</sup>. The letters of Ignatius played a key role in understanding the theology of the Early Church. "The letters show Ignatius' attachment to the Eucharist as the presence of Christ, human and divine, as central to the being and unity of the Church and as the source and the goal for Christian life."<sup>44</sup> For Ignatius, unity and the Eucharist are tied together. Ignatius acknowledges that it is God's will that the church be 'one in unity', represented by the 'one body' of Christ, which we receive at the 'one altar'.

Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage, ca 200-258) considered the Eucharist to be an essential part of the Church's fellowship. "The Eucharistic worship and reception of

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<sup>41</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 212-213

<sup>42</sup> Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy*, 126

<sup>43</sup> Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch; A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, 1

<sup>44</sup> La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 149

the sacraments of the body and blood are valued as a means of the manifestation and realization of the unity of the members of the Church with one another and with Christ.<sup>45</sup>” He also encouraged the church to use the Eucharist as a source of strength in which they could grow in faith and fellowship in defense of persecution.

Doctrinal unity was important for the development of the Church in the second century, also when concerning the practice of the Eucharist. Thus at this time in the Church there came a need for a more structured practice of the Eucharist to ensure its unity and that it was correctly practiced. In the New Testament accounts of the Eucharist, the authors are not concerned with the fact that the congregations are gathering together and partaking of the Lord’s Supper without apostolic representation or other authorities present at the meal. Though they are concerned that the church practices the meal in a correct and appropriate fashion, not to be influenced by false teachings. During the second century it becomes clear through the writings of Ignatius that the Church Fathers found it necessary to have authority figures present at the Eucharist to ensure that it was being practiced correctly in unity with the theology of the church leaders. Ignatius writes:

“Let that be considered a valid ‘thanksgiving’ that occurs under the bishop or the one to whom he entrusts it. Let the congregation be wherever the bishop is; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there also is the ‘catholic’ [i.e., universal] church. It is not permitted either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is acceptable to God, so that everything you do should be secure and valid. (Smyr. 8)<sup>46</sup>”

The presence of authority figures at the Eucharist was an answer to the progression of the Church. As more and more converts from the Gentile community entered the Church, the thinking and ideas surrounding Christian theology also evolved. Thus the church leaders saw it necessary to have more influence and control to ward off the heretical movements, such as the Gnostic and Docetic.

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<sup>45</sup> Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West; History and Theology* (Collegville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 10

<sup>46</sup> Witherington 111, *Making A Meal Of It*, 100

## Chapter Four

### DISAGREEMENTS SURROUNDING THE EUCHARIST

#### 4.1 Christology and the Eucharist

Christology played a key role in early disagreements surrounding the Eucharist in the Early Church. Understanding the person of Christ was, and is, important for the understanding of the elements as the body and blood in the Eucharist. In the theological disputes between the Church and the Gnostics and Docetics we gain insight as we read about how the different views of Christology also affected their understanding of the Eucharist and its elements.

Tertullian defended the reality of the incarnation of Christ and Christ's real presence in the Eucharist against Marcion's Gnostic view of a dualistic reality.

“Having taken bread, and having distributed it to his disciples, he made it his body, saying: ‘This is my body,’ that is, figure of my body. However it would not be figure unless the bodies were true. Moreover an empty thing, which is a phantasm, cannot take a figure as if he made bread a body for himself because, lacking the truth of a body, he ought to hand over bread ‘for us.’<sup>47</sup>”

The Gnostics dualistic view of reality claimed that there were two realms, the divine spiritual realm and the created lower realm. Using this doctrine they claimed that “the divine messenger Christ... ‘adopted’ the body of Jesus at a point such as at the baptism and departed at a point such as just prior to the crucifixion... This assumption of the body of Jesus by the divine messenger is generally termed as ‘adoptionism’ and is related to docetism.<sup>48</sup>” Ignatius defended the two natures of Christ (truly God and truly man), declaring that “the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father in His goodness raised<sup>49</sup>”. The bread is the flesh of Jesus, the cup His blood. Clearly he intends this realism to be taken strictly, for he makes it the basis of his argument against the Docetics’ denial of the reality of Christ’s body. Justin also attested to the true body of Christ while referring to the transformation of the elements. “We do not receive these’, he writes, ‘as common

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<sup>47</sup> Kilmartin, Edward J., *The Eucharist in the West*, pg 8

<sup>48</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition* (Baker Book House Company, Michigan 2001), 487

<sup>49</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 197

bread or common drink. But just as our Savior Jesus Christ was made flesh through the Word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that food which has been eucharistized by the word of prayer from Him (that food which by process of assimilation nourishes our flesh and blood) is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus.<sup>50</sup>” Irenaeus also defended the two natures of Christ while describing the transformation of the elements. Irenaeus remarks “Just as the bread, which comes from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but Eucharist, being composed of two elements, a terrestrial one and a celestial, so our bodies are no longer commonplace when they receive the Eucharist, since they have the hope of resurrection to eternity.<sup>51</sup>”

By defending the dual nature of Christ (truly God and truly man), the Church Fathers were also defending the real presence of Christ in the elements of the Eucharist. Jesus, being truly God and truly man, was sacrificed on our behalf. It is because of his sacrifice that the Church celebrates the Eucharist; and just as he was present at the Last Supper, he is also present in the elements.

#### **4.2 Transformation of the Elements**

The apostles and the first century authors don’t go into detail about the theology of the elements used at the Eucharist. There was no discussion about transubstantiation or consubstantiation. It wasn’t until around the second and third centuries that the critical discussions about the transformation of the elements began. In the early stages of the discussion the ideas and thoughts expressed were unclear. “There were a variety of views expressed about the Lord’s Supper ranging from the more symbolic and memorial ideas to the spiritual presence or spiritual-food ideas to the more literalistic language about chewing on the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood. And sometimes we even find all this language in one writer.<sup>52</sup>” As the members of the church grew, introducing new cultural thoughts and ideas there became a need to describe and explain the practices of the Church, which in turn prompted theological discussions and debates. In the beginning we find that the teachings and discussions were split into two areas of thought, the first being directed at the Christians of Jewish heritage and the second to the Gentiles whom viewed the gospel in light of their

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<sup>50</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 198

<sup>51</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 198

<sup>52</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 100

Greek philosophical background. This was partly the reason why the early thoughts surrounding the transformation of the elements are confusing; that and the fact that there was no clear language to describe the transformation which could be understood in the same way by both groups because of their ideological backgrounds. As the Church continued to develop its theology, there became not only a desire but also a need to decipher the language of the theology concerning the transformation of the elements.

During the fourth century a split occurred in the theology of the Eucharist causing a dispute between the Church in the East and the West. Representing the theology of the East was Cyril of Jerusalem around 347 A.D.; and representing the West was Ambrose of Milan around 374 A.D. They both claimed “that the prayer of consecration turns the ordinary elements into something they were not before”<sup>53</sup>. Both agree that the elements are being transformed; the disagreement appears in the matter of which they are transformed. For Cyril the transformation occurs because of the power of the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the prayer. For Ambrose the transformation occurs because of the word’s of the priests, namely “the priests repetition of Christ’s words ‘This is my body...(and) This is my blood...’”

After the split between the theology in the east and the theology in the west there were still questions as to how exactly the change is brought about. The theological view accepted in the east was expounded upon by Gregory of Nyssa around the year 395 A.D. He suggested that “just as bread and wine, through the process of digestion became the actual body and blood of Jesus when the historical Jesus ate and drank them, so in the Eucharist the elements are immediately transformed by the action of the Logos.”<sup>54</sup>

The theologians in the west had a more difficult time accepting the theology of the transformation and they continued to debate and discuss the issue internally in the search for a greater understanding and description of how the transformation actually takes place. Augustine suggested that one should view the Eucharist as having two natures just as Christ had two natures. Here he made a distinction between the sacrament and the thing signified by the sacrament. “Augustine was to say that the

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<sup>53</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 115

<sup>54</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 116

sacrament of the Lord's Supper was 'a visible sign of an invisible thing.'<sup>55</sup> It is a distinction between the outward sacrament and the power within it<sup>56</sup>. There is also to be found the element of faith within Augustine's theology of the Eucharist. Augustine believed that although the elements were transformed, the Eucharist was "a sacrament of commemoration of Christ's sacrifice', which only fully benefits those who believe<sup>57</sup>".

The dispute continued for centuries. During the ninth century the debate arose again between two monks, Radbertus and Ratramnus from the abbey of Corbie. Both monks used both Augustine and Ambrose in their debates to support their cases. "Radbertus used Ambrose to interpret Augustine, and Ratramnus used Augustine to interpret Ambrose"<sup>58</sup>. Radbertus took a realist approach to the elements in the Lord's Supper. He insisted that there was a real presence and a strict identity between that of the body and blood of Jesus the man who walked the earth and whom died on the cross and the sacramental body of Christ in the Eucharist. Ratramnus took a more figurative (symbolic) approach of the elements. He stressed that there is a resemblance between the body of the historical Jesus and the mystical body of Christ in the sacrament, but that there is not full identity between the two. For Ratramnus the body of the risen Christ is now glorified and different that that of the body of the historical Jesus who walked the earth; just as the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is different from how he is now in heaven or how he was present on the earth.<sup>59</sup>

It is important to note that the church's disagreement between the east and west was not whether or not a transformation occurred, but the debate was about how it occurred. Overall there was an agreement that there was in fact a transformation of the elements of the Eucharist.

Up until around the time of the reformation the Church in the west held a strict belief and teaching of the transformation of the elements. This is known as transubstantiation, "which was to become the orthodox position of the Western

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<sup>55</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 117

<sup>56</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 117

<sup>57</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 117

<sup>58</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 117

<sup>59</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 118; Gerard Kelly, "The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and Church"; available from <http://www.vincentians.org.au/Studies/Kelly%20G%20Presence%20Eucharist.pdf>; Internet; accessed 05. October 2010

Church all the way up to the Reformation (and beyond)<sup>60</sup>”. This teaching of transubstantiation was proclaimed by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D.; the teaching was afterward clarified by Thomas Aquinas; and later defended by the Council of Trent.

### **4.3 The Reformation and the Rethinking of the Eucharist**

The teaching of transubstantiation was a major cause of dispute both for and between the reformers. Before the reformation there was a (forced) consensus within the Church concerning the transformation of the elements of the Eucharist. After the reformation because of the re-evaluation upon the transformation of the elements the whole focus of the Eucharist shifted (pendulum) dawning a larger focus on the aspect of communion within the Protestant congregations. With this shift came a change in the whole dynamic of the practice of the Eucharist. Not only were the elements and their transformation being scrutinized, but also the view of the Eucharist as being the sacrifice of the mass.

The thinking of the reformers is found already in 1379 within the thoughts and ideas of John Wycliffe.

“Believing he was being true and faithful to what Augustine had suggested, (he) rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation but not the idea of the spiritual presence of Christ, which can be perceived by faith alone. The bread and wine remained just bread and wine after consecration, and so he called them ‘sacramental signs.’ Wycliffe deemed it idolatry to identify the bread with the physical body of Christ.<sup>61</sup>”

At the climax of the theology of the reformation concerning the Eucharist we find Luther and Zwingli. Both were Catholic priests before becoming reformers, both were taught in the Orthodox tradition, and both had differing views concerning the Church’s practice and understanding of the Eucharist. These conflicting views led to a wide gap between the theology and practices of the Eucharist practiced in the Orthodox congregations and those of the Protestants.

Martin Luther disregarded the sacrifice of the mass, but held on to the idea of

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<sup>60</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 119

<sup>61</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 121

the real presence of Christ connecting the presence of Christ to the sacramental elements.

Ulrich Zwingli rejected the Orthodox tradition of the sacrifice of the mass and distanced his practice of the Eucharist farther so than that of Luther by denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Instead Zwingli stressed the real spiritual presence of Christ. Zwingli also taught that the Eucharist was not only communion with Christ, but there is also fellowship between the people of faith.

The reformers were just that, reformers; they did not view themselves as separatists. Their actions and reactions against the practices of the Church were grounded in good intentions. They saw that the Church had gotten a little off track and wanted to bring it back in line with that of the scriptures. Concerning the Eucharist “the Reformers realized that sacramental theology had strayed a very long way from the New Testament text and in various ways had betrayed the essence and character. It had abandoned the meal context, abandoned the *koinonia* concept of ‘discerning that we are the body of Christ.’ It had turned the celebration of a miracle into something more like magic, and magic controlled by priests.<sup>62</sup>” The actions started by the reformers have had both positive and negative contributions concerning the Eucharist. First of all, there is now separation and disunity in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Also, some congregations have gone too far in the opposite direction and not given the Eucharist the respect and place it deserves in the Church. On the positive side, the practice of the Eucharist is now being re-evaluated by the Church in hopes of understanding the original and true identity of the Lord’s Supper.

## Chapter Five

### STRIVING FOR UNITY: (ECUMENICAL) DIALOGUES

#### WITHIN THE CHURCH

##### 5.1 Unity and Diversity

The ecumenical movement works towards the goal of ‘visible unity’ while at the same time affirming the positive attributes of diversity found within the Church. “The Church is ‘the one people of God’ wandering through history that derives ‘from Christ through the apostles’ and ‘remains true to the faith and mission of the apostles’ in the change of generations and epochs. Certainly, the Church is in constant need of renewal, but it stands, at the same, under the demands of ‘continuity’<sup>63</sup>”.

Since the beginning of the Church the Eucharist has been a call to fellowship and unity. The disciple Paul describes this unity as the “one body”<sup>64</sup> Over time the unity of the “one body” has been blurred by doctrinal issues and disagreements. Due to these disagreements the Eucharist is no longer partaken of together by the “one body”, but in some denominations held separately for the members of their congregations alone (know as ‘closed communion’).

In the hope of once again participating in the Eucharist together across the denominations as “one body”, the Church needs to find room for diversity. The model of ‘unity and diversity’ can be traced to the days of the Early Church, as they differentiated between the essential and non-essential aspects of the Church. The most commonly accepted forms of diversity are those in the areas of “ecclesiastical usages, practices, ceremonies, rites, and rules.”<sup>65</sup> There is also permissible diversity within some forms of doctrinal liturgy, whereas agreements of doctrinal teachings are highly stressed.

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<sup>62</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a meal of It*, 124-125

<sup>63</sup> Harding Meyer, *That All May Be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan: 1999), 50-51

<sup>64</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:17 “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all partake of the one bread.” NASB

<sup>65</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 39

## 5.2 Doctrinal Unity

Within the church there are some that practice ‘closed communion’. This practice of closed communion entails that one must be a member of the “church/congregation” to partake in the Eucharist. The purpose of practicing closed communion is to ensure doctrinal unity of those partaking in the Eucharist. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) is among those who practice closed communion. This is a special case because they have been known to deny the Eucharist to members of other Lutheran congregations who do not belong to the Missouri Synod. For the LCMS, closed communion is about true fellowship. They argue that to be truly one, all have to agree on all aspects of doctrine. Referring to the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 the LCMS states: “This passage in Corinthians strikes a crushing blow at unionism. To admit those who believe differently to our Communion, and so to our church fellowship, is a contradiction in itself. For those who approach the same altar together profess to be one—one in all points of Christian doctrine and practice—while in reality they disagree. It would be shameful hypocrisy on our part if we would have those who actually profess a different faith than we do join us at the Lord’s Altar.”<sup>66</sup> For the LCMS, sharing the Eucharist with those who hold to other doctrines than those taught and practiced by the LCMS is in a way condoning their false teachings. Also in doing so, those who practice ‘open communion’ are being irresponsible and unfaithful to the ministry and the spiritual care of the church<sup>67</sup>.

The Roman Catholic church practices closed communion, generally allowing only those whom are baptized and share in the same faith, worship and ecclesial belief to participate in the Eucharist. They also refuse to partake in, or accept the Eucharist from another denomination outside of the Roman Catholic church based on doctrinal discrepancies. ‘Closed communion’ is practiced with the exception of those in denominations outside of the ‘church’ in great need of the Eucharist, whom are able to agree with all doctrines of The Roman Catholic church.

The Orthodox church also practices closed communion. For the Orthodox church the Eucharist is associated with the faith of the Church and to participate in open communion would be to deny the nature of the Eucharist. “For the Orthodox, the

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<sup>66</sup> Dr. A.L. Barry “*What About Fellowship in the Lord’s Supper*”  
[http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/wa\\_fellowship-lordssupper.pdf](http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/wa_fellowship-lordssupper.pdf); Internet, accessed 20. October 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Dr. A.L. Barry “*What About Fellowship in the Lord’s Supper*”

Eucharist is the supreme expression of unity and not a means towards unity.<sup>68</sup> For this unity to be valid the partakers of the Eucharist must be one in faith, worship and ecclesiology. Based on ecclesiological standpoints the Orthodox church claims to be the one true church, in which is preserved the apostolic faith and tradition. The Orthodox Church views the Eucharist as the ultimate expression and realization of the church's worship and its theology, thus there is only room for the true church to celebrate the Eucharist. It is on these grounds that the Orthodox refuse to participate, and or partake of the Eucharist together with other denominations.

When denominations of the Church practice 'closed communion' based on doctrinal disagreements, claiming that agreement in these areas are fundamental for the ecclesial and sacramental life, and faith of the Church; one must become aware of which doctrines are affecting our common faith and also if these doctrinal disagreements, along with those concerning the celebration of the Eucharist are relative today. What does the word 'faith' mean to the denominations of the Church, and how should faith be understood and applied to the ecumenical movement? By policing the faith of individuals and denying access to the Lord's Supper, the Church, in instances where there is common faith to be found, is denying the reconciling work of God. Also In doing so they are neglecting to allow God to work through the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals who are a part of the 'one body' making up the Church.

### **5.3 Visible Unity: Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith**

#### **Today**

The purpose of the ecumenical movement is to achieve "visible unity in faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship."<sup>69</sup> The goal of 'open communion' within the Church is to re-instate visible unity between the congregations that share in, and express the same

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<sup>68</sup>The British Orthodox Church within the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate "One Lord, One Faith; Why Orthodox Don't Practice Open Communion" available from <http://britishorthodox.org/glastonbury-review-archive/misc/one-lord-one-faith-why-orthodox-dont-practice-open-communion/>; Internet; accessed 02. November 2010

<sup>69</sup> Max Thurian, *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 1

apostolic faith “that is attested in the Holy Scriptures and summarized in the creeds of the early Church.<sup>70</sup>” Specifically the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381<sup>71</sup>.

“This creed has been more universally received than any other symbol of the faith, as a normative expression of the essential content of the apostolic faith; -is part of the historical heritage of contemporary Christianity; -has been in liturgical use through the centuries to express the one faith of the Church.

The Nicene Creed thus serves to indicate whether the faith as set forth in modern situations is the same faith as the one the Church confessed through the centuries.<sup>72</sup>”

The World Council of Churches recognizes that the Nicene Creed is a common creed, used in the Church both in the East and West. The council also recognizes the use of the Apostles Creed<sup>73</sup>, which has its origins in Rome and is used only by the church in the West. When the Church proclaims and confess’ the creeds together, they are agreeing upon the foundational doctrines of the Church.

The practice of open communion is not for the purpose of developing unity in the Church, nor is it denying the true nature of the Eucharist. Just the opposite, open

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<sup>70</sup> *Confessing the One Faith; An Ecumenical Explanation of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed 381* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 2

<sup>71</sup> **The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed**, Text of 381 A.D.

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us all (man) and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by (the power of) the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered (death) and was buried. On the third day he rose (again) from the dead in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We (acknowledge) confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the (world) age to come. Amen.”

*Confessing the One Faith; An Ecumenical Explanation of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, pg 11-12

<sup>72</sup> *Confessing the One Faith; An Ecumenical Explanation of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, 4

<sup>73</sup> **The Apostles’ Creed**

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.” *Confessing the One Faith; An Ecumenical Explanation of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, 13-14

communion is about recognizing the unitive nature already in the Eucharist, by realizing the shared apostolic faith of the Church as described in the Nicene Creed, which encompasses the important foundational doctrines of the Church.

#### **5.4 The Road to Unity**

The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement described by the World Council of Churches is that of visible unity. The concept of visible unity encompasses two important aspects of the unity of the Church. First, the unity of the Church is a gift from God, seeking to make it visible is our response to his gift. Secondly, visible unity is grounded on the unity that is already realized in the faith of the Church. Part of achieving visible unity is celebrating the Eucharist together. Before the Church can discuss the issue of unity in the Eucharist, they must first understand where each denomination stands on the issue of unity, and what it means to them.

For Luther the reformation was not about separation or creating a new ‘church’, but a return to the true ‘church’. The Lutheran description of Church unity is described in Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession<sup>74</sup>. For Lutherans the unity of the Church is based on the pure and true preaching of the Gospel and correct administration of the sacraments. The Reformed denominations views of Church unity resemble those of Lutherans. The doctrinal statements of unity are described in Article 17 of the ‘Confessio Helvetica Posterior’<sup>75</sup>. What is expressed by both the Lutherans and the Reformed denominations is that Church unity is based on Word and sacraments. This unity of Word and sacraments is not based on conformity of ceremonial/rituals developed by man<sup>76</sup>. Church unity is to be found where the Word

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<sup>74</sup> “It is also taught, that one holy Christian church must always be and remain, which is the assembly of all believers, among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church, that the gospel harmoniously is preached and the sacraments administered according to the Word of God.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 16

<sup>75</sup> “We diligently teach that care is to be taken wherein the truth and unity of the Church chiefly lies, lest we rashly provoke and foster schisms in the Church. Unity consist not in outward rites and ceremonies, but rather in truth and unity of the catholic faith. This Catholic faith is not given to us by human laws, but by the Holy Scriptures, of which the Apostles’ Creed is a compendium. And therefore we read in the ancient writers that there was a manifold diversity of rites, but that they were free, and no one ever thought that the unity of the Church was thereby dissolved. So we teach that the true harmony of the Church consists in doctrines and in the true and harmonious preaching of the Gospel of Christ and in rites that have been expressly delivered by the Lord.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 16-17

<sup>76</sup> “What was understood as ‘ceremonies’ and ‘rites’ at the time [of the reformation] was quite varied, ranging from the ringing of bells to regulations on fasting, from particular forms of worship and of the life of piety all the way to canon law and certain expressions of ecclesiastical office. These ceremonies

of God is truly preached, and the sacraments (baptism and the Eucharist) correctly practiced.

Around the time that the reformers drafted their views of Church unity the Anglicans also distributed their doctrinal views of unity within their ‘Thirty-nine Articles’, specifically in Articles 19 and 34<sup>77</sup>. The form of unity described here is like that expressed by the reformers, Word and sacrament, also leaving room for diversity in the areas of tradition and ceremonies. More recently the Anglicans have further described Church unity in the ‘Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral’ document<sup>78</sup>. In this document the basis of unity has been expanded to include the affirmation of the ‘Apostolic’ and ‘Nicene’ doctrinal creeds, as well as episcopal order of ordination in accordance with the apostolic succession.

The Roman Catholics have a long tradition of written documents concerning the doctrine of the Church. Though to clearly understand their position of Church unity in relationship to the ecumenical movement, the more recent documents prove to be more insightful. “At the fifth public session of the Second Vatican Council on November 21, 1964, the ‘Dogmatic constitution on the Church’ and the ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ were promulgated. The first chapter of the latter, which is entitled ‘Catholic Principles of Ecumenism’ and constantly refers to Holy Scripture and the

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and rites all share a common characteristic, however, in that they were not given to the church from the beginning by God and thus established in Scripture, but rather that they arose in the history of the church and are the result of ecclesiastical ordinances or decisions. This makes them in the view of the reformation fundamentally ‘ceremonies instituted by human beings’ (CA7).” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 18

“This in no way denies that those ecclesiastical ceremonies and rites, practices and institutions have the potential to be good and useful for the church and its unity. Thus there is a readiness, especially in the area of the Lutheran tradition, to preserve communion in these matters—provided that they serve the gospel and its proclamation. What is rejected is the demand that, for the sake of the unity of the church, unanimity is absolutely indispensable in these matters.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 19

<sup>77</sup> “Article 19: The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same...” “ Article 34: It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 20-21

<sup>78</sup> “The following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God’s blessing made towards Home Reunion: a) The holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith. b) The Apostles’ Creed as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith. c) The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with un failing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him. d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and

ecclesiastical doctrinal tradition, developed the Roman Catholic understanding of the unity of the church.<sup>79</sup>” In this document, the three specifications of the position of the Roman Catholic doctrine of a united Church are made clear. These include the true and faithful preaching of the Gospel, the correct administration of the sacraments and the governance of the Church by the episcopal order of the bishops as apostolic succession (specifically stating the apostle Peter).

Unlike the other denominations the Orthodox do not have written official doctrinal statements. So to grasp their doctrine of Church and unity, declarations that they have made in the public arena have been compiled.

“The unity of the Church is not only obscured or hidden. The unity of the church is ‘lost.’ Loss of unity is more than division among the churches; it is division of the church (schism). The unity of the church must, therefore, not only be made ‘visible’ but also ‘regained.’

The reason for the loss of unity is that the churches have not preserved ‘the tradition of the ancient, undivided church,’ that is, the tradition of the church of the first seven ecumenical councils. Unity will be regained by all these churches ‘returning’ to the tradition of the ancient, undivided church and thereby ‘returning’ to the church.

This tradition of the ancient, undivided church includes in itself the apostolic faith, the sacramental life, especially the Eucharistic life, and the ministry, understood as the episcopate standing in apostolic succession and the sacramental priesthood. The effort for unity and consensus must concentrate on each of these elements.

However, these constitutive elements of the tradition of the ancient, undivided church – and with it the unity of the church – are seen as one indivisible whole. They are so inseparably and intimately connected that they can never be taken individually. The loss of one of these elements means ultimately the loss of all, and each of the elements is really only preserved if all elements are preserved.

Only in the Orthodox Church is the tradition of the undivided church preserved in its wholeness and integrity. The Orthodox Church is the preserver of this tradition, and only in it is this tradition, and with it the church in its unity, a living, lived, and visible reality.<sup>80</sup>”

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peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 21

<sup>79</sup> Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 31

“It is through the faithful preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles and their successors – the bishops with Peter’s successor as their head – through their administering the sacraments, and through their governing in love, that Jesus Christ wishes his people to increase under the action of the Holy Spirit; and he perfects its fellowship in unity: in their confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God.” Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 31-32

<sup>80</sup> Meyer, *That All May be One; Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, 30

These views of the Orthodox position concerning Church unity are based on declarations made by the Orthodox in the Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Their position of Church unity can be summarized as being a member of the Orthodox 'church'.

These five denominations have been active and play an important role in the ecumenical movement. Understanding these examples is crucial for understanding their position on inter-church Eucharist, and how the Church can move forward in its quest to regain the visible unity of the Church thus realizing the gift of unity found in the Eucharist. The positions represented by the Lutherans, Reformed and Anglican denominations are closely related and appear to be the most open and ready to participate in an inter-church Eucharist, as they accept some forms of diversity within the Church. The Roman Catholics position seems to be evolving through ecumenical dialogues as they realize the lengths of agreement shared concerning the doctrine of the Eucharist, though despite this there is still more work that needs to be done concerning the papacy before mutual agreement can be achieved. The position of Church unity posed by the Orthodox seems to be the most difficult in relationship with the other denominations concerning visible unity, as they only accept total convergence concerning all aspects and positions held by the Orthodox church.

### **5.5 Dialoguing**

The purpose of the dialogues between the denominations of the Church is not only to understand the position of the parties, but also to find a way to move forward by examining their positions. This is done by recognizing each parties position in relationship to the others, where they agree, disagree and why. It is through these dialogues that the Church grows closer together recognizing the unity to which it is called.

### **5.6 Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues**

After the reformation there was a great separation in the church bringing great devastation upon church unity leaving the church broken in a sense. This separation directly affected the sacraments of the church. Since 1965 there has been discussions occurring at a world level between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman

Catholic Church<sup>81</sup>. Due to the interaction and discussions between these two parties the Church gained great awareness into the devastation of the “continuing separation in the Supper of unity [since] the full unity of Christians, presupposing unity in faith, includes Eucharistic communion<sup>82</sup>” The problem of the Eucharist has been discussed by the commission and it has been laid out and presented in the document ‘*The Eucharist*’. Although this document is addressed to the Catholic and Lutheran Christians, it is aimed towards all Christians and has also accepted and utilized suggestions from other Christian groups in the hope that it may testify to a truth which is for all people<sup>83</sup>. Through the dialogues of the commissioners the two groups have come to realize that their doctrines concerning the Eucharist are quite similar, and the problem of communing together have become less problematic, but not yet abolished.

The first part of the document is presenting the joint witness between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans. Here they have listed seven points in which they agree upon concerning the Eucharist.

‘The Legacy of Christ According to the Scripture’ is identifying the Last Supper whence the Eucharist was instated and “the Lord gave himself as nourishment to his disciples and thus, in anticipation of his coming glory, made them partakers in his work, life and suffering”<sup>84</sup>. Today when Christians partake in the Lord’s Supper they do so in remembrance of Christ and experience the same fellowship with one-another and Christ, with anticipation as they receive “forgiveness of sins, life and salvation<sup>85</sup>”.

The ‘Mystery of Faith<sup>86</sup>’ is describing the connection between the Eucharist and the mystery of salvation given to us as a gift from God and received by the people through faith, which we receive through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharist is ‘Through, With and In Christ<sup>87</sup>’. The Eucharist is through Christ as it was he who initiated the meal and it is he who extends the invitation to his believers to partake in the meal. Jesus is also with us at the celebration of the

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<sup>81</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist* (Geneva : The Lutheran World Federation, Secretariat for promoting Christian unity of the Roman Catholic Church, 1980), 1

<sup>82</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 1

<sup>83</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 3

<sup>84</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 4

<sup>85</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 4

<sup>86</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 4

Eucharist. His presence is with us in various ways through the entire celebration. “It is the same Lord who through the proclaimed word invites his people to his table, who through his minister presides at the table, and who gives himself sacramentally in the Body and Blood of his paschal sacrifice.<sup>88</sup>” As we participate in the celebration, we are also embarking on a journey together with Christ as we await the coming kingdom of God. Above all the Eucharist is in Christ and He is in the Eucharist. “Under the signs of bread and wine the Lord offers as nourishment his body and blood, that is himself, which he has given for all.<sup>89</sup>” In the partaking of the Eucharist we are united with Christ as he unites those who participate in the meal, together, to be one body.

The Holy Spirit plays a major role in the Eucharist and the life of the Church. Jesus Christ was empowered by the Holy Spirit while he walked the earth. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ conquered death and rose again. “It is also through the Holy Spirit that Christ is at work in the Eucharist.<sup>90</sup>” It is the Holy Spirit whom God grants communion with Christ and amongst the believers, strengthening the Church so that the work of the Lord can be continued. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the elements of bread and wine are transformed to the body and blood of Christ, which the Church receives in faith granted by the Spirit.

The Eucharist is ‘Glorification of the Father<sup>91</sup>’ through proclamation, thanksgiving, intercession, praise and self-giving. The Eucharist “proclaims the greatness and mercy of God<sup>92</sup>” the Father, as it also confesses to our reconciliation with him. The nature of God’s greatness is revealed in the benediction by which the church expresses its thankfulness for what God has done, is doing, and will do.

The Eucharist is ‘for the life of the world’<sup>93</sup>. The gifts received in the Eucharist are available for all mankind. As the church becomes reconciled at the table of the Eucharist they are drawn into service, to be ambassadors for Christ<sup>94</sup>. At the Eucharist the Church receives strength to be witnesses for Christ so that the gospel can be received and realized in the life of the world.

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<sup>87</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 6

<sup>88</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 6-7

<sup>89</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 8

<sup>90</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 9

<sup>91</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 10

<sup>92</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 10

<sup>93</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 14

<sup>94</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20 “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. NASB

The Eucharist is a ‘view to the future glory’. “In the Eucharist we proclaim ‘the Lord’s death until he comes<sup>95</sup>’. In it the future glory is promised, as well as, in an initial way, revealed and meditated.<sup>96</sup>” The promise of the coming kingdom and future glory is revealed in the promise of the Lord’s return and with it the anticipation of the heavenly banquet. The Church receives a taste of this future banquet and fellowship with the risen Christ at the Lord’s Supper.

The second part of the document ‘The Eucharist’ is discussing the aspects of the Eucharist in which there are perceived disagreements between the two (Lutherans and Roman Catholics). There is a positive tone towards the discussion as they consider these disagreements as ‘common tasks<sup>97</sup>’, with the purpose of facing the problems together. The document states that “Controverted positions which hinder complete fellowship of faith and Eucharist must be recognized, described and faced with the purpose of recognizing and overcoming what is divisive.<sup>98</sup>”

The first position to be discussed is that of Eucharistic Presence<sup>99</sup>. Both the Roman Catholics and Lutherans confess to the real and true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The differences lie in the “theological statements on the mode and therefore duration of the real presence.<sup>100</sup>” The approach viewed by the Roman Catholics as the mode of transition of the elements is that of transubstantiation. Through the mode of transubstantiation “Christ whole and entire’ becomes present through the transformation of the whole substance of the bread and the wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ while the empirically accessible appearances of bread and wine continue to exist unchanged.<sup>101</sup>” The approach accepted by the Lutherans is that of ‘real presence’. In the mode of ‘real presence’ the Lutherans attest to the reality of Christ’s presence in with and under the elements of the bread and wine. Thus both agree upon the presence of Christ in the elements of

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<sup>95</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26

<sup>96</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 15

<sup>97</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 17

<sup>98</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 17

<sup>99</sup> “The ecumenical discussion has shown that these two positions must no longer be regarded as opposed in a way that leads to separation. The Lutheran tradition affirms the Catholic tradition that the consecrated elements do not simply remain bread and wine but rather by the power of the creative word are given as the body and blood of Christ.” Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 18

<sup>100</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 17

<sup>101</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 18

the Eucharist, but there is a difference in the duration of his presence in the Eucharistic elements<sup>102</sup>.

The second position under discussion is that of 'Eucharistic Sacrifice'. The Lutherans and the Catholics agree the crucified and risen Christ is present in the elements, who's sacrifice for the Church was once an for all, and can not be repeated, replaced or complemented. The Lutherans have shied away from calling the Eucharist a sacrifice, considering this term to be to closely related to the sacrifice on the cross, contradicting the view that the sacrifice of Christ was unique and complete in itself. The Catholics affirm the sacrifice of the Eucharist, explaining that it is not a re-enactment of the sacrifice of the cross, but an act making the sacrifice of the cross present at the Eucharist. The Lutherans do however agree that the Eucharist is the sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father.

The third, and most problematic position discussed, was that of 'Eucharistic Ministry'. Both the Catholics and the Lutherans confirm the view that the Eucharist should involve ordained ministers that have been appointed by the Church. The problem is that the Roman Catholic church does not identify with the Lutheran ministers as being ordained in the tradition of the apostolic succession.

After dialoguing, the positions held by the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans have been realized to be closer than first perceived. These discoveries have brought them closer together. In the document 'The Eucharist', both parties attest to and agree about the importance of the unity found in the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist is thus at once the source and climax of the church's life. Without the Eucharistic community there is no full ecclesial community, and without the ecclesial community there is not real Eucharistic community. This is true, first for the actual congregation wherever it gathers to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but equally it concerns the whole of Christianity. 'The sharing of the common loaf and the common cup in a given place demonstrates the oneness of the sharers with the whole Christ and with their fellow sharers in

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<sup>102</sup> "According to Catholic doctrine the Lord grants his Eucharistic presence even beyond the sacramental celebration for as long as the species of bread and wine remain. The faithful are accordingly invited to 'give to this holy sacrament in veneration the worship of *latria*, which is due to the true God'. Lutherans have not infrequently taken exception to certain of the forms of Eucharistic piety connected with this conviction. They are regarded as inadmissibly separated from the Eucharistic meal. On the other hand, Catholic sensibilities are offended by the casual way in which the elements remaining after communion are treated sometimes on the Lutheran side, and this indicates a discrepancy which is not yet overcome." Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 19

all times and places. By sharing the common loaf they show their unity with the Church catholic.<sup>103</sup>”

They go further in their convictions of Eucharistic unity by recognizing the damage being caused to the Church through the denial of inter-church communion.

“In view of this unity bestowed by Christ, the fact that Christians again and again sin against this unity is all the more serious. This occurs when they fail in faith and hope, but also when they tolerate or even cause deep divisions between human beings both in personal and social spheres.”<sup>104</sup>

Despite the discussions and joint statements the Roman Catholic Church still denies acceptance of the Eucharist in the Lutheran Church and only allows admittance of Lutherans to the Eucharist in acute situations. The main cause of problems is the issue of papacy and some areas of ecclesial diversity.

### **5.7 Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue**

Starting with Luther there has been an interest on the part of the Lutherans to come into contact with the Orthodox, and despite failed attempts and set backs, there has been contact between the two on a national level since around 1574<sup>105</sup>. In 1978 the dialogues between the Lutherans and the Orthodox entered into the realm of ecumenical dialogues on a world level. From 1978 until 1981 when they met in Helsinki, “the two individual dialogue teams worked separately but on a common agenda.<sup>106</sup>” The agenda concerned “three major topics: contacts in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the regional dialogues, and the theme for the dialogue, which was agreed as ‘Participation in the Mystery of the Church’<sup>107</sup>” In 1991, “after the first five meetings, joint statements reflecting significant convergences of thinking of divine revelation, scripture and Tradition, and inspiration and canon were prepared for publication.<sup>108</sup>” The work of the commission continued in Moscow in 1991, concerning “Authority in and of the Church<sup>109</sup>” Later “in 1998 the joint commission approved an agreed

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<sup>103</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 10

<sup>104</sup> Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist*, 10

<sup>105</sup> Nicholas Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 716

<sup>106</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Geneva: WWC Publications, 2002), 717

<sup>107</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 717

<sup>108</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 717

<sup>109</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 717

statement on ‘Salvation: Grace, Justification and Synergy.’<sup>110</sup> The goal of the commission for these dialogues was that of “full communion as full mutual recognition.”<sup>111</sup>”

The Eucharist was the topic of discussion at the 13<sup>th</sup> plenary of the International Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission when they met in Bratislava, Slovak Republic in 2006 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. The Lutherans and Orthodox agree and recognize the sacrament of the Eucharist as the new covenant, which was instituted by Christ whom offered himself as a sacrifice once and for all. It is also “Christ and not the priest whom offers the Eucharistic sacrifice.”

Concerning the practice of the Eucharist, both the Lutheran and Orthodox traditions include “proper preparation for participation in the Eucharist” which involves “preparatory prayers, confession and forgiveness of sins.”<sup>112</sup> The words of Christ “this is my body; this is my blood” are taken literally by the Lutherans and the Orthodox; believing that in the Eucharist the bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood to be consumed by the communicants. How this happens is regarded by both as profound and real mystery. The Lutherans take the approach of ‘real presence’<sup>113</sup>, while the Orthodox take the position of real change (*metabole*)<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 717-718

<sup>111</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 717

<sup>112</sup> The Orthodox also include fasting which is not required, but often practiced by the Lutherans.

<sup>113</sup> “Lutherans speak about Christ’s “real presence” in the Eucharist and describe Christ’s body and blood as being “in, with and under” the bread and wine (Formula of Concord, SD 7). By this they mean that the bread and the wine really become the body and blood of Christ, through the Words of Institution and the action of the Holy Spirit. Drawing on patristic sources, Lutherans understand Christ’s presence in the elements christologically: “Just as in Christ two distinct, unaltered natures are inseparably united, so in the Holy Supper two essences, the natural bread and the true natural body of Christ, are present together here on earth in the action of the sacrament, as it was instituted” (SD 7). Lutherans, however, maintain a distinction between a personal, hypostatic union and a “sacramental union”, favoring the latter in order to describe Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Lutheran theology is able to speak of a transformation (*mutatio*) of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (Apology X, 2; XXIV). This is not understood as eliminating the physical character of the bread and wine in the Eucharist. Lutherans emphasize that it is God’s Word which makes the sacrament (Large Catechism, 5: The Sacrament of the Altar).” Risto Saarinen, *Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church (13<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*, available from <http://www.helsinki.fi/~risaarin/lutortjointtext.html#euch>; Internet, accessed 11. November 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Orthodox profess a real change (*metabole*) of the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ by the Words of Institution and the act of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic *anaphora*. This does not mean a “transubstantiation” of the substance of the bread and the wine into the substance of the deified humanity of Christ, but a union with it: “The bread of communion isn’t an ordinary bread, but united with divinity” (John of Damascus). This union amounts to a communication of the deifying properties of the humanity of Christ and of the deifying grace of his divinity to the eucharistic gifts: The bread and the wine are no longer understood with respect to their natural properties but with respect to Christ’s deified human body in which they have been assumed through the action of the Holy Spirit. As in Christology the two natures are united hypostatically, so in the Eucharist Christ’s exalted human body and the “antitypes” (St. Basil, Anaphora) of bread and wine are united sacramentally

“Orthodox and Lutherans agree, whether they use the language of “metabole” or of “real presence”, that the bread and wine do not lose their essence (*physis*) when becoming sacramentally Christ’s body and blood. The medieval doctrine of transubstantiation is rejected by both Orthodox and Lutherans.” The change of the elements is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Proper use of the elements is also emphasized due to their salvific qualities in the Eucharist<sup>115</sup>. Although the description of the regulations concerning the consecrated elements outside of the Eucharist vary between the Lutherans and the Orthodox<sup>116</sup>, they can agree together because of the practice of reverence and respect of handling the consecrated elements.

For both the Lutherans and Orthodox the Eucharist is a part of the mystery of salvation. The Eucharist is the gift of communion, through and with Christ as well as with the Church. Together, the Lutherans and Orthodox affirm the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist, bringing “both the past and the future into the present.”<sup>117</sup>

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through the act of the Holy Spirit. Risto Saarinen, “*Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church (13<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*”

<sup>115</sup> “Those who believe Christ’s words receive his body and blood for their salvation.” Risto Saarinen, “*Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church (13<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*”

<sup>116</sup> “The Lutheran position stems from a historical critique of non-eucharistic uses of the eucharistic elements common in late-medieval Western traditions. Lutherans see a danger of superstition, fetishism or an abuse in private masses in such practices. Lutheran theology, furthermore, views the elements as means of salvation (*media salutis*) which means that its primary interest lies in the two entities that are brought together by those media—God and the believer—and not in the media themselves. Hence, the Lutheran tradition has not emphasized reflection on what happens to the elements outside their use in the Eucharist (*extra usum*). Orthodox understand the elements’ change christologically. Since Christ’s presence with the elements brings the divine into contact with the earthly, the earthly elements are affected—“deified”—much as Christ’s human nature is affected by union with the divine. As a consequence, Orthodox believe that the elements are sacramentally changed in themselves when they are united with Christ’s body and blood, and that that change is as irreversible as the incarnation itself. However, they insist that the consecrated bread and wine are used only for eucharistic purposes.” Risto Saarinen, “*Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church (13<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*”

<sup>117</sup> Lutherans and Orthodox together affirm the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, which brings both the past and the future into the present. Since the eschatological mystery is the incarnate, crucified, resurrected and exalted Christ, who is coming again with glory, the Eucharist, which brings us to him and him to us, is truly eschatological. The Eucharist presents the eschaton to the believers and to the world. It brings salvation to the believer and judgment to the unbeliever and unworthy participant (1 Cor. 11,27ff). By giving us his holy body and blood to eat and to drink, Christ is bodily as close to us now as he was to his first disciples and to all his followers throughout the ages. But the sacrament is also an anticipation of the future redemption and a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven (Rev. 19,9). This meal, the supper of the Kingdom, encompasses both the future eschatology of the Parousia and the inaugurated eschatology of the Eucharist. In it God the Father not only forgives us our sins, but nourishes us with the body and blood of His Son so that we are strengthened through the Holy Spirit for our earthly pilgrimage, until at last we fully possess the life of the world to come, which we already possess in a hidden manner by faith. In the words of the ancient prayer, “Maranatha, Our Lord, come!” (1 Cor. 16,22c), the Church prays for the future coming of the Lord at the end of time as well as for his coming now through the Spirit in this holy meal. In the Eucharist, the Kingdom becomes a present reality since by coming to Communion with Christ’s body and blood, the believers experience abiding union with the exalted Lord.” Risto Saarinen, “*Lutheran-*

Because of the nature of the Eucharist the church is placed into action as communicators of the coming Kingdom of God; giving back both to God and the community that which has been received through the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the members of the Church receive reconciliation and in turn are called to be reconcilers for God and the world.

After the church discussed the above aspects of the Eucharist, realizing the extent of agreement, they expressed a desire to continue the discussion at a later date. “For its next meeting, the Commission agreed to extend its reflection on *The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church* and to work on the following topics: *Preparation and Celebration of the Eucharist; Eucharist and Ecology (including Human Society)*.” This meeting, the 14th Plenary of the International Lutheran–Orthodox Joint Commission, took place in Paphos Cyprus from the 30<sup>th</sup> of May to the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2008.

The Lutherans and Orthodox agree that the Eucharist is an essential sacrament in the life of the church in which we receive “the gift of eternal life, the means of salvation and the medicine of immortality Participation in the Eucharist is participation in the risen humanity of Christ, which is present in the sacrament and constitutes the Holy of Holies of Christian worship. As such it calls for appropriate preparation.” Such preparation begins with self-examination which involves both confession and forgiveness of sins<sup>118</sup>. The act of self-examination was also important for the disciple Paul who sent a warning to the Church of Corinth concerning the practice of the Eucharist and partaking of the meal in a worthy manner. Paul insists that the members of the Church examine themselves first before partaking in the meal (1 Cor 11: 27-29).

“St. Paul’s warning to the Corinthians follows his cry of dismay over how they have abused the Eucharist by celebrating while divided among themselves and by ignoring social inequalities in their midst (1 Cor 11: 17-22). In a similar

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*Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church (13<sup>th</sup> Plenary)”*

<sup>118</sup> “This is done both in private prayer and through an act of confession and absolution before a priest or pastor, which for Orthodox is the sacrament of confession. While Lutherans do not typically define confession as a sacrament, they do also offer private confession and absolution. The Lutheran tradition includes general confession and absolution within the Eucharistic celebration. Differences between Lutherans and Orthodox on the topic of confession remain. Resolving whether such differences present an obstacle to sharing in the Eucharist will require further discussion.” Risto Saarinen, “*Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church; Preparation, Ecological and Social Implications (14<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*”

spirit, Jesus Christ calls upon those approaching the altar to first be reconciled with persons who have something against them (Mt 5: 23-24). Accordingly, proper preparation for the Eucharist should involve reconciliation with one's brothers and sisters. Lutheran and Orthodox traditions expect such reconciliation to follow self-examination when appropriate. In some cases, they provide specific rituals to facilitate the process."

The implications of the Eucharist do not end when the celebration of the meal is finished. "Christ's self-giving presence continues to guide and sanctify the communicants as they live out the church's mission in the world." Both the Lutherans and the Orthodox agree that by participating in the Eucharist they are being called into service to serve the Lord by sharing God's grace with the world<sup>119</sup>. This common commitment to serving God, revealing the power of reconciliation found in the Eucharist both for the Church and the world also reveals the uniting power of the Eucharist for the one body of Christ.

Despite their common convictions concerning reconciliation and Eucharistic unity, the Orthodox still refuse to celebrate the Eucharist together with the Lutherans (as well as the other denominations of the Church). Hopefully through reflection and future dialogues, the Orthodox will learn to understand its shared heritage with the other denominations.

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<sup>119</sup> "Luther describes the Eucharistic union of believer with Christ in the following terms, placing particular emphasis on the Eucharist's effect on social life: "Christ with all saints, by his love, takes upon himself our form, fights with us against sin, death and all evil. This enkindles in us such love that we take on his form, rely upon his righteousness, life and blessedness. And through the interchange of his blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common. O this is a great sacrament, says St. Paul, that Christ and the church are one flesh and bone. Again through this same love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christians our own; we are to take upon ourselves their form and their necessity, and all the good that is within our power we are to make theirs, that they may profit from it. That is real fellowship and that is the true significance of the sacrament. In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community by love" (Martin Luther, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*, LW 35, 58; cf. WA 2, 748). An eloquent statement of the Orthodox perception is the following text of St. John Chrysostom. Commenting on the instructions of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, Chrysostom speaks of the responsibility of Christians to be priests to Christ, serving human society as if it were an altar of Christ: "This altar is composed of the very members of Christ, and the body of the Lord is made your altar. ... This altar is more awesome than the one which you now use [in church], or the one that was used of old [in Israel]. ... This altar you may see lying everywhere, both in the streets and in the marketplaces, and you may sacrifice on it every hour, for on this altar, too, is sacrifice performed. And as the priest stands invoking the Spirit, so do you too invoke the Spirit, not by speech but by deeds. ... When then you see a poor believer, think that you behold an altar; when you see a beggar, not only should you not insult him, but you should even reverence him. And if you see another insulting him, prevent it." (St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 9: 10, Homily XX*). Risto Saarinen, "Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission; *The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church; Preparation, Ecological and Social Implications (14<sup>th</sup> Plenary)*"

## 5.8 Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue

Since the Reformation there have been efforts to bring together the reformed congregations, starting with the reformers themselves. In 1529 Luther, Melanchton, Zwingli and Oecolampadius met at the Marburg colloquy. Here they agreed on numerous points, “but not on the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>120</sup>

After the talks between the reformers there have been many open dialogues and discussions pathing the road to reconciliation between the reformed congregations. These discussions have led to great advancements, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>121</sup>

The Arnoldshain thesis of 1957, expresses the judgment of some of the most eminent exegetes of the century, such as the knowledge that the New Testament provides no justification for the Eucharistic division of the traditions.

The process of the European Leuenberg agreement began in 1969, and was concluded in 1973. Through this process the Lutheran-Reformed churches re-discovered their common heritage and shared doctrinal convictions.

“Article 7 of the Lutheran Augsburg confession became the critical text for the Leuenberg. It states that for ‘the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.’ In the first of four sections, the Leuenberg document recalls the common heritage of the Reformation and notes the divisions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The second section articulates the common faith of the Reformation churches: the centrality of justification by faith for the preaching, teaching and sacramental life of the church. The third section addresses the difficult issue of the 16<sup>th</sup> century condemnations, identifying specifically those raised in article 10 of the Augsburg confession concerning the Lord’s Supper, Christology and predestination. The modern thought-world differs from that of our forbearers; the condemnations should be lifted. The Leuenberg agreement concludes by offering itself as an instrument of unity”<sup>122</sup>.

Due to this agreement a respectful relationship between these congregations have been developed which includes “mutual recognition of ordination and the practice of reciprocal presidency at the Lord’s Table.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 718

<sup>121</sup> Not all discussion will be included here in this thesis, my focus is on the discussion with major outcomes.

<sup>122</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 718-719

<sup>123</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 679

The Leuenberg document was found not suitable for some of the Reformed congregations in the U.S. Instead, they started their own discussions in 1962, leading to the Marburg Revisited Report of 1966. ‘An Invitation to Action’ (1983) was built upon the foundation and work in the Leuenberg agreement and Marburg Revisited report. This document was adopted by the Synods of the American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church USA led to fellowship between these congregations. “The Lutheran Church in America however, declined fellowship, requesting that the new church initiate conversations with the Reformed. The LCA [Lutheran Church in America] was worried that the initiative would hinder the Roman Catholic-Lutheran convergences.<sup>124</sup>”

“The first world-level Lutheran-Reformed dialogue was not convened until 1985. Its report, *Toward Church Fellowship* (1989), finds the condemnation of the past no longer applicable, affirms the unity and diversity of the two traditions, and recommends pulpit and table fellowship and growth together in mission.<sup>125</sup>”

## 5.9 The Lutheran- Anglican Dialogue

At the request of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lutheran World Federation the Anglican—Lutheran European Regional Commission was set up and met three times over the period of 1980-1982.<sup>126</sup> The purpose of these meetings was to further discuss and clarify the issues of Eucharistic theology and ministry. The work done by the commission is understood by them as “a continuation of the international Anglican—Lutheran dialogue of 1970 to 1972 and as being closely related to the Lutheran—Episcopal dialogue in the USA, other bilateral dialogues of our two Communion, and the multilateral conversations of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. [The] report should be read and evaluated with these dialogues in mind.<sup>127</sup>”

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<sup>124</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 719

<sup>125</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 719-720

<sup>126</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission* (London: SPCK, 1983), ix

<sup>127</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, pg ix

Concerning the Eucharist, “there has never been substantial dispute between the two traditions on the nature of the Eucharist.<sup>128</sup>” The ecumenical discussions “confirm the conviction that we have a basic identity of understanding.<sup>129</sup>” Both view the Eucharist as a sacrament. They understand the Eucharistic sacrament to be a memorial of the crucified and risen Christ. “It is the sacrament of Christ’s sacrifice accomplished once for all on the cross but still operative on behalf of all.<sup>130</sup>” This memorial is not “mere figurative symbolism but the Church’s effectual proclamation of God’s saving acts in Christ.<sup>131</sup>” Both attest to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, affirming that “by the power of the Holy Spirit the bread and wine are the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood.<sup>132</sup>” Along with the traditional understanding of the “effects of the Eucharist in terms of forgiveness, Anglicans and Lutherans today also wish to stress its fruits in the building up of the community of the Church and in strengthening of faith and hope and of witness and service in daily life. In the Eucharist we already have a foretaste of the eternal joy of God’s kingdom.<sup>133</sup>”

The Eucharist as a sacrament of the Church is a vital part of the Church. Both the Lutherans and the Anglicans believe that “the right proclamation of the Word and the proper administration of the Sacraments are essential and constitutive to the ongoing life of the Church. Where these things happen, there we see the Church.<sup>134</sup>” This shared understanding of ‘Church’ has prompted the Anglicans and Lutherans to accept each other as well as to celebrate the Eucharist together.

### **5.10 The World Council of Churches**

The World Council of Churches was established in 1948. It consists of members from different denominational, cultural, traditional and political backgrounds. Their goal is to work together in both Christian witness and service to achieve visible Church unity.

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<sup>128</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, pg 11

<sup>129</sup> Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; *The Report of the European Commission*, pg 11

<sup>130</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, pg 12

<sup>131</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, pg 12

<sup>132</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, pg 12

<sup>133</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, 12

<sup>134</sup> Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission, *Anglican- Lutheran Dialogue; The Report of the European Commission*, 43

The group describe themselves as “a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>135</sup>” To achieve the goal of visible unity within the church, the council believes that there needs to be basic agreement between the denominations about baptism, Eucharist and ministry.

The work of the World Council of Churches has brought the issue of unity in the Eucharist between the denominations to the forefront of the Church. Although the road to a common inter-church Eucharist is still long, there is hope that the goal can and will be achieved. There is already evidence that through the open forum discussions the road to unity is being paved. One of the greatest factors is that through these discussions the denominations are able to explain their positions and misunderstandings are being cleared up. By understanding each others’ position common ground between the denominations are being discovered. Already through the help of the ecumenical movement some of the denominations have been able to realize their similarities.

### **5.11 The Lima Document: Concerning Unity in the Eucharist**

The World Council of Churches recognizes the importance of unity in the sacrament of the Eucharist. “The stated aim of the Commission is to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship.<sup>136</sup>” This goal set out by the World Council of Churches is made possible through the willingness of the denominations to come together in a cooperative spirit to explain their understanding and practice of the Eucharist. It is important for the movement that all practices are represented and given an opportunity to be explained and explored, ultimately tested by scripture and the practices of the disciples and the Early Church.

For the goal of visible unity to be reached the World Council of Churches give three essential conditions and elements that need to be met:

- “-the common confession of the apostolic faith;
- the mutual recognition of baptism, Eucharist and ministry;

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<sup>135</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WWC Publications, 1982), Preface

<sup>136</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, viii

-common structures for witness and service as well as for decision making and teaching authoritatively.<sup>137</sup>”

Ultimately it is not only the goal of visible unity of the Church being reached that is being achieved, but also a return to the roots of the Church. It is important to recognize the relevance of a reconciled church in which the visible unity stands for. The opening up for communication between the denominations is part of a healing process in the Church. The dialogues and discussions are paving the road to reconciliation. It is a response to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Reconciled in the Eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection. As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the Eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the Eucharist.<sup>138</sup>”

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<sup>137</sup> *Confessing the One Faith; An Ecumenical Explanation of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, 1

## Chapter Six

### THE MEANING OF THE EUCHARIST

#### 6.1 The ‘Whole’ Meal

As the Church evolved, so too did the Lord’s Supper. Not only did the character of the meal change, the ‘wholeness’ of the meal was lost, making it sometimes difficult to recognize that the meal celebrated throughout the denominations of the Church is in fact the same meal, that which was instated by Christ, and has been practiced since the beginning of the Church. By identifying and learning to understand the aspects of the Eucharist the Church is able to recognize the true identity and nature of the meal and the unity that it represents. As the Church learns to understand the ‘whole’ meal, the meaning of the Eucharist surfaces aiding the denominations of the Church to recognize the familiarities and similarities that they share in the Eucharist. This also guides the Church back to the original celebration of the Lord’s Supper. By experiencing the ‘whole’ meal, the Church becomes enlightened to the communion/fellowship that they share in the Eucharist.

#### 6.2 The Sacrament of the Eucharist

Before one can identify the meaning of the Eucharist, it is important to understand its place in the Church and its importance as a sacrament of the Church. The Eucharist is not simply a mere meal that the Church practices, but it is a sacramental meal that enriches the life of the Church. There is meaning beyond the simple actions of eating and drinking. The Eucharist has a significant symbolic action for the Church. Through the action of eating and drinking the bread and wine, we (the Church) are being brought closer together both with Jesus and our fellow brethren in Christ.

As a sacrament the Eucharist is a religious symbol<sup>139</sup> that holds spiritual significance for the Church. This symbol is not merely a sacrament because of its

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<sup>138</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 15

<sup>139</sup> “A symbol has even more significance when it comes to communal ritual activity. What makes a ritual a significant symbol is that we participate in it together. Together we identify with what is communicated through symbolic action. . . Symbolic actions connect us with life, but more specifically, they connect us to one another. Ritual action enables us to be connected not only with the reality symbolized but also with one another. Further symbolic gestures and actions enable us to communicate

religious meaning or connotation. “Rather, it is a sacrament because, first it is ordained by Christ... Second, what makes a symbol a sacrament is that it represents a spiritual reality that is held in common by those who participate in the action. Thus to participate in a sacrament is to participate in what is symbolized.<sup>140</sup>” Christ at the Last Supper ordained the Eucharist, and when we partake in the Eucharist we are experiencing the new pact, brought to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Understanding the symbolic action of the sacrament of the Eucharist is necessary for the identity of the Eucharist and the need for unity within the meal. The term symbol here is not to be understood as just representation but an active representation, one that in its action turns into a reality. “A symbol is an external, visible, and tangible object or action that represents an internal, intangible reality.<sup>141</sup>” It is in this sense that the bread and wine are symbols of Christ’s body and blood, which is to be understood in the Church as the real body and blood of Christ.

### **6.3 The Identity of the Eucharist**

It is agreed that the Eucharist is a special meal within the Christian Church, but what is the meaning of the meal? The Lima document identifies the Eucharist as one complete act with five aspects: thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful and meal of the Kingdom. These five aspects of the Eucharist are divided among the Church’s denominations. Different denominations emphasize different aspects of the Eucharist. The ecumenical movement has taken the initiative to combine the five aspects, placing the emphasis on the complete act of the Eucharist as understood from biblical and traditional practices. By combining the five aspects the Church receives a fuller and richer understanding of the practice of the Eucharist. One aspect is not held in higher importance than another, instead they complement each other helping the Church to better understand the meaning of the Eucharist. By understanding the different aspects found in the practice of the Eucharist the Church becomes better equipped to receive the true Eucharist together as one body in Christ.

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realities far more deeply than is possible with words.” Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal; The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 23

<sup>140</sup> Smith, *A Holy Meal; The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church*, 24

<sup>141</sup> Smith, *A Holy Meal; The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church*, 22

By identifying different aspects of the one Eucharist, the Lima document opens the Eucharist up for reflection. It is important that the Church be open, but at the same time use critical thinking while reflecting upon the Eucharist. The Church needs to understand why these five aspects deserve a place in the Eucharist.

#### **6.4 The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father**

The Lima document describes the Eucharist as the benediction of thanksgiving to the Father through the words (liturgy) spoken at the Eucharist. This form of thanksgiving recognizes not only God's redemptive act but also the act of sanctification and the works of God throughout creation, including those that are to come. It is also in the Eucharistic prayers and partaking of the elements that we are united in and with Christ. Here "Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are transfigured and their prayers accepted.<sup>142</sup>" Thus praise is presented and accepted unto the father in faith and thanksgiving<sup>143</sup>.

At the last supper, Jesus, following the Jewish tradition, set the example for us (the Church) and gave thanks to the Father. The Eucharist for us today is a sacramental meal that we accept in thanksgiving for creation, redemption and the new Kingdom that is to come. "In the bread and the cup we have symbols"<sup>144</sup> of the goodness of God. At the Lord's Table when we partake in the Eucharist we are invited to give thanks and to be thankful for the salvation we have received through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Along with being thankful there is also a joy that is intertwined with the thanksgiving at the meal of the Eucharist. While giving thanks we remember and recognize what the Lord has done, not only on the cross, but also through his resurrection and ascension, we are reconciled to God. This act of redemption and reconciliation gives us hope for the future, bringing joy with it for all who believe.

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<sup>142</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 10

<sup>143</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 10-11

<sup>144</sup> Smith, *A Holy Meal; The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church*, 104

### **6.5 The Eucharist as Memorial (Anamnesis)**

The Lima document describes the Eucharist as “the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e. the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind.<sup>145</sup>” The memorial is brought into the present tense through the liturgy and partaking of the elements. “Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for us and for all creation is present in this anamnesis (memorial), granting us communion with himself.<sup>146</sup>” The memorial becomes both a representation of the past along with a proclamation of the word and of the active works of God, as well as anticipation of what is to come.

In the institution narrative Jesus expresses that the new covenant is to be practiced in remembrance of him. We understand from the context of the Passover meal that the old covenant was also a meal of memorial (anamnesis). It was a memorial of the redemptive act of God for the Israelites. The new covenant represents the redemptive act of Jesus Christ for all of mankind. As with the old memorial covenant, we also are to partake and share in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ, both remembering and realizing that His redemptive act was and is also for us today.

Remembrance at the table of the Eucharist is not merely remembering the past events of what happened. While recalling the past events, the Church is also called to remember Christ’s presence in the life of the Church and the individual partakers. As the Church recognizes the presence of Christ at the Eucharistic meal the duality of the memorial is revealed.

### **6.6 The Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit**

The Lima document describes the Eucharist as invocation of the Spirit. “The bond between the Eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive.<sup>147</sup>” At the Eucharist the church prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill Christ’s words at the institution so that the real presence of Christ may be present in the elements of the Eucharist. “The Church, as the community of the new covenant, confidently invokes the Spirit, in order that it may be sanctified and

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<sup>145</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 11

<sup>146</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 11

<sup>147</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 13

renewed, led into all justice, truth and unity, and empowered to fulfill its mission in the world.<sup>148</sup>”

The Invocation of the Spirit during the Eucharist is not a mere supplement that complements the celebration of the Eucharist<sup>149</sup>. The inclusion of the Spirit into the partaking of the Eucharist is fundamental and important for the whole celebration. When the Church invites the Holy Spirit into the celebration the act of partaking in the Eucharist goes beyond a superficial ceremony to a sacred act in which God is present and active.

### **6.7 The Eucharist as Communion**

The Lima document describes the Eucharist as communion of the faithful. “The Eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church.<sup>150</sup>” It is in the fellowship of the Eucharist with the sharing of the one bread and the one cup that demonstrates unity between the partakers of the elements and Christ whom nourishes us. “It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world, demand[ing] reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God.<sup>151</sup>”

The Last Supper was an example of a communion (fellowship) meal. It was an intimate meal that was shared between Jesus and his disciples. It was a meal that united them to the Father through thanksgiving, and to each other through the sharing of one bread and one cup. The apostle Paul uses the term communion “koinonia” to indicate and express the nature of the Lord’s Supper as essentially being fellowship with the person of Christ<sup>152</sup>.

When the Church gathers together at the table of communion, they are being brought into a fellowship. They are united together through the Holy Spirit and the presence of Christ in the elements in which they partake of together. The communion which the Church receives and shares in is the gift of unity from God and for the Church. Some congregations focus mainly on the aspect of communion within the

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<sup>148</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 13

<sup>149</sup> Smith, *A Holy Meal, The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church*, 10

<sup>150</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 14

<sup>151</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 14

Eucharist. They view the Lord's Supper as a fellowship meal, which rightly it is, but it is more than that. To fully grasp the communion granted in the Eucharist, the church must identify with the other aspects presented in the Lord's Supper. Communion is the tip of the iceberg. The nature of the Eucharist as communion is easily seen and accepted as so in the Church. It is a meal that the Church partakes of together in the name of Christ whom instated the meal; fellowship comes naturally to the meal. But to truly understand the depth of the meal and the fellowship found within it, the whole nature of the Eucharist needs to be discovered and applied to the celebration.

### **6.8 The Eucharist as Eschatological Banquet**

The Lima document describes the Eucharist as the meal of the kingdom. The meal of the kingdom is a foretaste of the renewed creation.

“The world, to which renewal is promised, is present in the whole Eucharistic celebration. The world is present in the thanksgiving to the Father, where the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation; in the memorial of Christ, where the Church, united with its great High Priest and Intercessor, prays for the world; in the prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, where the Church asks for sanctification and new creation.<sup>153</sup>”

As the church is reconciled through the meal, they are also included and called to spread the gospel of reconciliation and to proclaim the coming kingdom of God.

In the Gospels Jesus' teachings were wrapped in eschatology. No different was his institution narrative at the Last Supper. After the disciples had received the bread and wine, Jesus went on to say that he would not drink the wine or partake in the meal until he is in the kingdom of God. This eschatological aspect of the Eucharist was understood and emphasized by the apostles and the New Testament church. “The apostles and their converts were so convinced of God's power through the resurrection of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that they expected the second coming of Christ in their lifetime and with it the triumphant establishment of the Kingdom of God.<sup>154</sup>” The focus of the Eucharist was not only on the past act of the cross and resurrection, or the presence of Christ in the elements but

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<sup>152</sup> Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy*, 122

<sup>153</sup> Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 14

<sup>154</sup> Davies, *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy*, Pg 81

also, and just as important, the eschatological hope of the kingdom of God. Paul had also encouraged the Church in Corinth to have an eschatological emphasis on the Eucharist. In his letter to the Corinthians he writes “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”<sup>155</sup>

### **6.9 Further Explorations**

The five aspects of the Eucharist that are described in the Lima Document give great insight into the Eucharist practiced in the Church. When these five aspects are understood and correctly practiced it opens the Church up for a richer Eucharist that is recognizable for all denominations. The work done by the Lima Document is respectable and helpful for the ecumenical movement and the road to an inter-church Eucharist. This being said, there is more work to be done. Although the document has many good points included in their five aspects, there are other important aspects that also need to be discussed. These include the matter of the elements and the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Both points have been, and still are major obstacles within the Church.

### **6.10 The Eucharistic Elements as the Body and Blood of Christ**

At the Last Supper, during the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ identified the bread and wine as his body and blood. How the Church interprets this statement made by Jesus has been debated and disagreed upon since the time of the Early Church. The issues concerning Christ's presence in the elements have also contributed to splits within the Church. The disagreements do not only concern if and to what extent Jesus is present in the elements, but also how the transformation occurs. The doctrine concerning the Lord's presence in the Eucharist is currently considered to be the “most divisive issue in Eucharistic faith.”<sup>156</sup> The Roman Catholic's and Orthodox would like to see more emphasis on the elements as the body and blood of Christ where some Protestant congregations would like to remove this teaching from the Eucharist<sup>157</sup>.

The biblical accounts of the Last Supper attest to the elements as the body and blood of Christ through the words of Jesus and the liturgical example of Paul. Also the doctrine concerning the Eucharistic elements as the body and blood of Christ was

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<sup>155</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26, NASB

<sup>156</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 418

<sup>157</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 418

accepted by the Church (both in the east and west) up until the time of the reformation<sup>158</sup>. Although there were some who did not identify with this, and they were rejected from the Church for false teachings. After the reformation some protestant doctrines have denied the real presence of Christ, preferring to view the elements purely symbolically, as only representing the body and blood of Christ, or accounting the symbolism to the faith of the believer.

“The Church’s [Roman Catholic] doctrine responds to both these misunderstandings [that of eating the earthly flesh of Christ, as well as the purely symbolic view] by maintaining firmly a sacramental understanding. All that one can touch, see, and taste externally by means of the senses is bread and wine; but through faith in Jesus’ word we know that, thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit, the true reality which is not accessible to the senses (that which the Middle Ages called the “substance”) is no longer bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ—and this means, in keeping with the language of the Bible, Jesus Christ himself in the gift that he makes to us of himself. Thus, the forms of bread and wine that the senses can perceive become signs and real symbols of a new reality, that of the risen and exalted Lord; they are filled with this reality and make it present. In this sacramental sense, Jesus’ words—“This is my body” and “This is my blood” —are to be understood as designating a reality. And it is in this sacramental sense that we speak of the “real presence,” that is, the true, real, and essential presence of Jesus Christ under the signs of bread and wine.<sup>159</sup>”

When the Church gathers together to partake in the Eucharist, the acceptance of the bread and wine as Christ’s body and blood is fundamental and important for the ecumenical doctrine of the Eucharist. The words of Christ were direct “This is my body” and “This is my blood”, and are too be understood as such. The language used by Christ does not indicate mere symbolism, but an actual change of the elements. This change is also not caused by our faith, but by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. This does not discredit our faith; our faith is still an important aspect in the partaking of the Eucharist. The Church is not to partake in the Eucharist without faith, believing that which God has done, is doing, and going to do, to be true. This faith is actualized by the resurrected Christ whom is present in the elements by the power of the Holy Spirit, whom now resides in the members of the Church.

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<sup>158</sup> Although there were some before the reformation who did not identify with the doctrine of the elements as Christ’s body and blood, and they were rejected from the Church for false teachings.

<sup>159</sup> Walter Cardinal Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity; The Eucharist and the Church*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), 52

## 6.11 The Eucharist as Sacrifice

Viewing the Eucharist as a sacrifice is one of the most controversial understandings of the identity of the Eucharist within the church. Representation of the Eucharist as a sacrifice was at the center of the controversy of the 16<sup>th</sup> century debates leading to the reformation led by Martin Luther. The reformers were “disturbed by the popular view and practice of the Eucharistic piety, still they felt strongly that these practices were rooted in a false understanding of the very nature of the Eucharist, particularly in its sacrificial aspect.”<sup>160</sup>

Language was a major contributor for the disagreements of the reformation, especially concerning the view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. A revival of the Roman Catholic sacramental theology has given the Church insight into the language of describing the Eucharist as a sacrament; as a result there is a general consensus among the ecumenists that the view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice is a valid understanding of the Lord’s Supper<sup>161</sup>. Jenson describes this theology in three steps. “First: the Eucharist is *sacramentally* a sacrifice, and not otherwise.”<sup>162</sup> “Second: the specific sacramental relation of the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ to the sacrifice on Calvary is *anamnesis*, ‘the making effective in the present of an event of the past’<sup>163</sup>. “Third: it is ‘above all, the rediscovery of the communion-structure of the Eucharist’ that enables new understanding of how the church can offer Christ.”<sup>164</sup>

The Eucharist can be viewed as a sacrifice because of its position as a sacrament. “If Christ is sacrificed historically by Pilate on Calvary and sacramentally by and in the church, then the first event is neither ‘continued, nor repeated, nor replaced, nor complemented’ by the second, since such is not ever the relation between historical and sacramental being.”<sup>165</sup> During the reformation, there was a belief and misconception that in calling the Eucharist a sacrifice the church was trying to repeat the sacrifice of Jesus’ death on the cross. The reformers found this to be problematic with the understanding that Jesus’ death on the cross was once and for

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<sup>160</sup> Ernest Falardeau, *A Holy and Living Sacrifice, The Eucharist in Christian Perspective* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), ix

<sup>161</sup> Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 266

<sup>162</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 266

<sup>163</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 266

<sup>164</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 267

all. For them this gracious act by Jesus could not be replaced, and thus should not be seen as being repeated during the Eucharist. This is no longer problematic when the presence of Christ at the Eucharist is understood in the sacramental sense. “Christ is sacramentally present in the Eucharist and so is ‘present as the sacrifice which once for all was brought for the sins of the world’.”<sup>166</sup>

The sacramental sacrifice of the Eucharist is a representation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary. This representation is not a “doing again” of the sacrifice of Christ that took place, but a “presenting again”. It is *anamnesis*, “the biblical and patristic understanding of memorial.”<sup>167</sup> The memorial is active; the act of the sacrifice of Christ in the past is also present in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

At the Eucharist Christ unites the Church to himself in and through his sacrificial self-giving on Calvary. “Therefore when the Church in the Spirit offers thanksgiving to the Father for the Son and embodies this prayer as the bread and cup that are Christ’s sacrificed body, she is one with Christ in his self-giving and so indeed herself offers Christ.”<sup>168</sup> This ideal was earlier formulated by Augustine “Christ ‘is both the priest who offers and the one who is offered. It is of this reality that the church’s sacrifice intends to be a daily sacrament: since she is his body and he her head, she studies to offer herself by offering him.”<sup>169</sup>

Although the New Testament does not actually use the words sacrifice to describe the Eucharist it is alluded to, particularly in the context of a Passover meal, which is a sacrificial meal in the Jewish community. The implication of the Eucharist as the Christian sacrifice was understood by the early Christians in the Early Church. They recognized and accepted that it both fulfilled and replaced the Passover<sup>170</sup>. At the time of the reformation there were many misconceptions concerning what the Roman Catholics call the sacrifice of the mass. The reformers then denied the sacrifice of the mass, removing the theological term from their understanding of the Eucharist. Today, through the process of ecumenical dialogues the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans have understood that their thinking is closer than first perceived.

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<sup>165</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 266

<sup>166</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 266

<sup>167</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 266

<sup>168</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 267

<sup>169</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2; The Works of God*, 267

<sup>170</sup> Falardeau, *A Holy and Living Sacrifice, The Eucharist in Christian Perspective*, 3

## Chapter Seven

### THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

#### 7.1 The Eucharist in the Life of the Church Today

The Eucharist today still has a central place in the life of the Church, as it should. To partake in the Eucharist is a direct command from Jesus. The celebration of the Eucharist is to be taken seriously. It is not a mere celebration, but a command and a practice which should be taken in a worthy manner; Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:27 writes concerning this matter “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord<sup>171</sup>”. As the Church heeds the warning of Paul, the celebration of the Eucharist becomes a topic of evaluation.

The Eucharist has been evolving since the beginning of the Church. Time, culture, size, accessibility and availability are some of the factors contributing to the changes. Due to these changes the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church today generally differs from the original celebration we have in the examples and records of the Early Church.

#### 7.2 Frequency of the Eucharist

How often should the church partake in the Eucharist? This is also debated and disagreed upon. Some denominations look at the Eucharist as an important rite that should be practiced often, while others look upon the Eucharist as an important rite that is so sacred that it should not be practiced too often.

Biblical, apostolic and early church examples “suggests that the early Christian communities believed they were to celebrate the Lord’s Supper each time they gathered.<sup>172,173</sup> The practice of celebrating the Eucharist every Sunday is affirmed in the recorded writings of Justin Martyr (ca 150 A.D.)<sup>174</sup>. The Lima

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<sup>171</sup> NASB

<sup>172</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal; The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church*, 112

<sup>173</sup> Acts 20:7 “On the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread.”

<sup>174</sup> “Justin Martyr’s classic description records that ‘on the day called sun-day an assembly is held in one place of all who live in town or country’; ‘the records of the apostles or writings of the prophets are read’; a sermon is followed by prayers; bread and wine are brought up, and the presider says the prayer

document also encourages the Church to celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday at least.

### **7.3 Where to Partake of the Eucharist**

The Early Church celebrated the Eucharist in homes, today the majority of the Eucharist celebrations occur in the church facilities. This transition started as the Church grew larger and houses became too small to incorporate all of the members. Thus there became a need for larger gathering areas, and as Christianity became more acceptable the church was able to meet in larger venues such as “churches”. Over time these churches became more institutionalized making it easier for the church officials to keep order and correct practices within the church. This transformation had both positive and negative results, which affected the celebration of the Eucharist. On the positive side there was room for the whole community to gather together to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The congregation could also rest easy knowing that the Eucharist was being celebrated correctly according to their beliefs. On the negative side, because of the size of the congregation the elements used in the celebration transitioned into separate cups and oblates and smaller portions. Although the congregation was together, there was a loss of fellowship within the celebration; there was no more sharing in the one loaf.

There is no direct command or instruction given by Jesus, or the other biblical accounts as to where to partake in the Eucharist. As long as the celebration of the Eucharist is practiced correctly it should not matter where it is being held.

### **7.4 The Elements of the Eucharist**

We know from the biblical record of the account of the Lord’s Supper, that Jesus used the elements of bread and wine to represent his body and blood in the Eucharistic meal. Thus the Church should also follow his instructions and example and use bread and wine. But what should the Church do if these elements are not available? Is it better to refrain from partaking in the Eucharist if one does not have bread and wine, or is it more important to observe the Eucharist than worry about having the correct elements?

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of thanksgiving, to which the people assent by their amen; then ‘everyone partakes of the elements over which thanks have been given.’ Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 420

The ideal Eucharist should include the elements of bread and wine. When available I agree that “there is absolutely no reason why real bread could not be used, and more importantly a whole loaf not yet broken, for the bread is in fact a double symbol, not only of Christ’s own body, but of the church as the body of Christ—a united whole.<sup>175</sup>” The oblates that are commonly served at the Eucharist are convenient but don’t do service to the representation of the bread. At the same time there should also be a substitute for those at the meal whom are not able to eat the bread due to health issues. As for the wine there is no good reason for why it should not be alcohol free.

Although the ideal Eucharist should include bread and wine, it is more important that the Eucharist take place than that of the correct elements of bread and wine being used when not available. If it occurs that the original elements are not available then the substitute elements should resemble bread and wine as closely as possible. The elements themselves are not what is most important, it is what they represent that means the most. The presence of Christ in the elements is what gives the elements their worth.

### **7.5 Presiding Over the Eucharist**

The controversy of who should or could preside over the Eucharist concerns several aspects of the Church. Presiding is not merely concerned with if the one who is presiding over the Eucharist is ordained or not, but also who can be ordained. This brings up the controversies of apostolic succession as well as that of ordaining women and homosexual ministers. “The status and structure of ecclesial office have provided the occasion or justification of much division within the church.<sup>176</sup>”

Ordination originates from the biblical process of the “laying on of hands<sup>177</sup>”. It is also the continuance of the apostles, otherwise known as the apostolic succession. Just as Jesus chose the twelve disciples, they later continued the tradition through the laying of hands, in the choosing of other clergy, or officers in the church. Thus the apostolic succession is a direct lineage to Jesus Christ. It is because of this lineage that ordained ministers consider themselves ordained by God.

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<sup>175</sup> Witherington 111, *Making a Meal of It*, 131

<sup>176</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 228

<sup>177</sup> <sup>4</sup>Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

The controversy concerning the ordination of women originates in the Pastoral Epistles. In Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul is helping Timothy to understand the order of the Church, and how the clergy should act and behave. Paul gives a detailed description of what a person of the clergy should be like<sup>178</sup>. Paul describes a person of the clergy as male and respectable, not only does he emphasize that the person is male, but earlier in the letter Paul states that He does not allow women to teach<sup>179</sup>. These statements made by Paul are the primary arguments against the ordination of women. Although, those who support the ordination of women also draw their conclusions and arguments from the example of Paul found in his letters. Also for the support of women ministers is the example of the first gospel told in the scriptures. Jesus chose women as the first bearers of the Gospel. When the word of God is being taught (in the Christian Church), it is the Gospel that is being told. The example that Jesus gives is one of being included, He himself included women in his ministry. On the other side, Jesus never invited a woman into the chosen twelve disciples. The argument as to whether or not women should be ordained has been discussed within the Church for many years. Some scholars have gone deeper into this matter and found other reasons and biblical grounds (verses) to strengthen and prove their arguments on both sides. These arguments will not be discussed here<sup>180</sup>.

First and foremost it is important to recognize that Jesus is the true host of the Eucharist. It is He who presides over the supper inviting us to come and receive His body and blood. Just as at the Last Supper when Jesus invited the disciples to partake

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<sup>178</sup> It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. (1. Tim. 3:1-12) NASB

<sup>179</sup> <sup>1</sup>A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. (1. Tim. 2:11-14) NASB

<sup>180</sup> I have chosen not to elaborate on the disagreement since my thesis is concerning the Eucharist, and not the argument of women ministers, which is a major issue and can be a whole thesis all in itself.

in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, He is today still inviting the members of His Church to come, receive and to do it in remembrance of Him. When the New Testament Church gathered together to partake in the Lord's Supper they were instructed as to how to perform the meal correctly as instructed by the Lord. At the meal there did not have to be an authority of the church present, the main criteria was that it be performed and partaken correctly as taught. As the Eucharist moved from the home to the 'Churches' it became common that an official of the church presided over the meal. This was due to the overall shift that was taking place in the church to ward off false teachings and practices. Now when the members of the Church gather together to partake in the Eucharist, the members should look past the person standing at the altar presiding over the meal and see Jesus. It is not the power of the person presiding over the Eucharist, but it is the Holy Spirit who is working in the hearts of the individual and in turn the collective group which makes the Eucharist a valid sacrament<sup>181</sup>. When the one presiding over the meal reads/says the liturgy, it is not them that are speaking that has the power, it is the words themselves that were instructed by Jesus, delivered to the Church by the disciples; and the belief of all whom are present by the power of the Holy Spirit that makes the elements more than what they seem, making the meal more than just a meal. The Eucharist is not a Eucharist because the one presiding over it has been ordained (through apostolic succession or not), It is a Eucharist because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the belief of that sacrifice by those whom are not only presiding over the meal, but all whom are present and partaking in the meal when being performed correctly in the fashion exemplified by Jesus and taught by the disciples.

## **7.6 Liturgy and the Eucharist**

The term liturgy encompasses the worship and spoken identity of the Church. "Liturgy... is the public, common action of a Christian community in which the church is both manifested and realized. From apostolic times, Christians would gather at appointed times for prayer and for the 'breaking of bread.'<sup>182</sup>" The importance of the liturgy spoken at the Eucharist varies depending on the denomination, as does the

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<sup>181</sup> With this statement I am not denoting the importance of the ecclesial office. Having a hierarchy within the church has had both positive and negative sides. But when used correctly the system works for keeping order within the Church. It is important to have order, but it is not the deciding factor in whether or not a sacrament, and in this case, the Eucharist, is valid or not.

words used. The apostle Paul's understanding of the Eucharist was in liturgical form. It was through the repeating of the words spoken, and the retelling of the Last Supper that gave the Church understanding as to the importance and significance of the Lord's Supper. As the Church remembers the Last Supper and speaks the words of Jesus at the meal they are being brought in to the memorial of the Lord's Supper and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "The memorial is not a mere subjective remembrance, but a liturgical action which actualizes the event of Christ's sacrifice and by which the Church presents to the Father this unique sacrifice as its offering of thanksgiving and intercession."<sup>183</sup>

Liturgy is also a representative of the 'visible unity' of the Church. When the Church recites the Nicene Creed together they are agreeing upon the most important doctrines of the Church. Thus liturgy becomes an aid to recognizing unity in the Eucharist by emphasizing the common faith of the Church.

"it is obvious that the primary form of Eucharistic devotion is the celebration of the liturgy. It is there that the church assembles, the word is proclaimed, the Spirit is called forth in prayer, and the sacrament is celebrated. It is there that we proclaim the Mystery of Faith at that central moment in the Eucharistic Prayer. It is there that we are drawn into the Eucharistic action and give praise to God in Holy Communion. Eucharistic devotion is an active devotion; it is participation in the mystery. Of course, I am speaking about more than participation through song and ministry; I am speaking about participation in the very action of Christ. If Eucharistic devotion is giving glory to God we glorify God by being transformed into the people that God has called us to be. We glorify God as we demonstrate to the world the unity of the body of Christ."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 702

<sup>183</sup> Thurian, *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharis and Ministry*, pg 91

<sup>184</sup> Gerard Kelly, "The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and Church"

## Chapter Eight

### THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH

#### **8.1 The Ecumenical Life of the Church**

The ultimate goal of the Church is to live in a way that represents Christ. The Church belongs to Christ. It is because of Him, and through Him that the Church exists. God sent His Son to the world so that we would believe and follow, leading to eternal life with Him. As believers, the followers are supposed to be “Christ like”. We are to follow his example and live as He has showed us. The Church is the body of Christ, and as there is only one Jesus Christ whom is head of the Church so is there only one Church.

The Eucharist plays an important role within the ecumenical life of the Church. “If there is a group that regards itself as church and there is another group that it regards as also church, and yet these two cannot celebrate the Eucharist together, the claim about both groups is compromised... For there is and can be only one church, actual as such in the one Eucharist.<sup>185</sup>” When the members of the one Church are unable to participate in the Eucharist celebration together, it is denying the Eucharist a part of its true identity, as that of a sacrament of unity.

It is vital for the Church and the Ecumenical movement that the Church be united in the act of partaking in the Eucharist together as one Church. The Eucharist belongs to the Church, which is the body of Christ, which incorporates all who believe.

The New Testament Church along with the Early Church recognized the unity found in the Eucharist. For them it was viewed as a source of strength that strengthened the fellowship of the Church, both with one another, and with Christ.

#### **8.2 “The Great Communion<sup>186</sup>”**

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<sup>185</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 169-170

<sup>186</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 211

In Robert W. Jenson's book "The Works of God", he writes concerning the Church and Communion. He states that "The teaching that the church is the body of Christ... and that the church is above all and decisively communion with Christ and among her members, are linked from their origins. Paul to the Corinthians is the parent of both.<sup>187,188</sup> As earlier discussed,<sup>189</sup> Paul taught the Church in Corinth the importance of properly taking part in the Eucharist, as it is communion both with Christ and between the members of Christ's body, the Church. In Paul's teaching and Jenson's formulation, the Eucharist is core for the ecumenical movement, and the goal of visible church unity. Unity is found in the Eucharist in the form of communion. This communion includes the present (universal) church, the saints (those who have gone before us), and the triune God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

When partaking in the Eucharist we experience communion with the believers of the Church whom are both present and those who are absent along with those who have gone before us. The Eucharist belongs to the universal church. Within the Eucharist there are no congregations. "Because the identities of the triune God are mutually one God, and because believers assemble with the son before the Father and in their Spirit, these believers are one. And because their fellowship is thus founded in the one God, there can finally be only one such fellowship: one people and one body and one temple.<sup>190</sup>" Thus the "mutual recognition (that the ecumenical movement is working towards) is the anticipation by which the church is what she is (universal)."

The Eucharist is communion with the triune God. In the Eucharist we are reconciled with Jesus Christ the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit to God the Father.

Christology has always had a central role in the Eucharist. It is also largely discussed within the ecumenical movement in connection to the Eucharist. The role of Christ in the Eucharist is the most obvious. It is because of Christ that we celebrate

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<sup>187</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 211

<sup>188</sup> "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. NASB

<sup>189</sup> Chapter Three: Development of the Eucharist; 3.4: The Eucharist Meal in Corinth

<sup>190</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 224

the Eucharist. Christ was present at the Last Supper where he instated the Lord's Supper and is present in the Eucharist in the bread and wine.

As we commune together with our fellow believers and with Christ, we do so through the Spirit. Jesus Christ lived, died and rose again through the power of the Holy Spirit. The elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist are transformed to the body and blood of Christ. "The Holy Spirit in the Eucharist actualizes that which Christ has performed."<sup>191</sup> Faith comes through the Spirit, and it is through faith that the believers (the Church) receive and partake in the Eucharist.

By proclaiming the Nicene Creed together, recognizing the true triune God and his Church; as we also remember the sacrifice and gift of reconciliation through the telling of the Last Supper and prayer of consecration, the 'one body' is realized in the liturgy. As the Church realizes and accepts its shared, common faith, the great communion is able to be actualized through the celebration the Eucharist together as 'one body' across the denominations achieving visible unity of the one Church.

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<sup>191</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2, The Works of God*, 226

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