

EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY: A COMMUNITY OF JOYFUL BROKENNESS

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As a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene and as a Wesleyan, I am optimistic and hopeful both for my mother denomination and for the Church Universal being and becoming the body of Christ. I am greatly encouraged and believe that God is at work within his church redeeming, restoring, reconciling, and creating anew. However, within our body it seems there are some ailments that are hindering it from greater vibrancy and health. Part of my concern is that too often in Wesleyan evangelical circles we have so focused on individual experiences and quantifiable “works of grace” that we have lost sight of the communal reality of our faith; Christianity has been reduced to “Jesus and me.”¹ Such focus on individual experience has generated a number of oft hidden infirmities. Most specifically, it has resulted in the absence or perversion of the doctrines of eschatology and the Kingdom of God, where eschatology has been implicitly or latently reduced to focus on “my” eternal destiny. As Wesleyans, we are explicit in our soteriological foundation that we are saved not by works but by grace. However, I am convinced that our life of corporate and individual holiness in mutual compassion, love, and service to one another becomes the symbol (bringing into reality) of our true response to God’s gracious love and forgiveness. This individualism has often lead to a reduction of Christian ethics to personal piety or spiritual discipline. To the extent that I offer my life to God as a living sacrifice, joyfully broken in love to God and for my neighbor, testifies to the work that I am allowing God to do in me. If I do not consider the communal dimension of “my” faith in light of the church, I become prone to a “tunnel vision” that often leads to Augustine’s definition of sin employed by Luther, *homo incurvatus in se*, “humanity curved in upon itself.”² While I do not want to dismiss or deny the crucial dimension of individual responsibility and growth in God’s love, I am concerned that we must address the disease of “Christian individualism.” This is not merely a matter of complaining about *what is*, but a sadness for the failure to vision what *could be*.

Too often the members of the body of Christ, fail to grasp the ways in which God would exercise us in the coming of his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. At its heart this is an ecclesiological issue making visible the church’s vocation to the world. H. Richard Niebuhr, Karl Rahner, William Willimon, and a host of others have excellently pushed the church to ask very serious questions about ecclesiology and its relationship to the culture. As a pastor it seems like the church, at certain times and places appears to have adopted and assimilated itself into the North American consumerist culture. This becomes another facet of the same problem of “Christian Individualism” where the church conforms itself into an institution that exists to serve the needs of the congregants, rather than engage and offer hope to the marginalized and oppressed. Clerics and members have also fallen victim to the atomization and consumptive nature of the North American culture with its myopic fixation on the individual’s needs. This is one of the seeds that helped to germinate the “worship wars.” One systemic problem is the lost understanding of liturgy: persons transformed into community offering praise, thanksgiving, and their lives to God. Corporate worship is about coming to offer and give, rather than coming to have one’s needs or preferences met. As God gathers us to corporate worship, worship must never be aimed to please me, but must be grounded in the formation of community offering thanksgiving to the Father, being transformed by God’s Spirit in the likeness of the Son.

How might a disciplined conversation between the local church and the academy yield a more authentically Christian ecclesiology and eschatology? Such a conversation might offer a more precise eschatological *telos* and ecclesiological *praxis* that keeps us faithful. Furthermore, under the rubric of ecclesiology, how are we to better navigate and articulate a distinctively Wesleyan theology of worship?³ Within ecclesiology how have we in the Church of the Nazarene and possibly in Wesleyan circles failed to really mine the depths of sacramental and liturgical theology that informs and guides our corporate worship?

I recognize these ecclesiological questions are not new in Christendom or even within Wesleyan circles. Alexander Schmemmann, an Orthodox scholar, suggests that the church itself springs from the very event of the Last Supper. Albert Outler asserted that John Wesley understood the church’s distinctive is not found in form or polity, but the church is best defined *in action*, in her witness and mission.⁴ I am suggesting that we need to re-vision ecclesiology within the theology and practice of the Eucharist in action. Re-imagining a Eucharistic ecclesiology will guide the church into a healthy and

robust vocation and *telos* as the eschatological vision of the kingdom of God. To this end I will offer three characteristics of a Eucharistic ecclesiology: first, a Eucharistic ecclesiology recognizes the corporate nature of the body of Christ in *koinwniva*; (kononia) second, a Eucharistic ecclesiology orients the church's vocation be a sacrifice of love for the world; third, a Eucharistic ecclesiology will recover the doctrine of eschatology, where God's kingdom comes on *earth* as it is in heaven as "God will be all in all."

Eucharist Ecclesiology: Koinonia

The church –*eikklesia*- (ecclesia) is those who are called out of individual pursuits of happiness and liberty, transformed into the body. The first act of corporate worship is "the gathering" or "assembling" of the church, the body of Christ. The Gospel of John records that Christ came "for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one."⁵ The sacrament of Eucharist provided a liturgical opportunity to realize the unity of the new people of God, gathered by Christ and in Christ. Schmemmann suggests that in the sacrament of the Eucharist the church becomes what it is intended to be.

The Eucharist is not one of the sacraments, or one of the services, but the very manifestation and fulfillment of the Church in all her power, sanctity, and fullness. Only by taking part in it can we increase in holiness and fulfill what all that we have been commanded to be and do. The Church, gathered in the Eucharist, even when limited to 'two or three,' is the image and realization of the body of Christ, and only those who are gathered will be able to partake, be communicants of the body and blood of Christ, because they manifest him by their very assembly.⁶

Furthermore, the Didache's Eucharistic prayer also highlights the joining of the many into the body of Christ in the Eucharistic meal. "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever."⁷ This leads into the proper understanding of liturgy within corporate worship. The original meaning of *leitourgia* is "an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals."⁸ Corporate worship must not be designed to satisfy self-oriented emotions or preferences, but to gather together and assemble as the church. Further, liturgies essentially "enacts and maintains community by the ritual remembering or re-presentation of foundational narratives, thereby helping to construct the perceived reality in which each member of the community lives."⁹ The liturgy, empowered by the Spirit, brings about that which it hopes and proclaims. As we gather together, I do indeed come as an individual "in order to be what I became on the day of my baptism—a member, in the fullest, absolute meaning of the term, of the body of Christ."¹⁰ Clearly the exaltation of the individual has no place in the context of this communal participation.¹¹ It violates the essence of the Eucharist, which is about transformation into the church. "One who maintains his 'individuality' and 'freedom' in such manner does not know, has not discovered the mystery of the church; he does not take part in the sacrament of the assembly, in this miracle of the reunification of the splintered and sinful human nature in the divine-human unity of Jesus Christ."¹²

Another possible component for the elevation of the individual in worship and the sacraments is a product of the Protestant Church's legal emphasis of the atonement. This has influenced the theology of the sacraments and specifically reduced the Eucharist to a means of grace dealing with certification of juridical pardon. This Western Protestant focus in many ways has "fed" the individualized and consumeristic model where the responsibility of the recipient is lost. The emphasis has been on the gift offered and not on the imperatives of its reception.

Wesleys and the Sacraments

John Wesley refused to accept the reduction of the Eucharist solely to justification. Wesley appeared to be at home with the Anglican *via media* emphasizing both the Spirit's role of giving and the responsiveness of the receiver. Both the Church of England and the Eastern Church influenced Wesley's theology of the sacraments. The Eastern Church's emphasis on the presence and offering of the Spirit not only recalled with joy God's work in Christ, but partaking of the sacraments fostered and empowered our therapeutic recovery of the holiness of God. This sentiment is visible within Catholic theologians such as Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx who writes, "Although forgiveness can be realized instantaneously, it nevertheless allows of a subsequent process through which holiness

steadily takes possession of and re-forms the whole psychological make-up of the 'convert'.¹³ While affirming the dynamic gift of the Spirit through the sacraments, the question ceases to be "whether we are 'worthy' to receive this gracious empowerment, but whether we co-operantly receive—or squander—its healing potential."¹⁴ Thus, Wesley also felt the Eucharist provided a most keen moment where individuals can respond to the love of God offered by yielding their lives to God, allowing God to consecrate them and make them holy. Hence for Wesley, the Eucharist was a converting ordinance.

While Maddox and others have documented the shift in Wesley's thought concerning the Eucharist, Wesley affirmed the central reason for partaking in the means of grace was not obedience to God's command, but that we encounter God's presence. Meanwhile, the mature Wesley also affirmed the means of grace as "exercises that nourish the grace given to us."¹⁵ Hence, the sacraments not only offer grace that must be responded to, but the grace received empowers that response.

A Eucharistic ecclesiology must recapture the Eastern Church's emphasis on the thanksgiving of God which makes love and not sin, the primary focus.¹⁶ John and Charles Wesley recognized the grace of God available in the sacraments and especially the Lord's Supper. They urged their band members to frequent participation. Wesley himself participated in weekly communion and in his sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion" stressed the importance of the sacrament for Christians. In 1745 the Wesley brothers wrote and published a collection of 166 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, which were used for meditation as well as for singing. Geoffrey Wainwright suggested that this publication by the Wesleys helped the church in the West to recover an eschatological edge. "The Western Church achieved again a rich appreciation of the Eucharist as the sign of the future banquet of the heavenly kingdom."¹⁷

Corporate and Individual Tension in Worship

With this emphasis on the corporate dimension of the church away from self-driven/ self-centered worship, there are some who go to the other extreme and deny any role and dimension for the personal response in the liturgy. Within this tension the Eucharist is not simply individually consumed but it is *shared*. Christ in his mystery is mediated "through bread and wine *shared*, and shared with the other with whom we come to the table."¹⁸ Meanwhile, this new seeing also fosters awareness of those who have been denied access to the table. The presence of some draws attention to the absence of others. "It so happens that it is often the poor, the socially marginalized, the victims of history and social organization, who are absent." Their absence at a banquet to which all have been invited is a kind of discomfiting present, "which distances the remembered Pasch even further, and most especially its eschatological promise."¹⁹ The table not only offers a new way of seeing but a means of relational transformation of the church members into the body of Christ. Not only do we encounter and *face* the other we hear and make visible their stories of oppression and injustice.

Eucharistic Ecclesiology: Vocation of Sacrifice

The Last Supper proclaims the essence of Christ's ministry of sacrificial love. The night Christ so longed to spend with the disciples was not only about love, but was love. Jesus not only offered a roadmap to life, he embodied it, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."²⁰ The church must reconsider the theology of the Eucharist where "the Eucharistic experience of the church, is the experience of *the Eucharist as sacrifice*. This sacrifice embraces Christ's entire life, his entire ministry, it is Christ himself."²¹ Clearly there are many corners of the Protestant Church which do not consider the Eucharist to be a sacrifice. However, my primary thrust is to emphasize that a reception of the Eucharist demands a response of sacrificial love and humble service to the other.

As the church is offered the body and blood of Christ as gift, its reception is embodied by affirming its vocation as having compassion for the lost, marginalized, and hopeless. The church exists to be broken before the world, thus in its brokenness the world will find hope. "Being the new people of God, gathered, redeemed, and sanctified by the Lord Jesus Christ, the church is consecrated by him for witness about him *in the world and before the world*."²² The cross leads us out of the church and out of religious self-interest into the fellowship of the oppressed and the abandoned. And it then calls those who have been oppressed and godless into the church and through the church into fellowship of the crucified God.²³ Thus the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is the symbol, bringing to reality, the kingdom of heaven to earth. In the church there is not a hierarchy of submission of one before another; rather, there is mutual submission in authentic *koinwniva*.

The vocation of the church to become a sacrifice before the world is not a result of coercive manipulation, but with thanksgiving proclaiming the death of the Lord, confessing his resurrection and awaiting his coming again. The church must not consider its purpose as self-preservation or even self-propagation. Without care against this, even the great commission to evangelize can be rooted in selfishness by turning in "successful" reports and receiving greater offerings. The only place of peace, identity, and vocation for the church lies in its communion with and in Christ as that which is broken in humble service before the world. This paper recognizes that the concepts and language of self-surrender, sacrifice, and brokenness have been extremely harmful, alienating and de-humanizing for women and marginalized people groups. For many who have been oppressed or marginalized, the table can become first a gift of real personhood: identity, value, and voice in the community.

When we partake of the Eucharist we must ask ourselves: Are we committing ourselves to be the *faithful* to the world? Are we committed to fulfilling the vocation into which we were baptized? This is not the "perfect" condescending upon the "sinful", but as we have been made new in Christ, our vocation is to encounter the other and offer the hope and light to which we are being made whole. We must remember, finally, that we do not go to church *for ourselves* and for our own desires, but for the service of Christ's work in the world. And yet we recognize the tension that church is also a place for healing and wholeness for those who have been de-personalized and oppressed.

Let me consider two parables that are rarely considered Eucharistic that may illumine the relationship between the Eucharist offered as gift, and the requisite transformation with its reception.²⁴ Truly receiving the gift of God in Christ transforms one's vision and purpose for life. In Matthew 18 Jesus responds to a question about quantitative forgiveness by telling a story of a servant who was in debt to the king for an exorbitant amount. As the story unfolds this servant was offered forgiveness but with his treatment toward a fellow servant it becomes clear the forgiveness from the king was not received. If he had really received the forgiveness from the king, his life would have been transformed and he would have *seen* the world differently. In a similar way the Eucharist is offered, but to really *receive* it is to have one's life transformed into a living sacrifice to God for one's world, so that not only do we offer forgiveness we also offer our lives in joyful brokenness before the other.

Similarly in Matthew 25, Jesus charged that the division of the righteous and unrighteous will be decided not by words said, songs sung, or money given, but for having eyes of compassion, ears of mercy, feet for action, and hands ready to embrace the other. Receiving the gift of the Eucharist yields a readiness to *face and love the other*. Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx writes, "If the sacrament is not thus personally lived with religious intent the sacramentally mediated personal encounter with Christ, and therefore with God, cannot take place."²⁵ Schillebeeckx implies that this religious intent is to be the eschatological body of Christ offered to the marginalized in our world. The world must be encountered, not to be pitied as those whom we must serve; but we encounter them in love that can be shared and flourished. Receiving the Eucharist offers the vocation of joyful brokenness and a new way of *seeing*. Those in the greatest need are many times in our consumptive culture, surrounded by "signs" of prosperity, when in *reality* they too are broken and hopeless. The sacraments offered as a means of transforming grace infer an ethical response as a sign of its reception.

The ethical is absolutely essential to sacramental practice, for sacramental action is intertwined with how lives are lived and with the testimony that these lives give. It is not possible to take part in liturgy without the edge of attention to, and empathy for, the other. This means an ethic rooted in wisdom of how we live day by day in faith in God's presence and in God's coming, even amid disorder and suffering.²⁶

This vocation of sacrifice is embodied in God. Schmemmann, correctly speculates that this notion of perfect love in sacrifice comes as a picture of the mutual love and sacrifice of the immanent trinity which is the economic trinity. The all-holy Trinity is the "perfect self-giving of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to each other, as perfect love and hence, perfect sacrifice."²⁷ In the sacrificial offering of the Father giving up the Son, and the Son giving himself for the world by the power of the Spirit, the sacrament of his offering is rooted in love. Within the sacrifice of Christ on the cross the "sacrifice is linked not with sin and evil but with *love*: it is the self-revelation and self-realization of love."²⁸ Truly there is not love without sacrifice. So that as the church is the sacrament of the Kingdom to the world, partaking in the Eucharist demands that the love of which we feed and find life embodies its completion in loving the other.

It seems that kingdom language and the doctrine of eschatology have become misplaced in the life of the local Church. Many find these words as void or meaningless.³⁸ Is the Kingdom of God heaven? Is the Kingdom of God some political state? Is the Kingdom of God the Church? Like eschatology, it is essential to recover the language and concepts of the Kingdom of God. Eschatology is often reduced to eternal divine judgment. Thus, eschatology takes on pragmatic significance only as it relates to personal piety and "the interest is narrowed to the question of one's personal fate 'after death.'"³⁹ So that one result of a lack of understanding, appreciation, and awareness of the Kingdom and eschatology continues to reinforce the individualization of Christian faith.

In the New Testament we read Jesus' proclamation that in his coming the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated, though not fully consummated. The key to re-imagining the Kingdom of God is to think about it not as some *polis* but in relational categories. The Kingdom of God is love for him, unity with him and life in him. "The Kingdom of God is unity with God, the source of all life, indeed life itself. It is life eternal."⁴⁰ As we consider the communal foundation of the Kingdom, to what degree is there a political dimension?⁴¹ A failure to grasp the communal and relational dimensions to the Kingdom of God leads to individualism in our faith and the reduction of eschatology to personal eternal destiny.

Sacrament as Symbol

In what way are the sacraments connected to eschatology and the Kingdom of God? In most Protestant Churches sacraments have been identified as symbols which serve as illustrations or representations. Most recently symbols are considered as something which point to reality but are distinct from it. Sacraments are robbed of their efficacy when viewed primarily as a mode of communication rather than relational and vocational transformation. And with this reduction, the Eucharist is relegated to this present reality and thus loses its connection to eschatology as the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

Schmemmann argues one historical understanding of symbol is not to illustrate but rather to manifest and to make visible that which was invisible.⁴² The symbol does much more than "resemble" or illustrate the reality, it *participates* toward its realization. This is a significant distinction. Thus historically the symbol makes possible the unseen and unrealized reality. However, the symbol is never substituted or satisfied as the thing itself. "However *real* a symbol may be, however successfully it may communicate to us that other reality, its function is not to quench our thirst but to intensify it."⁴³

Church as the Sacramental Symbol of the Kingdom of God

As the Eucharist is the sacrament of the assembly, the sacrament of the church, how can we consider the church as a sacramental symbol of the Kingdom of God? A sacrament is both cosmic and eschatological. This refers to both God's *telos* for creation and its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. It is cosmic in that it embraces all of creation returning it to God as God's own. But it is also eschatological, oriented toward the Kingdom which is to come. In this discussion it is paramount to recognize the pneumatological empowerment in the church as a symbol of the Kingdom.

Thinking about eschatology as a *theology of hope*, Jurgen Moltmann contends that eschatology "does not seek to illuminate the reality that exists, but the reality which is coming. It (doctrine of eschatology) does not seek to make a mental picture of existing reality, but to lead existing reality towards the promised and hoped-for transformation."⁴⁴ It is in this already present, but not yet consummated Kingdom of God on earth where ultimately "God will be all in all."⁴⁵ The church is the means by which God is saving, redeeming and perfecting in love his creation.

Liturgy as Eschatological Imagination and Vocation

Humans, as we live, are continually re-imagining who we are hoping to become. In this becoming there is a search for meaning daily discovered and embodied by our action. Human beings, in the same activity are looking for *and* creating meaning.⁴⁶ In that regard our lives become an imagination of what we hope to be, as we are bringing it about. The church's worship took shape primarily as an eschatological imagination. "Liturgy is the *natural* act of humanity, to imagine the world as God sees it, and to return the world to God in praise."⁴⁷ Schmemmann notes that Christian *leitourgia* was in its eschatological nature the presence of the "here and now of the future *parousia* communion with the world to come."⁴⁸ Moreover, Christian liturgy not only calls for eschatological imagination, but serves to bring about that reality to which it points. Thus, worship is a witness that indeed Christ is King and

Lord, and that his Kingdom has already been revealed and given to creation. The church is not a doctrine about the world to come but the joyous encounter with the Kingdom of God.

It is in the sacrament of the Eucharist that this eschatological imagination is most poignantly encountered. As John Zizoulas says, "The Eucharist is the "memory of the future."⁴⁹ This memory of the past continues to live in the bringing of the future. The Wesleys also considered the Eucharist as an eschatological taste of the consummation of God's kingdom. "We cannot partake of the Cup without realizing that one day we shall drink it with our Savior when He drinks it anew in the Realm of God."⁵⁰ Rattenbury suggests that early Methodism was really a revival of the realized eschatology which characterized the first Christians. This revival of the early church was "not merely an eschatological hope, but an eschatological experience, which permeated and quickened love, joy and peace."⁵¹ The Eucharist is the sacrament of peace, the sacrament of salvation, and the sacrament of the reign of Christ."⁵²

Through a fascinating narrative depicting the crimes against the Chilean people under the Pinochet regime, William T. Cavanaugh in his book *Torture and Eucharist* talks about the relationship between the church and the state and how ultimately a renewal in Eucharist ecclesiology brought names and faces to the violence of torture. Cavanaugh's major premise is that the Eucharist is the church's response to torture. How has the church in North America allowed our vision to be so small causing blindness to the hopeless, marginalized and oppressed? How has our worship and Christian piety been visioned as a personal road to eternal security? Do we really believe that God's Kingdom is coming? Are we making ourselves available to God to be used to bring hope and salvation to all corners of our world? I wonder why the gap is growing between the rich and the poor. Why do some deserve health care and others do not? Why are many churches settling in more "peaceful" suburbs while abandoning the inner city? Further, how have the Christians exacerbated atomization of our society, where the "successful" individual has risen and elevated himself and become so hedonistic and myopic that for the one in power, he desires to remain in power, while those who are on the margins are fully ignored, and treated as non-beings? There are many layers for social and economic problems in any country and the impetus here is not to cast blame, but to ask the simple question, what is the role of the church and its members? Far too often if we get involved in the lives of those who are oppressed and in the margins, our involvement takes the form of a check.⁵³ While compassionate ministry is beginning to flourish in many pockets of North America, is compassionate ministry satisfied to care for their physical and spiritual needs only? Or does a Eucharistic ecclesiology demand that the church do more, speak out, and give a name and voice to those who have been relegated to the shadows? How can we consider an ecclesiology that not only cares for the marginalized and oppressed but calls for justice? If nothing else, perhaps the church could start by looking carefully into the mirror to see our log of racism, sexism, oppression, and alienation. When our faith is atomized our myopic vision becomes fixated on *my eternal destiny*. To be a people of the table who have eschatological hope that one day God's Kingdom will come to earth as it is in heaven, we need to make ourselves available to the Spirit to offer compassion that really is sacrificial love—beyond that which is merely convenient.

Augustine in the *City of God* distinguishes true from false sacrifice. God demands that we ourselves become a sacrifice because "it behooves us to be His possession."⁵⁴ As we live sacrificially we make visible our identity in God. Our sacrifice to God is not self annihilation, but becomes our source of identity in worship and communion in God. In the reception of the Eucharist, the church's worship of self-sacrifice becomes the testimony of Christ's presence in the bread and wine. To embody Christ, who offered himself, the church must offer itself as a living sacrifice for the world. The church is nothing less than the body of Christ. The sacrament can be offered, but if sacrificial love is not then duly embodied, it is an indication that the sacrament was never received.

The church is reconciled, redeemed, and united through the sacrifice of God in the liturgy of corporate worship. Hence, in the Eucharist the church is becoming what it eschatologically will be. Furthermore, Cavanaugh claims that Christians are to be formed not by the culture but by a "Eucharistic imagination." This imagination is not fanciful unreality but "a vision of what is really real, the Kingdom of God, as it disrupts the imagination of violence."⁵⁵

I would push a little further to suggest that the Kingdom of God really disrupts an ego-centric, consumer driven, "peaceful" culture. Part of the problem is that the church and its parishioners have lost their identity as aliens in a land not their own and have applied and achieved full citizenship in this world's time and vision; hence, our heart and treasure are placed in the "here and now" in self-made Kingdoms built on sand. Conversely, "Every Eucharistic celebration recalls the merely temporary

status of earthy life and locates the Church in the simultaneity of both past and future.”⁵⁶ Jean-Luc Marion also claims that in our love and compassionate charity toward the other, this is the *res* life of the Eucharist. Hence, “the Eucharist aims at the building of the true body of Christ in time, his *corpus verum*, which the Church both is and is meant to be.”⁵⁷ Let us be honest, true sacrifice in worshipful response to God’s love is not equated to circumstantial peace and financial prosperity, but it does offer complete and abundant life. This is precisely what a Eucharistic ecclesiology is all about. Jurgen Moltmann powerfully writes of the cost of having such a vision for the world.

It promises first of all the pain of repentance and fundamental change. It offers no recipe for success. It does not bring man into a better harmony with himself and his environment, but into contradiction with himself and his environment. And by this radical faith, it brings liberation into a world that is not free.⁵⁸

Many people inside and outside the church remain fearful of the vocation of sacrificial love. What is most prevalent is a religion and world which are still seeking safety and peaceful circumstances for “me” no matter what the cost. The church which receives and partakes of Christ’s body and blood, embodies his presence through the power of the Holy Spirit in the world today. For as we find life by partaking of Christ and are assimilated into his body, we then become food for the world, to be broken, given away, and consumed.⁵⁹ The church is the presence of Christ in the world, most visibly not as a source of power or institution, but as gift and sustenance for others. Raniero Cantalamessa announces “The Eucharist makes the Church, by making the Church Eucharist!”⁶⁰

Christ’s *corpus verum* is the true body of Christ, wounded for the other. Hence the church of Christ is only his body as it joyfully broken in love for the other. The church’s mission is not driven by self-preservation or perpetuation like that of a state. “Its discipline is a constant dying to itself for the sake of others.”⁶¹ We are given the gift of Christ. To mark our true reception of that gift we give ourselves away as we are transformed into gift. And this is the mission of the Church on the 8th day of creation.

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- Didache*, Roberts-Donald English Translation (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>).

Endnotes

- ¹ I am not denigrating the significance and need for a personal response to God's grace. However, the emphasis on the individual spiritual life has allowed the vision of the Church as a corporate body to become lost. Furthermore, the individual, as utmost, can lose sight of the ethical imperatives to which one's Christian identity is immanently linked (Matthew 25).
- ² Cf. H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 287.
- ³ With this question I am not assuming that there is simply just one Wesleyan approach, form, or method.
- ⁴ Outler, Albert C., ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 307.
- ⁵ John 11.52, NIV.
- ⁶ Schmemmann, Alexander, *The Eucharist: The Sacrament of the Kingdom*, Trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 2003), 24.
- ⁷ *Didache*, Chapter 9 Roberts-Donald English Translation (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>).
- ⁸ Schmemmann, Alexander, *For the Life of the Word* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1988) 25.
- ⁹ Cavanaugh, William T., "The Liturgies of Church and State," *Journal of Liturgical Conference*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2005, 25.
- ¹⁰ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23.
- ¹¹ We will discuss later the healthy tension and between the community and individual congregant.
- ¹² Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 24.
- ¹³ Schillebeeckx, Edward, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1963; reprint 1987), 136.
- ¹⁴ Maddox, Randy, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 198
- ¹⁵ Maddox, 201.

¹⁶ Often sin and evil have become “things” and thus created the dualism with love and good. I prefer to think of sin as the absence of being, or the absence of the good. This also relates quite intricately to the doctrine of the atonement and soteriology.

¹⁷ Wainwright, Geoffrey, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 56.

¹⁸ Power, David, N, *The Sacrament: The Language of God’s Giving* (New York, NY: Crossword Publishing, 1999), 84.

¹⁹ Power, 85.

²⁰ Matthew 10.39 (NIV).

²¹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 208.

²² *Ibid.*, 90.

²³ Moltmann, Jurgen, *Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 40.

²⁴ Traditionally the term “Eucharist” has been understood as thanksgiving to God. What I would like to add is that our real thanksgiving is embodied as we sacrificially offer ourselves to the world. It is not to dismiss our words and songs of praise in corporate worship. But without humble acts of mercy and sacrifice at the feet of our world, that thanksgiving is empty.

²⁵ Schillebeeckx, 133.

²⁶ Power, 16.

²⁷ Schmemmann, 208.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 207-8.

²⁹ J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Cleveland, OH: OSL Publications, 1990), 113.

³⁰ Rattenbury, “Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons,” H-45.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, H-42.

³³ Rattenbury, 145.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁵ Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology* “The Duty of Constant Communion,” (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 503.

³⁶ John Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” 305.

³⁷ John Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” 307.

³⁸ To a great extent it seems that these doctrines and concepts are not rejected but simply never addressed. Often there has been little education and discussion of this terminology in the local church.

³⁹ Schmemmann, 42.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴¹ This is a question that I am still wrestling with, but will be explored briefly in the last section of this paper.

⁴² Schmemmann, 38.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁴ Moltmann, Jurgen, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 18.

⁴⁵ I Corinthians 15:28.

⁴⁶ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 198.

⁴⁷ Cavanaugh, “The Liturgies of Church and State,” 28.

⁴⁸ Schmemmann, 43.

⁴⁹ Zizoulas, John, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 180.

⁵⁰ Rattenbury, 57.

⁵¹ Rattenbury, 62. The Wesley’s wrote several Eucharistic hymns that spoke of realized eschatology which converges the past, present, future and now. See hymns categorized in Rattenbury under “The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven,” H-30-37.

⁵² Schmemmann, 242.

⁵³ Clearly the giving of our monetary resources is not disdained. However, it is often easier to send off money than to really face and encounter the hopeless and marginalized in our communities.

⁵⁴ St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), 705 [XIX.23].

⁵⁵ Schmemmann, 206.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 176-82.

⁵⁸ Moltmann, Jurgen, *Crucified God*, 39.

⁵⁹ Cavanaugh William T., *Torture and Eucharist* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 232.

⁶⁰ Cantalamessa, Raniero, *The Eucharist: Our Sanctification* (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 21.

⁶¹ Cavanaugh, 271.

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A COMMUNITY OF JOYFUL BROKENNESS
By Brent Peterson**