

**The Pledge of Future Glory**

**The Eschatological Dimension of The Eucharist: A Systematic  
Exploration**

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## **Statement of Sources**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Thesis Abstract

The Eucharist is preeminently the sacrament of Christian hope. It is a foretaste of the eschatological banquet. Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the antiphon for the *Magnificat* on the feast of *Corpus Christi*, described the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory. It contains within it the memorial of Christ's Passover and the anticipation of his coming in glory. Filled with hope, Christians celebrate the Eucharist as "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" in anticipation. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 47).

How this eschatological consciousness is related to the Eucharist is a question that deserves further exploration. While some authors have touched on the subject, there has been no systematic treatment of this theme since Geoffrey Wainwright's *Eucharist and Eschatology*. Our thesis explores the contemporary insights into Eucharistic eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Francois-Xavier Durrwell, Gustave Martelet, and Louis-Marie Chauvet. We shall situate our study in terms of a current philosophical-phenomenological context of hope as explored by Gabriel Marcel and Ernst Bloch, and the questions of gift as discussed in the works of Robyn Horner, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion and David Power.

To approach the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory is to discern the eschatological meaning of this sacrament and its relationship to Christian hope. If hope is essential to the human condition, then the Eucharist keeps hope alive within the Christian community and the world. As the sacrament of the *Eschaton*, the Eucharist activates hope in the present time for the consummation of God's purposes for all humanity and for the fulfilment of God's reign of justice, freedom and peace throughout creation. To celebrate the Eucharist is to participate in a "holy communion" with God through the bread and wine shared together. Such an eschatological communion foreshadows the future transformation of the whole cosmos into New Creation.

The Eucharist is thus the divine milieu where the Christian community celebrates the real presence of the risen and glorified Christ, and the eschatological grounds for its ultimate expectations. In order to celebrate the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory it is also important to recognize that the future glory which Christians anticipate through the Eucharist is God's gift. It is a gift of grace to be received and cultivated with a sense of responsibility. The Eucharist inspires Christian hope and gives birth to creative human activity in the direction of the coming of the new heaven and new earth. Only when Christians recognize the future as eschatological gift, they will be able to commit themselves to building up the body of Christ in the world and at the same time dare to hope for the future glory in the fullness of God's time. The Eucharistic hope thus embodies an ethical praxis that the Christian community is summoned to embody in their lives. The Christian community, gathered for prayers and thanksgiving, and for the "breaking of the bread" is itself an eschatological reality. It proclaims the real presence of the future that God has prepared for the whole of creation in Christ.

We seek to explore the notion that the Eucharist, as the sacrament of hope, is both a vision of the future and a celebration of the Christian community as it is nourished on the body and blood of Christ, the *firstfruits* of the Kingdom. It is significant because if God is our ultimate future glory it matters greatly that we understand and know that the gathering at the Eucharistic table confirms and extends our communion with God and with all creation. It is in this Eucharistic communion that hope is born. A foretaste of what is to come is already celebrated and given in Christ's self-giving love. It is vital therefore that we explore the interconnection between the Eucharist and eschatology and attend to the meaning and practice of Christian hope. The thesis will conclude with a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist as a pledge of the future glory.



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## Chapter 1 Introduction: Eucharist and Eschatology

The Christian understanding of the Eucharist has been remarkably enriched in recent years, with a rediscovery of the eschatological dimension of the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. With it we come to realize an essential feature of significance for a renewed appreciation of the formative power of the celebration of the Eucharist in Christian life, as well as its considerable ecumenical, social, political and ethical importance. Such an eschatological orientation of the Eucharist was, in fact, a strong element in the experience of the early Christian community. The New Testament testifies to this experience within a complex series of meal events in the ministry of Jesus, describing these experiences as "dining in the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> To eat the bread and drink the wine of the Eucharist was to remember Christ; and it was to anticipate Christ, and to participate proleptically in the future fulfilment of all God's purposes. A profound awareness of the ultimate realities was closely connected with the eschatological hope for the glorious future of all creation.

The Eucharist was thus celebrated in the context of the resurrection of Christ and the radical renewal of all things and the coming of God's reign. Recall, for example, that the first Christians were so convinced of God's power through the resurrection of Christ and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost that they expected the Parousia in their own lifetime, and with it the establishment of God's Kingdom. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to the Eucharist as the sacrament of the *Eschaton*, in which the Christian community is aroused to hope in Christ's coming again: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).<sup>2</sup> Apparently, it is out of this eschatological hope that the early

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 24.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of Eucharistic hope, this conviction leads Paul to spell out the eschatological significance of being Christian, as a repeated refrain throughout his corpus of writings: "Christ is the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10), so that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Since the New Testament unfolds the meaning of baptism as a dying and rising with Christ, the descent into the water signifies the Christian's identification with Christ's passion and death, and the ascent from the water signifies a participation in the new life based on the power of Christ's resurrection (Rom 6: 3-5), a new birth, and a renewal through the Spirit (Eph 5:14). As such, the Christian community is now living in "the end of ages" (1 Cor 10:11), or in "the later times" (1 Tim 4:1), and is called "to put away" the old person in order to "put on the new person" in the ecclesial body of Christ (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). The glorified and risen Christ is, above all, "the first-born among many" (Rom 8:29; Col 1:18), "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). When Christ appears, Christians will appear with him in glory (Col 3:3-4).

Christians continued to devote “themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). There is thus an awareness of the Eucharist as a thanksgiving for the works of salvation in Christ, and a celebration of praise to God who has made the believers worthy to anticipate the future unity of the reign of God.<sup>3</sup>

The eschatological significance of Christian worship is also reflected in the act of gathering for the Eucharistic sharing on a Sunday. The interconnection of the Pasch and the Lord’s Supper was the principal reason for the early Christians to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday, as the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Here is the sense that, in the Eucharist, the saving act of God has been realized in Christ, and that, through his Passover from death to life, the Christian community can share in the life of the resurrection. The early Christians looked forward to the eschatological fullness of God’s Kingdom, as we also learn from the Didache: “As this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and then, when gathered, became one, so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom.”<sup>5</sup> Later in this remarkable document comes the first clear evidence of the liturgical use of *Maranatha*, the eschatological prayer: “May grace come and this world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David; Maranatha! Amen.”<sup>6</sup> An eschatological hope for the final coming of Christ was thus closely connected with the experience of Christ encountered in the Eucharist.

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<sup>3</sup> See Enrico Mazza, *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Ronald E. Lane (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995). Mazza notes: “All this material originates in Exodus 12, which typologically is applied to the death of Christ. This is the fundamental fact, and a genuine Christian theology is able to express in specific literary forms...a reinterpretation of the Old Testament Passover.” 104.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 4-5. For a fine treatment of the eschatological character of worship in relation to the essential act of gathering for the Eucharistic assembly on Sunday, see Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). “The eschatological significance of Sunday is well known in the early Church’s practice and teaching. First, Sunday emerged from the witness of the women who found the empty tomb...The connection between gathering to worship on Sunday and the gathering to greet the risen Lord is at the very beginning of Christian liturgy. Second, Sunday was known as the ‘eighth day’, a day both in time of the week, but already participating in the future age to come...A third point is closely related. Sunday, if conceived as the resurrection day, is readily associated in the mind of the early traditions with the final advent, the *parousia* itself.” 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel J. Sheerin, *The Eucharist* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986), 352. See also Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 131.

<sup>6</sup> See Sheerin, *The Eucharist*, 353-354; LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 142.

## 1.1 The significance of this study

The question that arises today is whether it is possible and desirable to retrieve this eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. How can the Eucharist, in the third millennium of the Christian history, be more fully appreciated as the sacrament in which “Christ is present as hope’s food and drink,”<sup>7</sup> and celebrated as a fuller anticipation of the heavenly banquet? How does the celebration of the Eucharist connect with eschatology with practical implications for the way we live in the present and the future? How might this eschatological approach to the Eucharist serve as a fruitful source for reflection on every aspect of Christian hope, that is, immanent and transcendent, prophetic and apocalyptic?

The central argument of this thesis is that, in the Eucharist, *the pledge of future glory* is promised, and the first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth are revealed and communicated to the whole creation. Through the Eucharist, hope anticipates the eschatological fulfilment of history brought about through Christ’s self-giving in his Paschal Mystery. In this Christian perspective, the whole of reality is destined to participate in the life of the triune God, and is thus charged with immense eschatological significance. As the sacrament of hope, the Eucharist is a sacred symbol of vital importance to the Christian community and to our contemporary world. It is a sign of God’s coming reign and of the promised transformation of all things. It looks toward a future in hope and with confidence that the victorious death and resurrection of Christ makes a definitive difference and will bring all creation to perfect fulfilment. As we read in John Paul II’s most recent Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal, a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. Jn 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven, the “pledge of future glory.” In the Eucharist, everything speaks of confident waiting “in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 83.

the last day” (Jn 6:54). This pledge of the future resurrection comes from the fact that the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the “secret” of the resurrection.<sup>8</sup>

As the sacrament of the Kingdom, “already” but “not yet” fully embraced, the Eucharist has an intrinsically eschatological nature. What the Christian community celebrates here on earth is a participation in the banquet of eternity, that is, the final gathering of all the ages on God’s holy mountain (Is 25:6; Heb 12:18, 22-24; Mt 22:2-14; Jn 6:51,54). The liturgical acclamation, “Christ will come again” or “We await your coming in glory,” and the response following the Lord’s Prayer – “For the Kingdom, the power, and glory are yours, now and forever” – express the eschatological thrust of the whole Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of the eschatological banquet. “It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.”<sup>9</sup> Thus in the celebration of the Eucharist the whole range of Christian life in time – with its memory of the death of Christ, its experience of the power of his resurrection in the present, and its joyful hope for the final coming of God’s Kingdom – is expressed.

Such an understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist serves not only to lead the Christian community to the expectation of “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1), but also to increase a sense of responsibility for the world. Here the Eucharist anticipates the coming joy of God’s reign of justice, peace and freedom. Again, the words of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* point in this direction:

Many problems darken the horizon of our time. We need but think of the urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid premises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end...Proclaiming the death of the Lord “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26) entails that all who take part in the Eucharist be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain way completely “Eucharistic.” It is this fruit of a transfigured existence and a commitment to transforming the world in accordance with the Gospel which splendidly illustrates the eschatological tension inherent in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the Christian life as a whole: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia: On the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church*, par. 18 (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St Pauls Publications, 2003), 19-20.

<sup>9</sup> See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, par. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, par. 20.

As it sacramentally celebrates the commemoration of Christ's Paschal Mystery, the Eucharist thus embodies the eschatological character of hope for the world as a whole. When Christians celebrate their hope in this manner, says Tony Kelly, "they are not engaging in private meditation, nor are they meeting for a philosophical discussion on the afterlife. Rather, they are eating, drinking, tasting, breathing, and sharing the real presence of the future that God has prepared for them in Christ."<sup>11</sup> In a distinctly paschal dimension, the Eucharist celebrates the human attitude of hope and is "an instance of the world's passing over into the new creation."<sup>12</sup> Thus, as a sign of future realization, the Eucharist is utterly central and fundamental to any discussion of hope. It is both a word of hope and a participation in the eschatological banquet of the Kingdom to guide the whole world into the future. By bringing the memorial of the past and an anticipation of the future into the present, the Eucharist gathers up all that Christ stood for, namely, the coming reign of God.<sup>13</sup> It is the Eucharist that puts the Christian community in touch with its future glory, giving the meaning of hope to the ultimate destiny of humanity and the entire creation in directing the course of history towards its absolute consummation.

## **1.2 The state of the question and of contemporary scholarship regarding Eucharist and eschatology**

The interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology is an important and interesting area. Yet, it is only the twentieth-century scholarship that witnesses something of an "eschatological renaissance in Christian theology."<sup>14</sup> The eschatological dimension of the Eucharist faded into the background, but never entirely disappeared. Given its deep roots in the New Testament and patristic literature, we find, for example, a brief mention of the Eucharist as "a pledge of future glory and everlasting happiness" in the Decree on the Eucharist of the Council of Trent.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas also described the

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<sup>11</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite: Explorations in Christian Hope* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1991), 138.

<sup>13</sup> Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 195, 199.

<sup>14</sup> Lane, "Eschatology," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 329.

<sup>15</sup> See Joseph Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, ed., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1998), 578. Another evidence of the Eucharist as the sacramental anticipation of the eschaton can be found in the hymn attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, "*O Sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur: Recolitur memoria passionis eius. Mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.*" This quotation is taken from Michael Purcell, "This Is My Body

Eucharist as a “*signum pronosticum*, a sign which recalls a past event, the passion of Christ, indicates the effect of the passion of Christ in us that is grace, and foretells, that is heralds the glory to come.”<sup>16</sup> Why, then, has the loss of the eschatological understanding of the Eucharist only been retrieved in more recent years? In retrospect, traditional theology of the Eucharist, forgetful of the biblical context of eschatology in which the Eucharist is celebrated, for a long time gave almost exclusive attention to the Eucharistic doctrines of sacrifice and real presence to the detriment of its eschatological nature. As William T. Cavanaugh explains:

In general, the emphasis on the Eucharist as a memorial of Jesus’ actions on earth has emphasized his first coming to the neglect of his second. Aside from the problems involved in seeing the memorial as merely psychological calling to mind of certain historical events and their “meaning”, even theologies of real presence have neglected the Parousia as a key to understanding the Eucharistic action. There is not a single allusion to the second coming in the old ordinary of the Roman mass. The high and late medieval emphasis on sacrifice made it possible to think that the Eucharist was essentially a this-worldly dispensation of grace to the faithful through constant propitiatory offering of Jesus’ sacrifice to the Father.<sup>17</sup>

The growing prominence of the relation between the Cross of Christ and the sacrificial nature which classical liturgical tradition ascribed to the Eucharist, as the memorial of the past, ignored much of the eschatological realism of the Eucharist in the New Testament. Eschatology was regarded largely as the study of the “*Last things*,” namely death, final judgement, heaven and hell. Consequently, the subject of eschatology appeared as an appendix to the rest of theology, and therefore did not function as the light illuminating other realities of the Christian faith.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis of eschatology also centred on the eternal fate of the individual person and the end of history, rather than on the hope for the consummation of God’s purposes for all creation, for the completion of the creative and redemptive activity of God in Christ and the Spirit, that is, for the coming of God’s Kingdom in its eschatological fullness.

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Which Is Given "for You" ... Ethically Speaking," *The Presence of Transcendence: Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries (Leuven - Paris - Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2001), 141.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 207-208.

<sup>17</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 226.

<sup>18</sup> Lane, “Eschatology,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 329.

As the result of this eclipse of eschatology, the Eucharist and the other sacraments of the Church were perceived as the means to an end, where salvation in the future was a hope completely separated from an earthly existence. As Peter C. Phan points out, it was not made clear that “the Church is the pilgrim people of God on the march toward the eschaton; that grace is an anticipation and foretaste of our eternal communion with the Triune God; that all the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are signs announcing the world to come.”<sup>19</sup> Under the impact of modern developments in biblical studies and in theology, however, eschatology has moved from the periphery to the centre of theological discourse.<sup>20</sup> Reflecting on the current state of the eschatology question, Joseph Ratzinger writes:

For centuries eschatology was content to lead a quiet life as the final chapter of theology where it was dubbed ‘the doctrine of the last things.’ But in our own time, with the historical process in crisis, eschatology has moved into the very center of the theological stage. Some twenty years ago, Hans Urs von Balthasar called it the ‘storm-zone’ of contemporary theology. Today it appears to dominate the entire theological landscape. A recent synod of the German bishops published a confession of faith under the title ‘Our Hope’ – thus placing faith itself in hope’s perspective.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Dermot A. Lane observes that there has also been the emergence of “a new historical consciousness, a new ecological awareness, and a new sense of solidarity of the human race.”<sup>22</sup> All these factors thus present a particular challenge to the Christian faith and prompt a renewal in eschatology and a radical inquiry into the origin of its history.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Peter C. Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (New York/ Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>20</sup> See Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life*, 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Lane, “Eschatology,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 338.

<sup>23</sup> See Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life*, 6-7. According to Phan, many factors have contributed to the revitalization of contemporary eschatology: (1) the rise of historical consciousness; (2) the critique of religion initiated by Ludwig Feuerbach and carried to its conclusion by Karl Marx; (3) the contemporary philosophical understanding of the ontological unity of the human person; (4) the ecological crisis [which] has attracted the attention not only of the scientific community but also of the Church; and (5) a pervasive angst about the meaning of life or anxiety at the dawning of a new millennium.



Zachary Hayes argues that Christian hope in ultimate meaning and fullness is best expressed in the two eschatological symbols of the reign of God and the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>24</sup> He explains:

The symbol of the Kingdom is a symbol of that collective state of salvation in which the final relation between God and the world will be realized. The resurrection is a symbolic affirmation that the Kingdom has been realized in Jesus, and that what has been realized in him is the anticipation of what God intends for the whole of the human race and the world.<sup>25</sup>

Any theological treatise of a future beyond history is thus to be treated and developed in terms of the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the eschatological significance of the Christ-event. For examples, John Weiss's *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (1892) and Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906)<sup>26</sup> proposed a new interest in the notion of the Kingdom of God. For both theologians, the fulfilment of history has been realized in Jesus Christ. Karl Barth argues that, since the whole scope of Jesus' life and ministry is the announcement of the reign of God, "Christianity that is not entirely and altogether eschatology has entirely nothing to do with Christ."<sup>27</sup> A similar insight appears in the writing of Ratzinger, who notes that the rediscovery of the central significance of eschatology serves "to reopen the debate as to what the core of Christianity is."<sup>28</sup> For Karl Rahner, eschatology is at the centre of theological enterprise. He claims that Christianity is "the religion which keeps open the question about the absolute future which wills to give itself in its own reality by self communication, and which has established this will as eschatologically irreversible in Jesus Christ, and this future is called God."<sup>29</sup> A significant discussion has ensued about the relationship between the present and the future of the Kingdom

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<sup>24</sup> Zachary Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 146.

<sup>25</sup> Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology*, 146.

<sup>26</sup> See Dermot A. Lane, "Eschatology," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 337.

<sup>27</sup> See K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 314. Here quotation taken from D. A. Lane, "Eschatology," 329.

<sup>28</sup> See Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 1, 17. See also Walter Kasper, "Individual Salvation and Eschatological Consummation," in *Faith and The Future: Studies in Christian Eschatology*, ed., by John Gavin, (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1994), 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1999). 457. See also Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life*. According to Peter C. Phan, the theologians "who have most profoundly influenced the recent re-envisioning of eschatology are the two theological giants of our century, Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, the former with a more anthropological emphasis, and the latter with a more Christological emphasis."<sup>10</sup>

of God, that is, present reality compared with future reality or both (consequent, realized, and proleptic models of eschatology, respectively).<sup>30</sup>

An eschatological orientation is developed and incorporated into different theologies of hope (Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg), political theology (Johann Baptist Metz), and the most influential movement of this century, namely, liberation theology (Gustave Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff).<sup>31</sup> Here the summons is not simply to Christian awareness of a future fulfilment of hope, but to the creation of a new reality in the political and social order. Such an eschatology assumes a positive relation between present and future, between the earthly and the heavenly, between history and the Kingdom of God.<sup>32</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann is insistent on the importance of this reorientation of Christian thinking to eschatology: “The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day.”<sup>33</sup> What this means, in effect, is that eschatology is to be interpreted as a doctrine of hope, a radical openness toward the future of God. Modifying Anselm’s well-known definition of theology as “*fides quaerens intellectum – credo, ut intelligam*” (faith seeking understanding – I believe in order to understand), today we might describe a new principle of Christian theology as “*spes quaerens intellectum – spero, ut intelligam*” (hope seeking understanding – I hope in order to understand).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For an insightful representation of nine models of eschatology, see also Peter C. Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 27-31. These models are called: Consequent eschatology, Supratemporal eschatology, Existential eschatology, Realized eschatology, Anticipated eschatology, Eschatology in progress, Eschatology as Prolepsis, Eschatology as Hope, Secular and Political eschatology.

<sup>31</sup> Lane, “Eschatology,” 337.

<sup>32</sup> See Carl E. Braaten, *The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 18.

<sup>33</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967). Moltmann continues: “For Christian faith lives by the raising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promises of the universal future of Christ. Eschatology is the passionate suffering and passionate longing kindled by the Messiah. Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole Church.” 16.

<sup>34</sup> See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*. “If it is hope that maintains and upholds faith and keeps it moving on, if it is hope that draws the believer into the life of love, then it will also be hope that is the mobilizing and driving force of faith’s thinking, its knowledge of, and reflections on, human nature, history and society. Faith hopes in order to know what it believes.” 33.

Now, if eschatology means “the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it,”<sup>35</sup> then the Eucharist is preeminently the sacrament of hope. It is not only a sign and seal of God’s promise of a new, liberated, and reconciled humanity, but also has profound significance for Christian ethics and for Christian mission in the world. The words of Lane’s insight catch the point:

It is within the celebration of the Eucharist that the historical drama of Christian eschatology unfolds, uniting past, present, and future; it is in the Eucharist that the eschatological significance of the death and resurrection of Christ is represented; it is in the Eucharist that the Eschaton becomes sacramentally operative in the lives of individual communities. Above all it is the celebration of the Eucharist that keeps hope alive within the Christian community and the world.<sup>36</sup>

Understood in this framework, the Eucharist celebrates the *Eschaton* with confidence even as it remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and plunges Christians into the present reality. In other words, the Eucharist is the Parousia already begun, already at work until all God’s promises will be realized and the hopes of humanity fulfilled. The glorified Christ who is to come is already in communion with the believers, and so, when he comes in glory, the final efficacy of the Eucharist will be the full manifestation of the unspeakable reality, which “God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:7; Rom 8:28). The Eucharist thus becomes the pre-eminent symbol of the universal reality of God’s reign promised by Christ (Jn 15:11), filling Christians on their journey through history with hope.<sup>37</sup>

With the emergence of the Kingdom of God as the subject of intense scholarly research and discussion, a renewed interest in the eschatological implications of the Eucharist has also begun and is continuing. Informed by a more biblical and holistic view, the theology of Vatican II considers eschatology as a dimension of every aspect of Christian life and thought, pointing to the Paschal Mystery as the focal category for understanding the eschatological significance of the Eucharist. *Lumen Gentium*

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<sup>35</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 194.

<sup>37</sup> See Monika K. Hellwig, “Eschatology,” *Systematic Theology – Roman Catholic Perspective*, Vol. II, Eds. F.S. Fiorenza & J. P. Gavin, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 359.

proclaims the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life.”<sup>38</sup> This leads to the renewal of Eucharistic liturgy and Eucharistic theology, including the recovery of its eschatological nature, whereby the Eucharist foreshadows and anticipates “the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of the Father, proclaiming the Lord’s death till his coming.”<sup>39</sup> The pilgrim people are described as needing to be nourished on the body and blood of Christ as they move on the earthly journey towards “the marriage feast and to be numbered among the blessed.”<sup>40</sup> The Eucharist thus gives a sense of direction to humanity, activating hope in the present.

The beginning of *Gaudium et Spes* also highlights the Church’s change of understanding concerning the place of history: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”<sup>41</sup> The Christian community is thus called to co-operate with Christ through the power of the Spirit so that the world might be brought to its fulfilment. In this direction of Christian hope the words of *Gaudium et Spes* affirm the eschatological significance of the Eucharist:

Christ left to his followers a pledge of this hope and food for the journey in the sacrament of faith, in which natural elements, the fruits of man’s cultivation, are changed into His glorified Body and Blood, as a supper of brotherly fellowship and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.<sup>42</sup>

The Eucharist is thus the symbol of the final realization of the eschatological Kingdom.<sup>43</sup> To work and to wait in joyful hope for this future Kingdom is but to desire that, in the words of the Eucharistic Prayers, “we shall sing your glory with

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<sup>38</sup> Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 11, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 362.

<sup>39</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, *Instruction on the worship of the Eucharistic worship*, par. 3, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 48.

<sup>41</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, par. 1, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 903.

<sup>42</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> See Victor Codina, “Sacraments,” *Mysterium Liberationis*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 672.

every creature,”<sup>44</sup> and be united with God, who sends the Spirit “as his first gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of salvation.”<sup>45</sup> The Eucharistic transformation is itself thoroughly eschatological, implicating all the elements of nature and culture, involving the whole world of God’s creation.<sup>46</sup> To deepen the sense of its eschatological import, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also refers to the Eucharist as “an anticipation of heavenly glory” and “a sign of hope in the new heaven and the new earth.”<sup>47</sup> Through the Eucharist the whole cosmos anticipates its own consummation.<sup>48</sup>

In ecumenical statements, we also find the presence of this theme of the Eucharist as a foretaste of future fulfilment. The World Council of Churches, for example, identifies the Eucharist as the meal of the Kingdom: “The Eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule, which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it...the Eucharist is the feast at which the Church joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ” (1 Cor 11: 26; Mt 26:29).<sup>49</sup>

Likewise, the recognition of the interconnection of the Eucharist with eschatology is evidently expressed in the first agreed statement on the Eucharist, the so-called Windsor Statement, published by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: “In the Eucharist, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Receiving a foretaste of the Kingdom to come, we look back with thanksgiving to what Christ has done for us, we greet him present among us, and we look forward to

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<sup>44</sup> Eucharistic Prayers III.

<sup>45</sup> Eucharistic Prayers IV.

<sup>46</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 39. All of these various aspects of the eschatological hope are captured by the Church in what is essentially an effective meaning of the Eucharist: “When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise – human dignity, brotherly communion, and freedom – according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal Kingdom.” 938.

<sup>47</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, art. 1402 and 1405 (Homebush, N.S.W.: St Pauls, 1995), 354.

<sup>48</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 45. The Eucharistic transformation involves the whole cosmos and the universe itself, all the values of human creations and the different ways God’s Spirit has been at work throughout history. All human beings and the world are destined to find fulfilment in Christ: “The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as a perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of [humankind], the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead. Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history, which fully corresponds, to the plan of his love: ‘to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (Ephesians 1:10).” 947.

<sup>49</sup> “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” in *Faith and Order Paper, NO.111* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 15.

his final appearing in the fullness of his Kingdom.”<sup>50</sup> The text proceeds to describe the action of Christ in the Eucharist as the action of the glorified Lord, who gives himself to the Church in the Eucharistic signs of bread and wine:

The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of glory. In the Eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new humanity: elements of the first creation become pledges and firstfruits of the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>51</sup>

There is, then, an affirmation that, in the whole action of the Eucharist as the meal of the Kingdom, Christ is encountered, on the one hand, as eschatologically present, offering himself to the worshipping community. On the other hand, by eating and drinking what Christ gives, Christians have a foretaste of life in a transformed creation. In other words, the Eucharist brings into the present age the eschatological reality of what God has accomplished through Christ and in the Spirit.

Conversely, we have here an emphasis which is so fundamental to Christian hope that it is surprising to find that theology, for the most part, has overlooked it. Although the works of twentieth-century scholars on the notion of the Kingdom have contributed to the revitalization of eschatology as a key theological theme, there are very few theologians who point to the inherently eschatological dimension of the Eucharist as such.

In regard to the Eucharist, for example, even such a major theologian of the twentieth-century as Edward Schillebeeckx, who has contributed much to the renewal of Eucharistic theology, continues to deal with a hermeneutics of recovery of the doctrine of transubstantiation and real presence in his well-known book, *The*

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<sup>50</sup> Cited in O. Cummings, “The Windsor Statement on the Eucharist,” *Emmanuel*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (June, 2001), 268.

<sup>51</sup> See Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), “Eucharistic Doctrine” (1971), no.6 in *The Final Report* (London: CTS/SPCK, 1982), 14. The statement is available in various ecumenical collections, but here it is quoted in Gerard Kelly, “The Eucharistic Doctrine of Transubstantiation,” in *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship* (Sydney: ST Paul’s Publications, 2001). This statement is helpful and points to a possible way of dealing adequately with the questions of Eucharistic presence and change within the perspective of eschatology. As Gerard Kelly remarks, “It insists that when speaking of the Eucharistic presence, we recognize both the sacramental sign of Christ’s presence and the personal relationship between Christ and the faithful which is the result of that presence.” 69-70.

*Eucharist*.<sup>52</sup> His concern is whether we can express adequately the same conviction in a new terminology that is different from the metaphysical categories of accidents and substance. Schillebeeckx thus argues for the concept of “transignification” as an alternative to transubstantiation. The eschatological reference of the Eucharist is, however, omitted in his reinterpretation of the real presence of Christ.

We note that other contemporary sacramental theologians, who have made a detailed study of the Eucharistic mystery, have not paid much attention to the place of eschatology. For instance, in his significant work, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*,<sup>53</sup> published in 1998, Edward Kilmartin proposes to outline a more adequate theology of the Eucharist for contemporary Christians. However, in treating the issues of real presence and Eucharistic sacrifice, and the deepening of the unity of the liturgical assembly with Christ, the eschatological aspect of the Eucharistic celebration is mentioned on several occasions, but without elaboration in terms of eschatology.

Similarly, two recent studies present considerable suggestions for making the Eucharist vital to the contemporary Church, but do not explore its eschatological dimension. In his book, *The Future of the Eucharist*,<sup>54</sup> Bernard Cooke raises the question of how a new self-awareness among Catholics changes the way they believe and worship. A new context for Eucharistic worship is proposed, but without any direct reference to its eschatological dimension. Cooke takes only two lines in order to emphasize the relationship between the Eucharist and Christian discipleship, mentioning the Eucharist as a continuation of “Jesus’ proclamation of the arrival of God’s reign” and as “covenant pledge to work for the establishment of God’s reign.”<sup>55</sup> Another study, *The Eucharist: Toward the Third Millennium*,<sup>56</sup> edited by Martin F. Connell, includes papers presented at a symposium on the liturgy at the Catholic

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<sup>52</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (London, Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

<sup>53</sup> Edward Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. R. J. Daly (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Bernard Cooke, *The Future of the Eucharist* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Cooke, *The Future of the Eucharist*, 26, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Martin F. Connell, ed., *Eucharist: Toward the Third Millennium* (Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997).

University of America, but there is no paper written on the specifically eschatological nature of the Eucharistic celebration.<sup>57</sup>

From the perspective of eschatology, we find examples in the works of many well-known theologians where the Eucharist is left out. Karl Rahner is the theologian who has most influenced the development of eschatology in Catholic theology in the twentieth century. Yet one of the major criticisms, which might be made of his eschatological investigation, is the lack of connection between eschatology and the Eucharist. Indeed, Owen F. Cummings comments that “worship and liturgy, as the primary and privileged expression of theology, is nowhere present in the Rahner *corpus*.”<sup>58</sup> In some ways, rather like Rahner, Moltmann moves eschatology to the center-stage of theological discourse; he does not, however, relate it strongly to liturgy, sacraments and worship.<sup>59</sup> Zachary Hayes has in recent years published a number of articles on eschatology, culminating in a book, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology*.<sup>60</sup> He offers both a view of the present state of Catholic eschatological thought and a reflection on the nature of Christian hope. Here too, there is no attempt to demonstrate the interconnection of eschatology and the Eucharist.

This, then, is the context in which a new exploration of the relationship between the theology of the Eucharist and eschatology emerges in our study. We find five contemporary examples of theologians, Geoffrey Wainwright, François-Xavier Durrwell, Gustave Martelet, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Louis-Marie Chauvet, who consider both aspects of the connection, even though with different emphases. Reflecting on the New Testament texts that deal with table fellowship in the life and

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<sup>57</sup> See Connell, ed., *Eucharist: Toward the Third Millennium*. In this volume, David Power’s paper, “A Prophetic Eucharist in a Prophetic Church,” offered an insight-filled and compelling presentation on the Eucharist as the Church approaches new cultural, sociological and theological arenas. The author claims that through the power of the Spirit, Christians are given the hope that they may celebrate the Eucharist anew, as a life-giving force that opens them to the challenge of proclaiming the gospel for the turn of the millennium. He also notes that “there is merit in looking to the eschatological sign of the assemblies ‘without order’ but in which sacrament is celebrated, offered, taken and shared in the generous, mutual, Spirit-filled, sharing of selves.” 38. But the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist is not explored in particular.

<sup>58</sup> Owen F. Cummings, *Coming to Christ: A Study in Christian Eschatology* (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 172.

<sup>59</sup> See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16. In this study, Moltmann brings together the eschatological influence of Karl Barth’s theology with the philosophy of hope of Ernst Bloch. There he argues that eschatology is not simply another topic within theology but an issue which pervades the whole of our Christian perspective.

<sup>60</sup> Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology*.



ministry of Jesus, these theologians describe the Eucharist as the meal of God's Kingdom, the bearer of Christian future, an anticipation of the heavenly glory, and a sign of hope in the new heaven and the new earth.

### **1.3 Scope and method of approach**

With a view to offering a manageable contribution to the question, the present work intends to examine the interconnection of the Eucharist with eschatology with a view to constructing a systematic synthesis of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist and reflecting upon the contemporary insights of significant theologians in the field. It is against the eschatological background and informed by a current philosophical-phenomenological context of hope, as explored in Gabriel Marcel and Ernst Bloch, and the questions of gift as explored in the works of Robyn Horner, Jean-Luc Marion, Jacques Derrida and David Power that the Eucharistic theologies of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar, Chauvet are to be explored and evaluated. Our study will be divided into three parts.

We will firstly examine a philosophical-phenomenological basis for Eucharistic eschatology. Since to celebrate the Eucharist is to look forward to the fulfilment of history, which is inextricably bound up with hopeful expectation of the future, it is important to begin with an investigation of the condition of human hope, as explored in philosophy. In Chapter 2 we shall consider the works of Gabriel Marcel on the source of the phenomenon of hope, Ernst Bloch on the hopeful ontology of the future, and Robyn Horner, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion and David Power on the question of the gift in recent philosophical thought. A mutually critical correlation of Christian hope and human hope suggests some essential components for a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist.

We will then explore the eschatological approaches to the Eucharist of Geoffrey Wainwright, François-Xavier Durrwell, Gustave Martelet, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Louis-Marie Chauvet. We shall study them in chronological order. Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet stand firmly in the Catholic tradition, while Wainwright is a member of the Methodist communion. It is Wainwright who pioneered the rediscovery of Eucharistic eschatology experienced in biblical, patristic

and liturgical theology, and explicitly raised the question in the contemporary context. Our choice of these contemporary authors is based upon their generally representative value and upon the fact that each of them addresses a particular aspect of the connection, and therefore contributes to a deepened understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist.

In Chapter 3 we present an exposition of Wainwright's theology of the Eucharist as a foretaste of the messianic banquet. Herein three central images will be considered: the messianic feast, the advent of Christ, and the firstfruits of the Kingdom with implications of an eschatological understanding of the Eucharist for the mission and unity of the Church.

In Chapter 4, Durrwell's theology of the Eucharist as the real presence of the Risen Christ will be examined. Durrwell approaches the connection of the Eucharist with eschatology from the perspective of the Paschal Mystery. Concerned that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Parousia, he insists that it is only in the distinctly paschal character of Christ that the Eucharistic presence can find its eschatological explanation.

In Chapter 5, Martelet's eschatological approach to the Eucharist and the transformation of the world will be studied. Engaging Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the eschatological meaning of the universe, Martelet brings together two fundamental aspects of the Christian faith, Eucharist and resurrection, in relation to their significance for the destiny of humanity and the whole cosmos. Christ's risen body is the principle of a life so absolute that it embodies, on the cosmic plane, the ultimate hope of a world which has been created for the resurrection.

In Chapter 6, we will examine von Balthasar's vision of the Eucharist as sacrificial celebration of the *Eschaton*, which is deeply informed by the drama of the passion of Christ. Recognizing that, as a memorial, the Eucharist commemorates the drama of Christ's Pasch, he argues that the *Eschaton* has already entered history, and that the messianic community becomes a reality each time Christians gather together to celebrate the Eucharist. In this Eucharistic action, the Christian community not only participates in the eternal movement of Christ towards God the Father, but also

welcomes Christ as the bridegroom who comes from the Father to embrace humanity with a divine love and to make the body of Christians his bride, in this communion of love and service.

In Chapter 7, we will examine the sacramental theology of Chauvet. Reflecting on the question of the Eucharist in light of postmodern concerns, Chauvet proposes a change of sacramental language and insists that the anamnesis of the Eucharist is eschatological: it is memory of the future. Here the Eucharist entails a new communion of solidarity with the historical world, and deepens our responsibility for God's creation and all forms of life within it.

The third part of our thesis aims at a systematic synthesis of the Eucharist as a pledge of the future glory. Since the method employed in this study is analytico-synthetical, that is descriptive, interpretative and, where appropriate, analytical and critical, Chapter 8 compares and contrasts the five theologies of the Eucharist and eschatology, and assesses how this development is faithful to the theological tradition concerning the Eucharist and creative with regard to its contemporary expression. To highlight their similarities and differences is also to indicate how these theologies are mutually enriching and complementary.

In Chapter 9, we bring together the most fruitful theological insights of these authors, to determine the possibility and desirability of a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. Such a retrieval establishes grounds for further questions, and certainly opens up doors for a deeper understanding of Eucharistic eschatology in particular and of Christian theology in general.

Chapter 10 summarises the major points of the thesis and brings this study to conclusion with a reflection on the Eucharist as a pledge of future glory.

#### **1.4 A hopeful contribution**

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the need for and value of a retrieval of an eschatological appreciation of the Eucharist. It would seem indeed that the whole project of approaching the interconnection of the Eucharist with eschatology serves as

a useful and appropriate introduction to the direction Eucharistic theology is currently taking, as the Church approaches new cultural, socio-political and theological arenas. Some of the contributions that this study aims to make toward a hopeful future of a theology of the Eucharist are as follows:

Firstly, it is possible that a revitalized Eucharistic theology within eschatology could provide a new and refreshing context for Christian worship. Although the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist has undergone significant changes since Vatican II, these changes would seem to address the inner awareness and attitudes of Christians as they gather for the Eucharist. By approaching Eucharist as sacrament of hope, however, these changes can have a deeper impact. Instead of “attending mass,” “going to mass,” or “receiving sacraments,” we now talk of “celebrating Eucharist.” Christians come to celebrate, not out of obligation or compliance, but out of a desire to be actively involved in what is happening in the Eucharist as an event of eschatological communion. At the heart of the Eucharistic action is an openness to God’s saving activity and a commitment of Christians to build up the Body of Christ. Such a response of the faithful, through the power of the Spirit, is necessary for the Eucharist to be effective. A renewed understanding of the essential interconnection between the Eucharistic body of Christ and the ecclesial body of Christ would do much to reshape our approach to Eucharistic thinking and practice.

Secondly, approaching the Eucharist as eschatological sacrament can only intensify its significance. Authors such as Marcel and Bloch understand hope as the living conviction that present reality is laden with the potential for something more, and as a dynamism that opens human life to a fulfilment. The question of hope becomes a truly eschatological question of Eucharist when we ask: Does our celebration of the Eucharist have anything to say to the existence of so much oppression, suffering and death in the world, to the imminent threat to the life of the earth from nuclear destruction and ecological collapse? What may a Christian hope for in this life? When the eschatological nature of the Eucharist is recognized, the Eucharist as a practical doctrine of hope is also realized, with radical consequences for Christian life, a counter-cultural sign to individualism, fatalism, consumerism and cynicism of the modern world.

Thirdly, while another full thesis remains to be written regarding the Eucharist as gift, any serious retrieval of the eschatological character of the Eucharist cannot properly occur without taking a point of departure in the language of gift. A theology of the Eucharist as eschatological gift, a gift which is inclusive rather than exclusive, may also contribute to an enrichment of ecumenical dialogue, wherein the sacramental ritual is still the object of confessional dispute. It provides a framework in which to reconsider the predominantly juridical ecclesiology, and the meaning of an ordained ministry. A renewed appreciation of the Eucharist as pure love and gracious gift also opens up the possibility of intercommunion and Eucharistic sharing, facilitating a move toward the fuller reality of the final hospitality of God's Kingdom.

Fourthly, I hope that an exploration of the Eucharist as a Trinitarian event can shed light both on a new theology of mission and on the God-world relationship. As we look back on the traditional treatments of sacramental theology, we note a Christomonistic tendency and a paucity of pneumatology. Here I indicate that God's activity from creation until the consummation of God's saving purposes is Trinitarian in character, revealing through the Eucharist the nature of God as outgoing and tending to embodiment in the whole world. It is this Trinitarian perspective that makes the whole idea of the Eucharistic communion possible, as it speaks of God's saving action both through Christ and in the Spirit in every time and place. Traditionally, mission was understood as a bringing of a comprehensive truth to people devoid of truth. In the contemporary Church, we understand that a formula of faith can never exhaust the mystery of God and the justice of God's Kingdom. I shall argue that a reappraisal of the Eucharistic mission in terms of inter-religious dialogue and transformation of societal structures can contribute to the new and effective method of evangelization today.

Finally, our study offers some suggestions for a renewal that will transform the liturgy and the life of the Church in a way at least equal to what happens when we approach the Eucharist as a foretaste and pledge of the future glory of God's Kingdom. I am, however, aware that this proposed vision of the Eucharist is far from our present experience. The promise is yet to be attained and realized while our hope involves the overcoming as best we can of the gap between the present reality and expectations for the future. One of the aims of this study is thus to keep "the memory of Christ" alive

through an enriched understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist as an embodiment and a constant source of the Christian hope. I hope this exploration can provide fresh insights for a further development of the whole area of Eucharistic eschatology and enhance our understanding of Christian worship and the ways in which we express eschatological hope.

## **Chapter 2: A Current Philosophical-Phenomenological Context for Eucharistic Eschatology**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the philosophical and phenomenological background to an analysis of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. The meaning and practice of hope is the point of connection here. It is the anchor. The aim is both to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of hope, and to formulate a number of questions with which to investigate the various theological approaches we shall be exploring.

What we seek is a correlation between the eschatological origins of Christian hope and the condition of hope already constituted within human existence, as explored in philosophy. As John Macquarrie says, hope “is also as wide as humanity itself.”<sup>1</sup> It is hope that animates us as rational, critical, moral and questioning beings. As such, hope is the anchor of the human spirit.

Accordingly, this chapter will be divided into three sections. In the first section, we will outline two philosophies of hope, as they appear in the writings of Gabriel Marcel and Ernst Bloch respectively. The second section will explore the question of the phenomenology of the gift in the works of Robyn Horner, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion and David Power. Finally, the third section will propose a thematic approach to Eucharistic hope, where our aim is to formulate a number of significant themes with a view to developing the various authors’ viewpoints.

### **2.2 Gabriel Marcel: The existential attitude of hope**

Existentialist philosophers would generally agree with the Christian view that human beings are open to the infinite in a movement of human transcendence. They would disagree, however, about whether or not there is ever a fulfilment of that openness to the future. For example, in Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy, life is without intrinsic

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<sup>1</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 18.

meaning, and the human being is alone, existing for no purpose. In this philosophical approach, human beings merely exist and are destined to continual frustration, because hope is denied its fulfilment, since there is no future. For Sartre, human existence is absurd and pointless, and living with the thought that one's life, one's very being, is of no value in relation to the future is a daunting task.<sup>2</sup> In what is effectively a philosophy of despair, hope is nullified by death, and the entire human effort for freedom is doomed to futility, to self-destruction.

Contesting the pessimism of his contemporary existentialist writers, Gabriel Marcel believes that the experience of despair can in fact be the prelude for an authentic hope that far transcends a naive optimism.<sup>3</sup> He begins with an exploration of individual choice and freedom, but this leads him to the mystery of personal relations in human community. Marcel infers from the innate need for meaning and the search for truth that human beings are created especially to commune with the *Eternal Thou*, and that it is only through this communion that they could ever hope to find wholeness. Unlike Sartre's philosophy of despair, which affirms the meaninglessness of life, Marcel's philosophy of hope addresses constructively the crisis of hope in the culture of his day.

The phenomenological analysis of hope of this Christian philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, is an important resource for our study. Marcel explores a dimension of human experience that can be immediately related to Christian hope, and extended into our consideration of the Eucharist as the sacrament of eschatological hope. In what follows, the focus of discussion is on Marcel's positions regarding, firstly, the phenomenology of the experience of hope; secondly, the relation of this to Christian hope; thirdly, how it relates to the Eucharistic perspective which is the subject of our thesis; and finally how this informs an eschatological perspective.

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<sup>2</sup> See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H.E. Barne (New York, 1956), 566. See also Zachary Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 72-73.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 36.



### 2.2.1 The phenomenology of the experience of hope

Marcel's approach to the theme of hope is presented in relation to the pilgrim condition of the human person. His *Homo Viator*<sup>4</sup> provides an accessible and succinct introduction to a discussion of hope. Marcel conceives life as a journey, thus aiming "to connect the existence of a stable earthly order with the consciousness of our being travelers."<sup>5</sup> In this regard, hope constitutes the journeying aspect of human existence. As Marcel observes, there exists "the closest of connections between the soul and hope,"<sup>6</sup> so that "hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism."<sup>7</sup> This is the kind of hope that constitutes the dynamic of human transcendence; it makes sense only in the state of being on a journey. In other words, hope is part of the steadfast orientation toward the realization of one's nature or of one's potentiality for being, in a way that affects every level of human life.

Marcel begins his analysis of hope by attending to concrete experience typical of all human activity. In this, the mere observation expressed as "I hope" is of a very low order, similar to the casual phrase, "I believe." At this end of the scale, hope exists in what Marcel describes as a "diluted condition," but from there he moves to reflection on the same experience "at its point of complete saturation,"<sup>8</sup> when "I hope" is expressed in all its strength. As Marcel explains:

The "I hope" in all its strength is directed towards salvation. It really is a matter of my coming out of a darkness in which I am at present plunged, and which may be the darkness of illness, of separation, exile or slavery. It is obviously impossible in such cases to separate the "I hope" from a certain type of situation of which it is really a part. Hope is situated within the framework of the trial, not only corresponding to it, but also constituting our being's veritable response.<sup>9</sup>

In this analysis of the human experience of hope, Marcel identifies two prominent aspects of hope: firstly, that "there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists" and, secondly, that there is an enormous difference

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<sup>4</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*.

<sup>5</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 30.

between “to hope” and “to hope that.”<sup>10</sup> We may ask then, in regard to the opposite of hope, despair, what people mean when they speak of despair and despairing? How is that experience related to or contrasted with the experience of hope? Here Marcel makes a radical point: it is from “a reflection on despair and perhaps only from there that we can rise to a positive conception of hope.”<sup>11</sup> Here Marcel contrasts hope to the complacency of optimism, which, he argues, refuses to give a place to the possibility of despair. In contrast his “hope is the act by which this temptation [to despair] is actively or victoriously overcome.”<sup>12</sup> Hope is thus an active struggle against despair.

For Marcel, hope consists of a kind of interior activity, which constitutes “our being’s veritable response”<sup>13</sup> to trial situations, such as illness, separation, exile or of slavery, in which the human being is faced with a choice between withdrawal and communion, between being closed or open to others.<sup>14</sup> Marcel has in mind those people who in despair establish a form of self-imprisonment and live in a state of estrangement, on the level of the solitary ego.<sup>15</sup> In that state of isolation from others, the future possibilities and creativity of love and communion are completely cut off. To this degree, despair is deadly, for it leads to termination and disintegration. While hope keeps alive the venturing and creative spirit of the human person, despair is bound up with “a practical nihilism”<sup>16</sup> that amounts to a denial of being and value.

Marcel observes that, in a culture marked with a sense of futility, loneliness and despair, it is difficult to find a language by which to express the experience and meaning of hope. In his account of hope, Marcel includes dimensions of humility, modesty and patience, along with trust in reality and love.<sup>17</sup> He proposes that in hope there is something that goes further than mere acceptance. It involves a non-

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<sup>10</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 30, 32, 36, 41, 45.

<sup>11</sup> See Joan Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” *The Sources of Hope*, ed. Ross Fitzgerald (Rushcutters Bay, N.S.W.: Pergamon Press, 1979). Accordingly, “it is not despair *per se* that lies at the centre of our condition; rather it is the temptation to despair.” 44.

<sup>12</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> See Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 47; and also Sam Keen, *Gabriel Marcel* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1966), 41.

<sup>15</sup> Quotation taken from Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 47.

<sup>16</sup> See Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope.” “Practical nihilism easily becomes cynical. It is the spirit of ‘nothing but’: love is nothing but an instinctual drive, hope is nothing but an illusion, my personal reality is nothing but a complexus of physics and chemistry, my life is nothing but a game of chance – with death at the end or the last play of the dice.” 49.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 74.

acceptance, but with a positive attitude, hence it is distinguishable from revolt.<sup>18</sup> This non-acceptance implies a certain surrender, while not capitulating to the evils it confronts. If despair leads to disintegration, hope shows itself by keeping “a firm hold on oneself, that is to say to safeguard one’s integrity.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time, hope includes humility as a rejection of fatalism, an active non-capitulation.<sup>20</sup> As such, as Marcel puts it,

by accepting an inevitable destiny which I refuse with all my strength to anticipate, I will find a way of inward consolidation, of proving my reality to myself, and at the same time I shall rise infinitely above this *fatum* to which I have never allowed myself to shut my eyes.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the ambiguity of human experience, hope adapts to the rhythm of the trial situation and inevitably chooses to remain in total openness to an absolute; this is the existential attitude of hope. In this perspective, hope expresses itself in humility or patience in regard to the circumstances in which life has placed us. Hope motivates one to take one’s time, in a spirit of tranquility, thus allowing this creative process of hope to work.<sup>22</sup> In summary, only where there is the possibility of despair does hope reveal its true nature, as the human person, in freedom, transcends the particular context of tragedy or disappointment in which he or she exists.

Marcel insists that hope must be real and cannot be reduced to “a mere platonic wish” or desire.<sup>23</sup> It is, indeed, a kind of activity, or at least it includes participation in the event. If there is no creative involvement or direct part to play in the struggle, the hope that includes patience can easily dissipate.<sup>24</sup> Because it refuses to calculate the limits of the possible, or to resign completely in the face of an inescapable fate, hope is not a passive and listless waiting.<sup>25</sup> Rather, it frees the person to act or to participate freely

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<sup>18</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 52.

and actively in the action, so as to prepare the way for a future by its very expectation of it.<sup>26</sup>

This feature of hope is then closely connected with another aspect of the innermost nature of genuine hope. Marcel refers here to the prophetic character of hope, whereby “one cannot say that hope sees what is going to happen; but it affirms as *if* it saw.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, while hope does not foresee or imagine its end, it nevertheless has a conviction that reality is laden with potential for something more and unpredictable.<sup>28</sup> Marcel describes it:

To hope is to put one’s trust in reality, to assert that it contains the means of triumphing over this danger; and here it can be seen that the correlative of hope is not fear, far from it, but the act of making the worst of things, a sort of pessimistic fatalism which assumes the importance of reality...that it can take account of something even if it is not just *our* good, but rather, as we think, a good in the absolute sense of the word.<sup>29</sup>

This prophetic character of hope becomes even clearer when we consider it, not as something that depends upon us or on “established experience”<sup>30</sup> as a basis for projecting into the future, but rather as a creative response to something that is offered to hope. In other words, what Marcel means by this prophetic character of hope is understood as a kind of refusal to calculate the limits of the possible, for the absolute openness of hope, he argues, is “inseparable from a faith which is likewise absolute, transcending all laying down of conditions.”<sup>31</sup> Hope then appears as unconditional hope and as meaningful only within the context of a response to “the Absolute Thou.”

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<sup>26</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 48, 59. For Marcel, wherever the fundamental relationship uniting the human soul and the mysterious reality which surrounds and at the same time confronts it becomes perverted. This relationship, when grasped in its truth, is participation. Then he illustrates his point with the example of a patriot who refuses to despair of the liberation of his native land, which is provisionally conquered. Here hope consists in the affirmation that in hoping for liberation, the patriot really helps to prepare the way for it. It is in a patient non-capitulation of any form of mechanistic determinism that it is possible for hope to come into being as a certain creative power transcending any tragedy and disappointment.

<sup>27</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, trans. K. Farrer (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976), 74-75.

<sup>30</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. “This is what determines the ontological position of hope – absolute hope, inseparable from a faith, which is likewise absolute, transcending all laying down of conditions, and for this very reason every kind of representation whatever it might be. The only possible source from which this absolute hope springs must once more be stressed.” 46.

As such, to hope is to put one's trust in the order of reality as though reality carries within it the "affirmation of eternity and eternal goods."<sup>32</sup> Hope, therefore, is a creative response which keeps all the possibilities open and indeed, as Marcel acknowledges, rests ultimately with faith.

### 2.2.2 The relation to Christian hope

In the light of what has been explored about the intrinsic connection between hope and the human condition, at this point we can show how the human phenomenon of hope is related to Christian hope. If hope is not finally to be condemned to the realm of the absurd, then hope, which is essential to Marcel's *homo viator*, and Christian hope, which looks to the fulfilment of God's promises, must be brought together. We now turn to consider the major characteristics of hope understood in the light of both human and Christian experience.

The first characteristic of hope, as Marcel describes it, is the longing for salvation.<sup>33</sup> He recognizes that there is no place for salvation except in a real world in which there is the possibility of despair. Hope must be distinguished from the optimism which fails to recognize the ambiguity of the world and does not take its evil and negative features such as suffering, tragedy and disappointment seriously. As we have already mentioned, hope is an active struggle against despair, refusing to give up altogether or to surrender completely in the face of an inescapable fate. In this sense, for Marcel, the heart of hope is formed in the heart of darkness. We note that both are found in the Paschal Mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Marcel also affirms that hope is actually inconceivable, except as an immediate appeal beyond itself to a transcendent reality. Genuine hope, he argues, transcends any determinate object, any particular image or representation, and the hope that a certain state of affairs will prevail.<sup>34</sup> The significance of this insight is more clearly seen when we come to the question of how *hope* is related to *hopes* in this world. Marcel's

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<sup>32</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 75, 79.

<sup>33</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 75. See also Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Keen, *Gabriel Marcel*, 42.

point here is the distinction between an absolute “I hope” and an “I hope that.”<sup>35</sup> Since Marcel’s concern is to clarify this unconditional or absolute hope, hope at its saturation, in his phenomenological analysis, he takes the example of a mother who persists in hoping that she will see her son again, although a witness, who found his body and buried it, has certified his death.<sup>36</sup> Marcel’s argument concerns the difference between hope (the pure hope which sustains the mother’s ongoing journey) and the specific object of hope (that she “hopes that” she will see her son again). At this extreme point, how is it possible to speak of pure hope that is able to transcend the experience of tragedy that her son is dead?

Objectively, the return of the son to the mother in this case must be considered as impossible. What Marcel is, however, most concerned about is to examine the real “intention” of hope in the mother’s situation. What, then, is the mother’s hoped-for salvation? In believing that her son will come back, what she is hoping, so argues Marcel, is not “in the language of prevision or making a judgment based on probabilities.”<sup>37</sup> Rather, in affirming that the loss of her son is not absolute, in the sense that nothing, not even the power of death, can finally destroy the being of her beloved, the mother hopes unconditionally and transcends her desire to see her son; she no longer remains centred upon the subject herself.<sup>38</sup> All of this, taken together, affirms the “indestructibility” of the love of the mother for her son.<sup>39</sup> This is what Marcel means when he says, “to hope is not essentially *to hope that*...whereas to desire is always to *desire something*.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, to hope is not to desire, since pure hope is an absolute openness to a transformation of the hoped-for and, as such, it transcends all particular forms of hope.

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<sup>35</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being - Vol. 2, Faith and Reality*, trans. Rene Hague (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 181.

<sup>36</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. Marcel draws our attention to the indissoluble connection that binds together hope and love. The mother’s absolute hope is “for a communion of which [she] proclaims the indestructibility.” 66. Here she addresses herself to what is eternal, namely to the indestructibility of the living bond of love that links her with the son. See also Marcel, *The Mystery of Being - Vol. 2, Faith and Reality*. Marcel is convinced that to love a person is to affirm, “Thou at least, thou shalt not die.” 61.

<sup>39</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being - Vol. 2, Faith and Reality*, 181.

Conversely, the ability of this absolute hope to remain freely open is not dependent on purely logical thought, nor is it based upon any claim to be able to imagine the nature of the hoped-for salvation.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen in the example of the mother who hopes for the return of her dead son, the absolute sense of “I hope,” which Marcel distinguishes from “I hope that,” is directed not toward anything that a person could *have*, but rather has something to do with what a person *is*, with the fullness of his or her being.<sup>42</sup> From the Christian perspective, all of these different experiences of hope in one way or another are an expression of what Karl Rahner calls the experience of self-transcendence,<sup>43</sup> or what Bernard Lonergan calls our native orientation to the divine.<sup>44</sup>

At this point of maximum saturation hope reveals its transcendental orientation. To hope is to long for the absolute future, whether consciously understood or not. In this sense, the transformed objects of hope are no longer defined as specific in the sphere of the calculable and possessible, but remain radically open in the historical and spiritual movement towards the infinite reality. To this extent, hope is all-inclusive and unconditional in orientation, enabling the human person to cope with the disappointment and frustration of ordinary or everyday hopes. This is what Rahner means by the Christian character of hope, understood as transcendental hope, and what Marcel describes as absolute hope. To hope, in the Christian perspective, is to trust in the final and ultimate triumph of the love of God.

### 2.2.3 Eucharistic perspective

From an explicitly Eucharistic perspective, we can appreciate what Marcel considers as one of the most fundamental aspects of hope, namely its distinctly inter-subjective character. Hope, as he understands it, is always in some way related to a “*thou*,”<sup>45</sup> that

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<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 54. See also Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 53-66.

<sup>43</sup> Karl Rahner, “The Question of the Future,” trans. David Bourke, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 12 (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1974), 181-201.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Westminster Press/ Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), 102-103.

<sup>45</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. By the appeal to the absolute transcendence, Marcel asks whether it is possible to conceive of a real personal survival independently of this transcendence. He writes: “I think that my reply would be as follows: there is no human love worthy of the name which does not represent for him who exercises it both a pledge and a seed of

is, to a real communion established among persons. This implies, on the one hand, that the movement of hope generates openness to others in terms of mutual interaction; yet, on the other hand, communion itself generates a hope that keeps the human spirit in a kind of active readiness to trust, and to take risk, and to make a decision to overcome despair with dreams of hope. If relationality, as opposed to the isolated consciousness of despair, is the primary category of hope, then the ontological enquiry into hope can be developed only by taking inter-subjectivity as the starting point.<sup>46</sup> Here, as a corrective to a metaphysic of *I think*, Marcel offers a metaphysic of *we are*.<sup>47</sup> He summarizes the authentic expression of the act of hope in the formula: “I hope in thee for us.”<sup>48</sup> Marcel’s words persuade us that hope by its very nature involves a new reality, a new consciousness of communion.

For Marcel, this possibility of communion experienced in human relationship is true of hope in all its purity, for there is no true being without communion. So too, without communion there is no hope; it is the absence of communion that brings about despair. Hope, Marcel says, is primarily centred “on the level of us, or we might say *agape*...it does not exist on the level of solitary ego.”<sup>49</sup> Notice that, within this interpersonal structure of the experience of hope, Marcel speaks in terms of a *disponibilité*, a state of availability or “being ready to.”<sup>50</sup> He describes the intimate connection between this availability and hope as a creative response or a commitment to a meaningful and fulfilled life.<sup>51</sup> Such availability lies at the heart of hope, and is,

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immortality: but, on the other hand, it is really not possible to exercise this love without discovering that it cannot constitute a closed system, that it passes beyond itself in every direction, that it really demands for its complete realization a universal communion outside which it cannot be satisfied and is destined to be corrupted and lost in the end.” 152.

<sup>46</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. The examples of hope, such as the mother hoping for the return of her son, the man for the recovery from his incurable illness, the patriot for liberation of his country, all of these enforce a realization that there is one remedy. It is, in Marcel’s view, “the remedy of communion, the remedy of hope.” 60.

<sup>47</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being - Vol. 2, Faith and Reality*, 1, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Otto Friedrich Bollnow, “Marcel’s Concept of Availability,” *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1984), 179.

<sup>51</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 78. See also Thomas J. M. van Ewijk, *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*, trans. M.J. van Velzen (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965). “The less someone is available, and the less room he has for hope.” 57. Thus availability is the presupposition of hope. It is realized not only in the act of love but also in the act of hope. In terms of love then, the experience of hope allows other individuals to become more fully alive and more passionately involved in a certain possibility of inventing or creating.



as Marcel understands it, a presence in the sense of “the absolute gift of one’s-self.”<sup>52</sup> While the despairing person is unavailable, isolated and incapable of self-giving or responding to the demands of life, the hoping person is available, open to others and to whatever he or she encounters, and thus free to recognize, in the unexpected, new possibilities leading to new directions. In this way, availability and hope are closely related.

This availability of hope has, moreover, the double significance of the formula: “I hope in you for us.” It is not only founded on the intimacy of communion or openness to the other persons, but also reveals an unconditional or transcendental element at the heart of human existence.<sup>53</sup> Since there is no limit to hope, Marcel argues that hope begins in finite communion and is consummated in total openness, an openness that turns the human spirit to a source beyond the visible world.<sup>54</sup> Marcel seems to suggest a kind of cosmic openness to reality as a whole, which is beyond our power of imagination.<sup>55</sup> As such, to hope is not just to thrust oneself forward, but also to feel at home absolutely in the *Thou* who is the transcendent source and guarantee of absolute hope.<sup>56</sup> Then hope appears, as Marcel emphasizes, as “a mystery and not a problem.”<sup>57</sup> Instead of being integrated into a rational system of preconceived ideas and calculations, hope serves as an existential wellspring. As Marcel explains:

We might say that hope is essentially the availability of a soul which has entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge, the transcendent act – the act of establishing

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<sup>52</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 69. See also Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. “There is nothing which is more important to keep in view – that the knowledge of an individual being cannot be separated from the act of love or charity by which this being is accepted in all which makes him a unique creature or, if you like, the image of God.” 24.

<sup>53</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. Marcel explains: “In thee – for us: between this ‘thou’ and this ‘us’ which only the most persistent reflection can finally discover in the act of hope, what is the vital link? Must we not reply that ‘Thou’ is in some way the guarantee of the union which holds us together, myself to myself, or the one to the other, or these beings to those other beings? More than a guarantee which secures or confirms from outside a union which already exists, it is the very cement which binds the whole into one. If this is the case, to despair of myself, or to despair of us, is essentially to despair of the Thou.” 60-61.

<sup>54</sup> Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 65.

<sup>56</sup> Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 66.

<sup>57</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 35. This learning to regard hope not as a problem but as a mystery is the substance of Marcel’s thought. The hope on which he reflects is not the hope that we cannot help hoping, nor is it the hope for what we consider as a rational, calculable or verifiable possibility. It is, indeed, a hope essentially grounded on fidelity to other persons in every experience of loving relationship and renewal in human life, and ultimately fidelity to the Eternal Thou.

the vital regeneration of which this experience affords both the pledge and the first-fruits.<sup>58</sup>

Here Marcel creates a significant meeting ground for a concrete, existential philosophy of hope with the meaning of the Eucharistic hope in terms of communion. His examination of how hope connects with inter-subjectivity, with love, and ultimately with faith,<sup>59</sup> points to the possibility of a constructive interconnection between the common experience of human hope and the eschatological hope of the biblical tradition. So conceived, in a common vision of the Eucharist as the sustaining foundation of one's loving relationship with other persons and with God, the link between Christian hope and human hope is thus more clearly regarded.

By implying that hope, faith and love are intimately connected, Marcel's philosophical insight also assists in the contemporary theological effort to formulate a theology of hope, by offering a valuable clue to how such a theology might be constructed. For example, this phenomenology of hope both challenges and supports an eschatological view of the Church as the pilgrim people moving into the future. In particular, it contributes to the revitalization of the Eucharist as eschatological sacrament, an anticipation and foretaste of our eternal communion with the whole creation and ultimately with God. For Marcel, since hope seeks its fulfilment in love, hope also points beyond itself in faith to an Absolute Thou, who is the foundation of this communion of love. Likewise, in the Christian perspective, it is hope, together with faith and love traditionally understood as the three theological virtues, the "three things that last" (1 Cor 13:13), that describe Christian existence as an eschatological community, for only on the basis of hope can life unfold in accordance with our Christian and human condition of being on the way.

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<sup>58</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 10,67.

<sup>59</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 29. See also Keen, *Gabriel Marcel*, 42; Ewijk, *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*, 53.

### 2.2.4 Eschatological perspective

While eschatology is concerned with future hope, it is not simply to be confused with future predictions, for the primary meaning of eschatology is not a factual description of the future fulfilment, but the narrative of absolute hope that is incalculable. So too, the question of hope becomes a truly *eschatological* question when the radical openness of hope is related to the fulfilment of our human existence as such, not simply hope for success in various projects, specific plans or human demands. In other words, if eschatology is characterized by a tension between the present and the future, between the already and the not yet, between the known and unknown, between this worldly realities and otherworldly realities, then hope in the future must be immanent and transcendent, prophetic and apocalyptic. It is in the context of this eschatological outlook that we can situate Marcel's philosophy of hope.

An understanding of the difference between the hoping person and the despairing one is further clarified when the consciousness of time is taken into consideration.<sup>60</sup> Marcel relates openness to the concept of hope and isolation to that of despair. He speaks in his analysis of despair in terms of a life frozen in an inner determinism, in which fulfilment in the future no longer appears to be possible. Thus despair entraps the individual within time, as though the future, drained of its substance and its mystery, is no longer anything but the place of pure repetition.<sup>61</sup> In this way, since the future horizon dissolves into the finality of the present and its bondage to the past, hope is disappointed and lost. In such a world, time only passes without bearing within it the possibility of something new; it is a counter-eternity, an eternity turned back on itself, frozen in the hopeless present.<sup>62</sup> While the despairing person anticipates nothing and is rendered ineffective by present disappointment, hope, in contrast, says Marcel, "appears as piercing through time."<sup>63</sup> In this perspective, hope can only exist in "open time," that is, in time open as the anticipation of the fulfilment of a possible

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<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 42, 60.

<sup>62</sup> See Nowotny, "Despair and the Object of Hope." Marcel explains: "Despair seems to me above all the experience of closing or, if you like, the experience of *time plugged up*. The man who despairs is the one whose situation appears to be without exit...as if the dispairee kept hitting against a wall, the wall being faceless certainly, and yet hostile, and the result of this shock or impact is that his very being starts to disintegrate or, if you like, to give up." 46-47.

<sup>63</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 53.

future that is not predetermined. The openness of hope, therefore, indicates that it is the nature of hope to be eschatological.

It is in its interconnection with time, moreover, that hope might be called “a memory of the future.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, since hope refuses to rest all on the established security of the past, on an inventory approach to reality, we might say that hope is only possible as a kind of memory of the future, when we trust that our concrete existential experience holds within it the promise of what we hope for. While despair isolates us in the sense of “closed time,” hope always presupposes an absolute or totally open future, that is, an unconditional readiness to make the appropriate response to a reality which exceeds all expectations and calculations. Marcel, indeed, understands this response of hope in the life and activity of the human person as symbolized and supported by all experiences of his or her inner renewal. It can be seen in terms of reunion, recollection, reconciliation, or a promise of restoration.<sup>65</sup>

This is also Marcel’s meaning when he speaks of hope as a certain creative power at work in one’s life,<sup>66</sup> a power which reconciles us with life and the world, considering that nothing is finished but the future lies open.<sup>67</sup> He asserts that only the expectation of pure newness, unforeseeable and yet awaited, can take the hoping person beyond the already existing world.<sup>68</sup> What is involved here, as opposed to the calculation of probabilities discussed previously, is the inner logic of hope, that is, an orientation towards a “beyond” which hope regards as real.<sup>69</sup> As such, as Marcel puts it, hope “has no bearing on what *should be* or even on what *must be*; it [hope] just says, *this will be*.”<sup>70</sup> In this eschatological perspective, hope’s intelligibility, so argues Marcel, is “our most direct means of apprehending the meaning of the word ‘transcendence,’

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<sup>64</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 53.

<sup>65</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 63, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 52.

<sup>67</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 79.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. “This aspiration can be approximately expressed in the simple but contradictory words: *as before, but differently and better than before*. Here we undoubtedly come once again upon the theme of liberation, for its is never a simple return to the *status quo*, a simple return to our being, it is that and much more, and even the contrary of that: an undreamed-of promotion, a transfiguration.” 67.

<sup>69</sup> See Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope,” 62.

<sup>70</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, 79.

for hope is a spring, it is the leaping of a gulf.”<sup>71</sup> Hope is a way of transcending time; it is a trusting openness to whatever the future may have in store in the way of unverifiable experiences.

In conclusion, Marcel’s notion of hope suggests an understanding of the human spirit as oriented to life beyond the present moment. Human beings are not constrained within a limited structure; they live by a dynamic movement reaching toward a goal that is as yet not fully visible. Nothing is finished when the future still lies open.<sup>72</sup> We turn now to this question of the future, by discussing the principle of hope and the goal of humanity’s striving to realize its hope for a better life, as expressed in the utopian philosophy of Ernst Bloch.

### 2.3 Ernst Bloch: A hopeful ontology of the future

Ernst Bloch, perhaps more than any other recent thinker, has placed the phenomenon of hope in the very center of philosophy. In his monumental work, *The Principle of Hope*,<sup>73</sup> Bloch shows that hope is a universal characteristic of humanity and that it reveals the most profound nature of human existence. He begins with the basic metaphysical questions: “Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?”<sup>74</sup> Then he goes further: “What are we waiting for?” and “What awaits us?” Here Bloch addresses the question of what is to come.<sup>75</sup> In this perspective, the human person is precisely one who dreams about the future, who hopes for it, and who strives

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<sup>71</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*. “Hope, in this sense, is not only a protestation inspired by love, but a sort of call, too, a desperate appeal to an ally who is Himself also Love. The supernatural element which is the foundation of Hope is as clear here as its transcendent nature, for nature, un-illuminated by hope, can only appear to us the scene of a sort of immense and inexorable book-keeping.” 79.

<sup>72</sup> Nowotny, “Despair and the Object of Hope.” In this way, such a phenomenology of hope reveals a basic assurance at the heart of human existence, and thus asserting that reality indeed contains a mysterious principle and goes beyond the categories of data, inventories and calculations. 66. See also Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. “Perhaps the human condition is characterized not only by the risks which go with it and which after all are bound up with life itself, even in its humblest forms, but also, far more deeply, by the necessity to accept these risks and to refuse to believe that it would be possible – and, if we come to a final analysis, even an advantage – to succeed in removing them.” 54-55.

<sup>73</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice & Paul Knight, Stephen Plaice, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>74</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3.

to attain it.<sup>76</sup> The nature of human existence is a tendency toward the future, a “venturing beyond,”<sup>77</sup> toward that future which does not yet exist. For Bloch, hope permeates everyday consciousness. The new would never come into existence in history unless it exists first in the imagination of human beings, animating them by their dreams of a better life.<sup>78</sup>

According to Bloch hope is, in most general terms, concerned with the subjective and objective poles of hope, of the not-yet, of the future.<sup>79</sup> Breaking with a philosophy of despair and post-modern nihilism, he focuses on the human drive and hunger for a better future. This drive embodies an energy designed to ensure both humanity’s existence and the realization of its possibilities. The following analysis will first consider Bloch’s anthropological structure of hope in terms of the three levels of the “Not-Yet-Conscious.”<sup>80</sup> Secondly, this principle of hope will be discussed as a new eschatology of religion. Finally, the connection between hope and Eucharist will be elaborated.

### 2.3.1 The anthropological structure of hope

Bloch discloses, on the one hand, the intentionality of subjective consciousness as it continuously reaches out for an adequate object. Since the object intended by the subject is not yet given, it does not exist in the present or in the past, but rather in the possible future. This subject-object relation, as Bloch regards it, is a dynamic relation that tends ultimately towards its final goal. Prior to the distinction between subject and object, however, is the basic human drive which Bloch terms “hunger.”<sup>81</sup> It lives from what is “Not-Yet” and manifests itself in searching, a desire for something, through a goal-directed driving.<sup>82</sup> Hunger then gives rise to dreams, to daydreams, a wish, a

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<sup>76</sup> Harvey Cox, “Ernst Bloch and the Pull of the Future,” *New Theology No. 5: The Best Way into Bloch, Moltmann, Pannenberg and the New Talk of the Future, Hope and Eschatology*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 193.

<sup>77</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Ernst Bloch, Utopia, and Ideology Critique,” *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (London, New York: Verso, 1997), 81.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas H. West, *Ultimate Hope without God: The Atheistic Eschatology of Ernst Bloch* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 98.

<sup>80</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 45.

<sup>82</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 45.

plan, and a longing for something better, for the new.<sup>83</sup> Here, by defining human nature in terms of the one fundamental drive, hunger, and one fundamental attitude, hope, Bloch explains that human beings are both open to the future and directed toward it by something within themselves.<sup>84</sup> He delineates his process in terms of three levels of human consciousness.

Firstly, just as human beings can actively generate images of what they hunger and hope for, Bloch, in agreement with Freud, sees that “every dream is a wish-fulfilment.”<sup>85</sup> But against Freud, he affirms the superiority of daydreams over night dreams as the vehicle for wishes. Bloch is fascinated by fantasy and regards it as a vital key to how human beings align imagination with their needs.<sup>86</sup> While Freud is concerned with events from the past that are repressed and which re-emerge in the night-dream, Bloch is more concerned with possible future events, which are expressed in the daydream. The daydream, Bloch says, remains within human imaginative powers as “the ego starts a journey into the blue, but ends it whenever it wants.”<sup>87</sup> In other words, since the ego of the daydream remains active in the context of its life and its waking world, the daydream is subject to the conscious control of the will.

Precisely in the daydream, Bloch observes, the “Not-Yet-Conscious” reveals itself as “the mode of consciousness” of what is to come, “the psychological birthplace of the New.”<sup>88</sup> In this perspective, dreams for a better future become more authentic when they begin to call the *status quo* into question. This “not-yet consciousness” in the

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<sup>83</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*. Bloch takes inventory of the images generated by consciousness on this level. In the Introduction, he describes what he intends to explore: “Instead of the unregulated little wishful images of the report...common to all of them is a drive towards the colourful, representing what is supposedly or genuinely better. The appeal of dressing-up, illuminated display belong here, but then the world of fairytale, brightened distance in travel, the dance, the dream-factory of film, the example of theatre. Such things either present a better life, as in the entertainment industry, or sketch out in real terms a life shown to be essential. However, if this sketching out turns into a free and considered blueprint, then we find ourselves for the first time among the actual, that is, planned or outlined utopias.” 13.

<sup>84</sup> West, *Ultimate Hope without God: The Atheistic Eschatology of Ernst Bloch*, 105-7.

<sup>85</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 86.

<sup>86</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*. He offers a critique of the Freudian theory: “The daydream is not a stepping-stone to the night-dream and is not disposed of by the latter. Not even with respect to its clinical content, let alone its artistic, pre-appearing...anticipatory content. For night-dreams mostly cannibalise the former life of the drives, they feed on past if not archaic image-material, and nothing new happens under their bare moon.” 87.

<sup>87</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 88.

<sup>88</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 116.

daydream recognizes that all reality is pregnant with possibilities. In this way, human desire, as expressed in daydreams, leads to hope for the new and possible future.

Secondly, Bloch insists that consciousness is refined and rationalized to carry out a “utopian function.”<sup>89</sup> Instead of indulging in wishful thinking dealing only within the empty-possible, the utopian imagination is in touch with what is actually real, with the “real forward tendency,”<sup>90</sup> the objectively real possibility present in its time. In other words, while fantasizing results in a vision of the future, which is abstract, theoretical and remote from reality, the utopian consciousness is fully attuned to the concrete and its actual possibilities. Hence imaginative ideas or wishful images are composed not merely of existing material. They extend the present reality, by way of anticipation, “into the future possibilities of its being different and better.”<sup>91</sup> As Bloch explains: “Not-Yet Conscious itself must become *conscious* in its act *known* in its content.”<sup>92</sup> Only by means of this consciously known does hope properly perform its utopian function.

The ontological category on this second level of consciousness is thus described as the “mediate Novum.”<sup>93</sup> Since the present world is not statically determined, the real is in process. Indeed, what is real is practically and actually being transformed into the “Possible,” as a concrete aspect of utopia.<sup>94</sup> Hence Bloch conceives utopia as a synthesis, which discloses how the subjective is translated into objective, how the dream exhibits a concrete relation to the future, and how hope is the source of the history which human beings create. Here the ontology of hope is but the ontology of objective possibility. Hope is learnt; it is a *docta spes*,<sup>95</sup> a growing awareness of the dimensions of the possible.<sup>96</sup> Wishful thinking is thus transformed into “wish-full and effective acting.”<sup>97</sup> In this way, hope forms an alliance between theory and practice, to

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<sup>89</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 142.

<sup>90</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 145.

<sup>91</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 144.

<sup>92</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 144.

<sup>93</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 197.

<sup>94</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 197.

<sup>95</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*. “Philosophy will have conscience of tomorrow, commitment to the future, knowledge of hope, or it will have no knowledge.” 7.

<sup>96</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 7, 9, 233.

<sup>97</sup> Ruth Levitas, “Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia,” *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (London, New York: Verso, 1997).73. See also Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 73. There are the philosophical dreams of a society



become a world-forming energy, which emanates from the primary hunger for what is not yet. Utopia is the horizon in which every reality is grasped in its possibilities.

Thirdly, in Bloch's view, both what is "already" present and what is "not yet" belong to human activity in the historical world process. The future is the mode of time which provides the space for the realisation of the possibilities of history. It is in this context that Bloch conceives of utopia as a kind of reconciliation between subject and object. Since human yearning for a better future appears in a variety of forms, it follows that utopia will be conceived in a variety of ways. Yet only concrete utopias can generate hope and become the entry into a new future. From this perspective, Bloch recognizes that hope relates to something which is still absent. He understands this experience of absence as a hunger for a yet-to-be realized presence. Bloch also speaks of this experience of absence as the "darkness of the lived moment."<sup>98</sup> In such darkness, there is no "what," no content, and no answer, but it is from here that the experience of hope can arise. Such an experience of hope, however obscure, is like existing in a "zone of silence in the very place where the music is being played."<sup>99</sup> Accenting the positive, Bloch remarks that "often the same cause which produces negative astonishment is capable of producing happiness as the *Positivum of astonishment*."<sup>100</sup> He contemplates, for example, "the way a leaf turns in the wind" or "the smile of a child, and a girl's glance, the beauty of a melody rising up from nothingness."<sup>101</sup> He also speaks of a "final leap"<sup>102</sup> that results, not in a heavenly otherworld, but in a "new heaven and new earth." Although Bloch's philosophical work is inspired by the Marxist understanding of reality as an open system, his position relates, at least to some degree, to the experience of the Christian mystic, and to the desires and images

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that promotes freedom from hunger and distress, from oppression and alienation. In Bloch's view, dialectical-materialistically comprehended hope, or educated hope illuminates the concept of a principle in the world. 73.

<sup>98</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*. "Not the most distant therefore, but the nearest is still completely dark, and precisely because it is the nearest and most immanent; the knot of the riddle of existence is to be found in this nearest. The life of the Now, the most genuinely intensive life, is not yet brought before itself, brought to itself as seen, as opened up; thus it is least of all being-here, let alone being-evident. The Now of the existence, which drives everything and in which everything drives, is the most inexperienced thing that there is; it still drives continually under the world. It constitutes the realizing aspect, which has least realized itself – an active moment-darkness of itself." 292.

<sup>99</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 295.

<sup>100</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 302.

<sup>101</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 302, 1179.

<sup>102</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1198.

characteristic of messianic expectations of both Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic literature.

In this field of associations, Bloch describes utopia, using the words of Thomas Munster, the revolutionary theologian of the Reformation, as “the Kingdom of the children of God.”<sup>103</sup> However, following the projective thinking of Feuerbach, he claims that God is merely the utopian hypothesis of the unknown future of humanity. Bloch denies the existence of any transcendent, objective personal reality in the religious sense. For him, ultimate hope is the immanent “Kingdom of the cleared incognito of the depth of humanity and of the world: to here and nowhere else the entire history of religion has journeyed.”<sup>104</sup> Since utopian hope always struggles for the realization of the best possible, in Bloch’s view, the world of human beings will transcend itself into a state of ultimate and perfect utopia. We shall now examine the manner in which Bloch’s principle of hope is related to a new eschatology of religion.

### **2.3.2 A new eschatology of religion**

Bloch is not hostile toward religion; he asserts that religion can still enlighten hope and give it its direction. From his atheistic Marxist viewpoint, however, Bloch replaces the “other-worldly” divine Being of the Jewish and Christian faith with the reality of a humanity that can make its own history.<sup>105</sup> In this perspective, Bloch’s principle of hope seeks to offer a “new eschatology of religion” or a “new anthropology of religion.”<sup>106</sup> In other words, his vision is one of a meta-religious knowledge-consciousness expressive of “the act of transcending without heavenly transcendence,”<sup>107</sup> thus conceiving, not God, but humanity as the creator of the revealed utopia. Bloch’s “Kingdom of the children of God” is the Kingdom of ultimate freedom in which the exploitation of human beings by one another will disappear and be overcome by hope-filled praxis.

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<sup>103</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1202.

<sup>104</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1298.

<sup>105</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1201.

<sup>106</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1202.

<sup>107</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1288.

Despite drawing inspiration from the texts of the Old and New Testaments and their associated apocalyptic literature, Bloch's philosophy, in line with elements of Marxism, reduces the eschatological reality of God to human freedom. Humanist utopian hope is in the end a correlative of human creative reason; religion can be *true* insofar as it exalts human dignity and the power of human freedom. For Bloch, the content of religious hope is subordinated to the "highest good."<sup>108</sup> In other words, this highest ideal can be actively striven for and ultimately achieved by the capacities and potentialities of humanity and in the depth of world.<sup>109</sup> Bloch concludes:

True genesis is not at the beginning but at the end, and it starts to begin only when society and existence become radical, i.e. grasp their roots. But the root of history is the working, creating human being who reshapes and overhauls the given facts. Once he has grasped himself and established what is his, without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy, there arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland.<sup>110</sup>

In this sense, the material world has no intrinsic meaning apart from human activity; it holds within itself the anticipation of a possible future.<sup>111</sup> Equally, human existence has no ready-made determined significance, apart from humanity's creative transformation of nature. Hope, then, is an expression of the incompleteness of human nature, inspiring a continuing state of process and of becoming better. If the future is "not yet" and is a realm of possibility,<sup>112</sup> then humanizing the world is a practical goal, essentially determined by the future. In Bloch's view, whether the most hoped-for object of hope is called the highest good, the Kingdom of heaven, the golden age, the promised land or being conformed to the Risen Christ, these symbols and images illuminate hope on the way to its ultimate goal, the "regnum hominis."<sup>113</sup> Humanity, as Bloch understands it, is marked with a genetic striving, a fundamental attitude of transcending the limits of present experience. Not God, but humanity, has the power to bring the whole process to its successful end.

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<sup>108</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1323-1324.

<sup>109</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1316-1317.

<sup>110</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1375-1376.

<sup>111</sup> Ze'ev Levy, "Utopia and Reality in the Philosophy of Ernst Bloch," *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (London, New York: Verso, 1997), 177.

<sup>112</sup> Levitas, "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia," 66.

<sup>113</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1323, 1324. It is in this process and in its interchanges with the world that humanity knows itself and makes itself. Hope is a human project. Ultimately, the only test of hope is the human action, that is, in praxis and in history.

### 2.3.3 Revealed utopia and Eucharistic hope

In one sense, Bloch seems to accept the major characteristics of Christian hope in its biblical expressions, but his is a hope without faith in the transcendent personal God. In the words of Jürgen Moltmann, this hope without faith is a “humanism without God.”<sup>114</sup> This is not, however, the place to enter into a debate on whether or not Bloch’s ultimate hope without God can truly satisfy the human thirst for the infinite.<sup>115</sup> Whatever the case, human beings are still faced with the ultimate discrepancy between being and nothingness. Moltmann points the way to a constructive dialogue when he states: “Without faith’s knowledge of Christ, hope becomes a utopia and remains hanging in the air. But without hope, faith falls to pieces, becomes a fainthearted and ultimately a dead faith.”<sup>116</sup> Clearly, in this perspective, faith and hope are intimately connected.

The humanism of Bloch’s principle of hope, nevertheless, remains as a challenge for Christian theology. In this regard, both the Marxist philosopher and the Christian theologian understand human existence as future-directed. For example, following Bloch’s lead, Wolfhart Pannenberg points out that our understanding of God must derive from a historical understanding of God as “the power of the future.”<sup>117</sup> Karl Rahner also describes Christianity as the religion of the absolute future.<sup>118</sup> In shedding light on the human orientation towards the future, Bloch’s hope-filled humanism provides a rich phenomenological context in which to elaborate on the Eucharist as the most intense eschatological symbol of Christian faith. It is in the Eucharist that the Christian community proclaims and celebrates the presence of the God who leads all creation to its eschatological consummation, the fulfilment to which the world and human freedom is moving.

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<sup>114</sup> Quotation taken from Carl E. Braaten, "Toward a Theology of Hope," *New Theology No. 5: The Best Way into Bloch, Moltmann, Pannenberg and the New Talk of the Future, Hope and Eschatology*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 96.

<sup>115</sup> See Braaten, "Toward a Theology of Hope." "Bloch’s atheism is right to the extent that it is a protest against a divine hypostasis that obstructs the freedom and future of man, and instead guarantees the prevailing forces in nature and society." 99.

<sup>116</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), 20.

<sup>117</sup> See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991), 10, 25.

<sup>118</sup> See Karl Rahner, "Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 59-68.

Bloch further reminds theology that the ultimate fulfilment of hope includes the realm of freedom actualised in world history. For him, “the one thing necessary” is the emergence of human identity through the actualisation of its full possibilities.<sup>119</sup> In this regard, freedom, so argues Bloch, is not only a basic feature of human consciousness but also a basic determination, within objective reality as a whole, to bring about in history the embodiment of dreams of a better life. In other words, freedom is the capacity to develop and to create the conditions for orienting human life toward the future in which the common good can be fully realised. Freedom is thus neither abstract nor empty, but concrete and actual, working with given possibilities.

From the perspective of Christian theology, human freedom finds its nourishment in the Eucharist in which the absolute future is already anticipated. The Eucharistic celebration is the celebration of a new Passover from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. Christ is present, in his life, death and resurrection, offering humanity salvation and the possibility of rising to new level of freedom. Through his Eucharistic presence, the sacrament exhibits an eschatological dynamic, drawing believers into the darkness of his death and the victory of his resurrection. In Christ, the future comes to meet the believer.<sup>120</sup> It is in this memorial of Christ’s Passover, the “rebirth to a living hope” (1 Pet 1:3), that Eucharistic hope emerges with its own possibilities in the light of the God of Exodus and Easter.

It would appear that Bloch’s understanding of hope is more radical than that of Marcel. Although both these philosophers of hope contest the philosophical existentialism of the absurd, as for example expressed in Sartre’s work, there is, however, a fundamental difference. Bloch points out that hope is the force inspiring the historical struggle for a transformed humanity. His thesis is that hope is not the renunciation of a successful outcome, for “it is in love with success rather than failure.”<sup>121</sup> In contrast, Marcel hardly ever speaks of success. For him, the key is

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<sup>119</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 158. It is from human beings that the world can expect its realization and vice versa, the realization of the world process is parallel with the self-realization of human beings.

<sup>120</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God - Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 24.

<sup>121</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3. The unfinished world can be brought to its fulfilment. So, too, is the perfection of humanity calculable and reachable goal.

fidelity, even when success is not apparent.<sup>122</sup> His hope refuses the security of calculable achievement in any form. The hoped-for transforming outcome involves solidarity between persons, and is ultimately a response to the Absolute Thou as the sustaining transcendent reality, in contrast to the historical, immanent utopia that Bloch envisages.

Whilst differing in these important respects, Bloch and Marcel both stand in the anthropological tradition based on a conception of the human existence as hope-full, and a history that remains open-ended and free. Both refuse to let the past and the present define the limits of human existence. For both, hope breaks open the present, leading humanity toward the newness of the future. Although there is an obvious opposition at the phenomenological level between Marcel's transcendently oriented hope, on the one hand, and Bloch's historically immanent possibilities for humanity, on the other, there is a certain complementarity in their different emphases. Both protest against the inhumanity of oppression and despair, and both are indebted, although in different ways, to the prophetic eschatology of the Old and New Testaments.

This section has explored the phenomenon of human hope as described by Marcel and Bloch. Marcel concentrates his thought on the reality of inter-subjective communion, providing an account of absolute hope, which exceeds any form of expectation or calculation. Bloch's analysis of the categories of possibility is based on the ontological priority of the future, regarding the whole of reality as a great progressive movement. Where Marcel's hope is ultimately hope in God, Bloch's hope rests on hope in the potential of history itself and the liberating praxis it inspires. The "ultimate homeland"<sup>123</sup> of humanity is different for each of these philosophers: for Marcel, it is the human community sharing in the transcendent life of God; for Bloch, it is our common humanity attaining its ultimate immanent good.

Christian eschatology, however, is not simply intent on achieving social betterment on the level of human history. In the horizon of distinctly Christian hope, the future is received as God's gift, and depends on God's gracious initiative. Christian hope looks

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<sup>122</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 29.

<sup>123</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1376.

to the absolute future as the gift of a new creation, where “God will be all in all,” while admittedly requiring human cooperation and the exercise of individual and social freedom. We note at this point that the notion of gift is integral to Christian hope. We turn then to consider the phenomenon of the gift, as explored in Robyn Horner’s *Rethinking God As Gift*<sup>124</sup> and David Power’s *Sacrament: the Language of God’s Giving*.<sup>125</sup>

## 2.4 Robyn Horner, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion and David Power:

### The phenomenology of gift

In today’s market economy, the character of a gift is often obscured for a gift often prompts, even demands, a counter-gift in exchange. This situation immediately calls into question the scriptural data regarding the divine gift as utterly gracious, pure, perfect and absolute. As David Power remarks: “We can fail to do justice to the superabundance of divine gift unless we are quite careful in using this analogy.”<sup>126</sup> He continues:

So burdened is gift-giving with impositions on others, and so bound is it to certain expectations from the receiver, that some recent writers have questioned the possibility of true giving and see it as the “impossible” to which we may aspire in aspiring to the good and to openness to the other.<sup>127</sup>

A radical question, then, is implied: is a pure gift possible, given the seemingly inevitable presence of some kind of system of exchange? The point is that *gift* has become a problematic concept,<sup>128</sup> even though it is an essential notion in Christian theology dealing with grace, the sacraments, and ultimate hope.

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<sup>124</sup> Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

<sup>125</sup> David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999).

<sup>126</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 277.

<sup>127</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 277.

<sup>128</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. For a discussion on “an economy of gift” in Christian context and postmodernism, see also Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 277-280.

### 2.4.1 The conditions of possibility and impossibility

Robyn Horner's treatment of God as gift unfolds in both a theological and phenomenological context. There is the question of the nature of the gift and of how it might be understood. Horner explains, "a gift has to be given in a certain spirit if it is to be a gift at all, and that spirit is sheer generosity."<sup>129</sup> She proceeds to consider the conditions for the possibility of the gift but also points out its difficulties. She notes:

The purest of gifts is the one that is given without motive, without reason, without any foundation other than the desire to give. A gift is, in the best sense, something that emerges from a preparedness to expect nothing in return, to be dispossessed unconditionally. The attitude of the giver of the true gift must be to expect nothing in return. And the recipient, in like spirit, must accept in complete surprise and genuine appreciation. For a gift cannot be something earned, something automatically due, any more than it can be something passed on merely out of obligation.<sup>130</sup>

A gift, however, can be experienced more as an imposition of new debt rather than the unconditional offering it is supposed to be.<sup>131</sup> For a gift to be a gift, it must be given in complete freedom. Presupposed, on the one hand, is the freedom of the giver to give and, on the other, the freedom of the recipient to receive. If there is no freedom, there is no gift.

Horner asks whether such a pure gift exists, a gift without a reason or a cause outside itself. Such a gift would not enter into a series of exchanges, because this could make it no longer a pure gift.<sup>132</sup> The first part of the problem concerns the relation between freedom and the economy.<sup>133</sup> Here a gratuitous gift seems to be something impossible, more a process of exchange. As part of an economic circularity, a gift is but "obligation, payback, return, tradition, reason, sweetener, peace offering, or a thousand other things."<sup>134</sup> The second part of the problem concerns the relation between presence and economy.<sup>135</sup> If a gift is brought into the presence of its recipient, it is identified and gazed at by the giver and the recipient, and then it

<sup>129</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 199.

<sup>130</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 1.

<sup>131</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 5.

<sup>134</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 5.

<sup>135</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 6.



becomes a causal object. In other words, since the gift is present and can be identified as such, the gift contradicts itself, and immediately anticipates some form of recompense. As Horner explains, the gift is “no longer gift but commodity, value, measure, or status symbol.”<sup>136</sup> The point is that pure gift simply does not work in the logic of the economy; “it is resistant to calculation, unable to be fully thought, impossible, a black hole.”<sup>137</sup> Here lies the very problem of the gift.

Horner refers to Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of the gift, whereby the gift is structured as “an aporia.”<sup>138</sup> In Derrida’s words, an aporia is “the difficult or the impracticable, here the impossible passage, the refused, denied, or prohibited passage...the event of a coming or of a future advent, which no longer has the form of the movement that consists in passing, traversing, or transiting.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, as Horner points out, an aporia is “a problem that resists being solved because it defies any usual frame of reference.”<sup>140</sup> It is therefore experienced in its impossibility, as a problem that “exceeds our capacity even to hold onto it as a problem.”<sup>141</sup> Yet this problem is resolvable, not by reasoning or by proof, but only in the decision of either giver or recipient, for the gift then cannot decide itself.<sup>142</sup> In this regard, we can never know whether or not we give a gift or whether or not we receive it. What we can do is believe it, or desire it, or act as if there were a way forward. In this sense, the gift, by its very aporetic qualities, is impossible, something whose possibility is sustained by its impossibility.<sup>143</sup> The condition of possibility of the gift is paradoxically its condition of impossibility.

Horner also turns to Jean-Luc Marion’s examination of the phenomenological “horizon of givenness.”<sup>144</sup> While maintaining that the gift is possible, Marion

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<sup>136</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 6.

<sup>137</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>138</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>139</sup> Cited in Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>140</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>141</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>142</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 7. This does not necessarily mean solving the problem, but rather making a decision to resolve it.

<sup>143</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. From this, Horner concludes: “In Derrida’s analysis, the gift cancels itself by being elemental in an economy, a cycle of return. The gift cancels itself because as a present, it is never completely free.” Of course this does not necessarily mean that, as Derrida claims, “there can be no gift but that a gift cannot be known as such...no phenomenon of gift can be known.” 18.

<sup>144</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 124.

presupposes that an elemental lack of reciprocity is demanded.<sup>145</sup> The recipient must not make any return to the giver, since the gift or givenness disappears as soon as it enters into a situation of exchange. Further, the recipient must remain unaware of the gift received. The recipient only profits from a gift given in sheer gratuity, if he or she does not interpret it immediately as gift. The gift is transformed into a burden as soon as it is recognized; in that case it would imply contracting a debt. Moreover, even the donor must also forget the gift, for remembering it would be a cause for self-congratulation in the gift, a self-congratulation that returns to the donor in terms of self-esteem or power.

Finally, if the gift is to be a gift, it cannot appear as gift, because the appearance or visibility of the gift would annul it.<sup>146</sup> The problem here is that the very phenomenality of gift would make the gift-aspect disappear.<sup>147</sup> Marion thus connects the problem of the gift with that of givenness.<sup>148</sup> He identifies the problem in terms of a cycle of exchange. If the character of the gift is to be safeguarded from the dynamics of exchange, Marion suggests, it must in some sense be removed from the present, and located in the sphere of the “undecidability”<sup>149</sup> of its origin. As Horner clarifies, “The donor must not know whether or not he or she gives, and the recipient must not know whether or not it is a gift that he or she receives.”<sup>150</sup> In short, it cannot be present in a routine way if it is to accomplish its work as a gift; it must remain unrecognisable.<sup>151</sup> Horner gives a key summary:

For despite the fact that each and every human gift bears the wounds of its loss, undoes itself in one way or another, human beings continue to give, and continue to believe that the impossible gift is possible. For this reason, in this lack of reasoning, it is possible to trace in the madness of the gift the figure of desire, of expectation, of anticipation, of faith. The pure gift (the gift that meets all its conditions of possibility and impossibility) is always the gift that

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<sup>145</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 123, 124.

<sup>146</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 126 -127.

<sup>147</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. Marion pushes the analysis further and explains: “Derrida’s gift can only be thought outside presence, outside subsistence, and outside truth, and is therefore impossible.” At this point, he is inclined to affirm, “No gift can be that which takes place in an economy, and that as a consequence there must be other conditions of possibility of the gift.” 128.

<sup>148</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 124, 182.

<sup>149</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 181.

<sup>150</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 181.

<sup>151</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 181.

is to come, the gift that is hoped for. The pure gift is of an order that is asymptotic; always *à-venir*, always to come but never coming to closure.<sup>152</sup>

Horner, with reference to Marion and Derrida, thus emphasises the sheer gratuity in gift giving. The gift is always the gift that is to come, the gift that is hoped for, something given without motive, without any foundation other than the desire to give and to believe. From this perspective, Horner notes a further intrinsic aspect of gift giving, namely, “the leap of faith,”<sup>153</sup> by which she means that to receive the gift requires being open to the impossible, surrendering to it, waiting for it. This entails an element of risk in accepting the impossibility of the gift, and making a decision to recognise it as such.<sup>154</sup> If the gift is to be possible, then there needs to be an interruption to the economy of exchange, and thus an interruption to the cycle of the present. In some sense, it must precede the present form of exchange, to exist immemorially, outside the history of calculation. The possible gift, so argues Horner, can only be experienced by “way of a trace”<sup>155</sup> where “trace” refers to the immeasurable excess that pertains to the reality of the original gift.<sup>156</sup> In this regard, the gift does not return to the giver in any economy of exchange, for it is given in sheer gratuity or in unconditional freedom. Such a position clearly invites a further reflection on the *eschatological* character of the gift, as we explore the eschatological character of the Eucharist.

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<sup>152</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 199.

<sup>153</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 158. The whole question of gift is understood to involve some kind of faith, which is “not necessarily religious faith, but a faith in the gift.” 158.

<sup>154</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. As far as the question of gift is concerned, we acknowledge the significant contribution that Horner has made to our investigation of the gift. What we can witness in her discussion about the debate between Marion and Derrida on the question of the gift is a combination of philosophical and theological references. Horner argues that “the question of God and the question of the gift come from the same aporetic space, that it is not only possible to think God as gift, but highly appropriate to do so.” 217.

<sup>155</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, 193.

<sup>156</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. Horner includes another significant perspective of Derrida’s discussion, namely, the linguistic [O]dissemination. This hypothesis of dissemination can be shaped by the possibility that “the gift will go where it will.” In this way, Horner notes that it is “because of the *difference* – the difference and deferral that make absolute identity impossible, that make a complete return impossible.” Dissemination then implies “the effect of scattering in multiple contexts that marks each context with difference, with a difference and a deferral of meaning.” 193.

### 2.4.2 An eschatological view of the gift

David Power, attentive to another range of contemporary reflections on the meaning of gift, draws on the feminist approach of Hélène Cixous.<sup>157</sup> He remarks:

What Derrida and Lévinas see as difficult to come by, Cixous sees as already central to a woman's world. The “impossible” gift, or the “eschatological” gift, or the “womanly” gift, is one that gives the gift of freedom. That is, it opens up possibilities of free action for the recipient, who is impaired neither by the nature of the gift nor by the expectations of the giver, nor by the need to try to be the same as the other, but acts purely out of an appreciation of the gift in itself and out of what it opens up as possible. possible<sup>158</sup>

From this perspective, it becomes apparent that gift and freedom are interconnected. The giving never ceases, emanating as it does from freedom, and addressed to the freedom of the other. The freely gifted recipient is recognised as being other, free to enjoy and live out what has been given.

Power finds a threefold eschatological significance in this approach to the “impossible” gift. Firstly, an essential otherness is implied. Both the giver and the recipient recognize in the gift-giving the otherness of the other; the two are not and cannot be the same. Gifts are spoiled when either the one giving or the one receiving wants to objectify the other person in the exchange.<sup>159</sup> Secondly, there is a relationship between giver and recipient. The gift nourishes participation and mutuality. The response of the gifted to the giver is that of receptivity to the source of giving and of being united with it: it is not a matter of giving back.<sup>160</sup> Thirdly, true giving takes

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<sup>157</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 279.

<sup>158</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 279. See also Emmanuel Lévinas, “The Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 347-350. Lévinas (1906-1995) was an outstanding Jewish Philosopher, born in Kaunas, Lithuania and naturalized French in 1930. He began to study philosophy at Strasbourg University in 1923, where he came into contact with Blondel. In 1928, he went to Freiburg University to pursue studies in phenomenology under Husserl. He also encountered Heidegger, whose *Being and Time* was to have a profound and lasting influence on his thought. He died in Paris, December 25, 1995. See Lévinas's first philosophical works: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979, and *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981.

<sup>159</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 279.

<sup>160</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*. David Power remarks: “When a mother gives birth to a child, she gives it life. When parents care fear a child, they open up the gift of life to it. The ideal reception is for the child to value life as the parents do and to live freely from this gift, not out of a sense of indebtedness to the parents. The child's living leads to life's enhancement and moves it to give

place when the gift cannot be simply returned, but remains to enhance the life of the other, in the expectation that the fullness of the gift will be realized only in the future. In other words, the value of the gift increases, in a measure not known at the time when the giving begins: “it is not consumed in the present passing moment, nor indeed fully possessible in that moment, but is eschatologically oriented.”<sup>161</sup> The pure gift appears more as a dynamic process than a static object, more future-oriented than confined either to past or present.

In the light of these considerations in regard to gift-giving, several questions emerge in relation to our thesis: How is it possible to speak of the Eucharist as the eschatological event of gift? How is the Eucharist the sacrament of Christ’s free self-gift in the life of the Church? Tony Kelly makes an important point:

Christians live from a gift – a disturbing thought in itself. The form and nourishment of such a gift is the self-giving love of Christ. He gave us himself, and with that invites us to share in his imagination. It opens new relationships with those with whom we celebrate the Eucharist, with all members of the Church, and the whole world of God’s love (Jn 3:16), and with the whole of creation. In such an imagination, we are always living beyond ourselves, for our true and final life is Christ himself.<sup>162</sup>

Kelly reminds us that the world of Christian imagination is nourished by a gift that is already efficacious, yet awaiting a future fulfilment. The Eucharist is a gift that is endlessly productive as it looks to “the transformation of fruit of our earth and work of our human hands.”<sup>163</sup> An eschatological fulfilment is implied, compared to which any present realisation of the Eucharistic gift is a “trace” in the sense described above.

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to others out of this gift. There is a flow to true gift, that means it is not consumed but passed on and given increase in this very passage.” 279-280.

<sup>161</sup> Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 281. These are some of the ways, it seems to me, in which Power can speak of the eschatological character of the gift and enrich it with distinct voices in Horner’s approach to the gift. Power observes that it is precisely in this way that there is a flow to true gift in terms of life’s enhancement and increasing in this very passage. A gift which is to be free could not be a present.

<sup>162</sup> Tony Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2001), ix.

<sup>163</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, ix.

## 2.5 A thematic approach to Eucharistic hope

Having explored various approaches in contemporary thought to the phenomenon of hope, an ontology of the future, and the reality of the gift, we can now focus our exploration more clearly on the eschatological character of the Eucharist.

Firstly, Marcel's insight can contribute to an understanding of *how the Eucharistic hope is related to the Paschal Mystery*. For Marcel, hope is not hope unless it co-exists with the possibility of despair. Hope is directed toward salvation and involves coming out of the darkness of suffering. There is then a close connection between this human character of hope and the paschal character of the mystery of Christ. Indeed, the Gospel writers portray Christ as "the Son of Man [who] must suffer many things...and be rejected...and be killed...and then enter his glory" (Mk 8:31; Mt 16:21; Lk 17:25, 24:26). To celebrate the Eucharist is to participate in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. It enables Christian hope to embrace all the realities of suffering and death, darkness and light, tragedy and transformation, as intrinsic elements of Christian existence. As Dermot Lane explains, "The Paschal Mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ therefore is the centerpiece of Christian hope."<sup>164</sup> As nourished on the sacramental reality of Christ's body and blood, Christian hope anticipates a real communion with Christ in his self-giving death and resurrection. It can acknowledge both the experience of despair, as Marcel has described it, and yet struggle against despair with the creative historical positivity that Bloch has expressed.

Secondly, since hope is manifest in a hunger for the infinite, for the fulfilment of human life as a whole, there is a close relationship between *Eucharistic hope and the human condition of being on the way*. For both Marcel and Bloch, human beings are historical by nature; they are still on the way, *in via*. In this sense, hope seeks the definitive validity of human self-understanding and looks to its complete self-realization. Notice that both Bloch and Marcel attempt to establish the "not yet" of our human existence. For both there is an ontological basis for hope. Human hope for the

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<sup>164</sup> Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996), 68-69.

future is not merely a wishful projection into a void.<sup>165</sup> Instead, the intended future contains what is hoped for. In Bloch's view, venturing beyond the given is the function and content of hope.<sup>166</sup> Not only human beings, but also the whole world is moving towards a better future, a still-unfulfilled existence, and reaching forward to a realisable utopia. Hope guides both unfinished humanity and the whole of creation to a final fulfilment. Now, the dynamism of distinctly Eucharistic hope is to bring the cosmic dimensions of the "fruit of the earth" and "the work of human hands," the groaning and travail of all creation into "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).<sup>167</sup> In its relation to the human state of being on the way, the Eucharist is thus the site of creative tension holding together the "already" and the "not yet," the present and the orientation toward the fulfilment of hope.

Thirdly, according to our phenomenological analysis of hope, human beings understand themselves and their present reality in *relationship to the absolute future*. From a Christian perspective, we understand that God, who is "the power of the future,"<sup>168</sup> is always present in the centre of human existence. As absolute future God offers us the possibility of freely participating in this future in Christ. Since the God of hope is the God of creation and consummation, who was, and is experienced as "the Coming One,"<sup>169</sup> hope finds its future in God. From its foundation, the Christian community understood itself as an eschatological gathering.<sup>170</sup> It lives not only for the future, but also from it. The celebrations of the Lord's Supper are so strongly eschatologically oriented that believers proclaim the Lord's death "until he comes" (1 Cor 11: 26). The remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection is, therefore, not simply recalling the past, but an anticipation of its future in Christ. The Eucharist, as the sacrament of the Kingdom, is an anticipatory sign, in which the salvific reality of the Kingdom is already present. Central to our Christian understanding is the idea of Eucharist as celebration of a hope-filled preparation for the coming of God in a final and definitive way.

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<sup>165</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 4.

<sup>166</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 4.

<sup>167</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 86.

<sup>168</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 24.

<sup>169</sup> Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>170</sup> Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 199, 207.

Fourthly, the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist includes the reality of *communion*; the hope it nourishes lives in an eschatological solidarity with and for others. For Marcel, hope by its very nature involves a consciousness of communion; it occurs in the person who lives completely immersed in the network of human relationships.<sup>171</sup> In this regard, the Eucharist may be described as total hope, embracing all humanity and the whole cosmos. As John Zizioulas states that “the Eucharist shows that truth is not something concerning humanity alone, but has profound *cosmic* dimensions. The Christ of the Eucharist is revealed as the life and recapitulation of all creation.”<sup>172</sup> In other words, the Eucharistic hope looks to the salvation of the world as an interconnected, interdependent, communitarian and embodied totality. As Kelly expresses it, “As nourished on the reality of this sacrament, hope cannot but be hope for all.”<sup>173</sup> In its inclusive quality, Eucharistic hope is thus never a matter of merely individual salvation, but implies union with others and the whole cosmos in the one Body of Christ.

Fifthly, the Eucharist is the pre-eminent instance of the *impossible gift*, as described by Derrida and Marion. Christian hope awaits its future, as the gift of God. That gift of the future signifies something freely given, not earned or merited by human action or power, but rather originating in a boundless love beyond understanding.<sup>174</sup> From this perspective of the future as God’s gift and in regard to Eucharistic hope, Kelly explains: “In the surprises and challenges that lie in store, each Eucharist anticipates a future determined not only by human ingenuity or failure, but by the gift of God.”<sup>175</sup> The Eucharist as eschatological gift thus points beyond itself to the final coming of Christ at the end of time. Power offers a helpful summary when he suggests that it is of the nature of gift to be both eschatological and responsible:

What is given is the seed of participation and mutuality. It is a being together, a loving together, a covenantal relation by which both God and people pledge

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<sup>171</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. Marcel writes: “We are not dealing here with an abstraction, an impersonal order: if I inspire another being with love which I value and to which I respond, that will be enough to create this spiritual interconnection. The fact of the reciprocal love, the communion, will be enough to bring about a deep transformation in the nature of the bond which unites me to myself.” 49.

<sup>172</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 119.

<sup>173</sup> Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite: Explorations in Christian Hope*, 140-141.

<sup>174</sup> Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite: Explorations in Christian Hope*, 140-141.

<sup>175</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 80.



and work for the enhancement of the same gift. It does not mean that the beneficiaries are giving something back to God.<sup>176</sup>

This notion of gift echoes the perspective of *Gaudium et Spes*,<sup>177</sup> whereby the Eucharist as eschatological gift is closely related to a participation in history that actively co-operates with Christ, so that the world “might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and brought to its fulfilment.”<sup>178</sup> In other words, the Eucharist is a gift to be received in the giving, to be cultivated with a high sense of human responsibility. Bloch has stated that hope “grasps the New as something that is mediated in what exists and is in motion, although to be revealed the New demands the most extreme effort of will.”<sup>179</sup> In a similar fashion, the characteristic of the Eucharistic gift most closely linking it with eschatology is its agency in the historical transformation of the world.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attended to an examination of the phenomenon of human hope, in order to inform our understanding of the Eucharist as the sacrament of hope. Noteworthy here is the recognition that hope is both a structural element of human existence and that it is situated at the very heart of Christian faith. By exploring this interconnection between the common human experience of hope and Christian hope we can now refine our understanding of Eucharistic hope, and not allow it to remain as something quite otherworldly in character and thus alien to the ordinary, everyday human and historical hopes. The account of eschatological hope that Christians seek to give (1 Pet 3:15-16) is not separated from the common human experience of what hope is.

To conclude this chapter, we can summarise in the following manner. In the first place, hope is recognized as being born of human transcendence emerging out of the creativity of interpersonal relations and human freedom. Marcel argues that hope is

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<sup>176</sup> Power, *Sacrament-The Language of God's Giving*, 281.

<sup>177</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, pars. 38, 39, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 937-938.

<sup>178</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.

<sup>179</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 4.

lived in communion and is meaningful only within the context of a trusting openness to the unforeseen gift of the future.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, as Bloch recognizes, hope is a source of a new social order in which the task of creating a new humanity and new world asserts itself. Thirdly, if utopian hope finds in humanity itself the resources and capacities to establish justice and complete history, Christian hope, by contrast, always speaks of the coming reign of God as *gift*. Its logic is the logic of imagination, insisting on something greater than what can ever be achieved by human effort alone, a hope beyond all hopes. This understanding also offers useful insights into the Eucharist as the eschatological gift of God in Christ.

From our analysis so far, we have looked at this hope for an immanent good and for a future that transcends alienation and oppression, in modern recoveries of the eschatological relevance of the Eucharist. This renewed eschatological understanding provides the Eucharist with a privileged place in holding together the “already” but “not yet” of Christian faith and salvation. The Eucharist stands out as a celebration inspiring visions of a future in the light of the past and in the reality of the present. It gathers up all that Christ stood for in his Paschal Mystery. In the chapters that follow we will explore the insights, which the authors Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar, and Chauvet, in their different approaches to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, make to our understanding of Eucharistic hope. These contemporary developments will then serve as a theological forum, from which new insights can be drawn, so as to reach toward a theological synthesis of Eucharistic hope as God’s pledge for the fulfilment of the reign of God.

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<sup>180</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 65.

### Chapter 3    Geoffrey Wainwright: The Eucharist as A Foretaste of the Messianic Banquet

#### 3.1 Introduction

It is fitting that an investigation of the Eucharist in the light of eschatology should begin with the figure of Geoffrey Wainwright because his most recent major treatment of the subject, *Eucharist and Eschatology*,<sup>1</sup> has been widely welcomed by contemporary liturgists and theologians for its importance in today's theological and ecumenical scene. Here Wainwright attempts to give the first full and satisfactory account of the relationship between the Eucharist and a rediscovered eschatology which, in its various forms, has been a marked feature of twentieth-century theology. This innovative study is supplied with biblical, doctrinal, and liturgical scholarship from a range of traditions (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox). It offers a fresh perspective on the Eucharistic mystery as the pivotal eschatological event and fundamental ground of Christian hope.

Born in 1939, Wainwright is a minister of the Methodist Church. After studies at Cambridge, Geneva and Rome, he taught theology in Cameroon, in West Africa, Birmingham, in England, and Union Theological Seminary, in New York. He has held visiting professorships at the University of Notre Dame, the Gregorian University in Rome, and the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne. He was a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and currently chairs the international dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church. He is also the author of the highly acclaimed *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*<sup>2</sup> and is co-editor of *The Study of the Liturgy*.

The context of Wainwright's study of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist is the growing awareness of the prominence of eschatology in the New Testament, from Jesus'

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

proclamation that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15) to the apocalyptic vision of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1). For the New Testament writers, the coming of God’s Kingdom into time has already taken place precisely in the person and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. The Kingdom is the final and decisive act of God’s entering human history.<sup>3</sup> The time of the Church lies in the tension between the “already” of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the “not yet” of his final advent. It links present experience with the eschatological hope of future fulfilment.

Wainwright explains his perspective by referring to the main features of the various current styles of eschatological thought and, at the same time, points out how his approach to Eucharistic eschatology is characteristic of the understanding expressed in the Scriptures and the ancient liturgies.<sup>4</sup> He shares the common view that the renewed interest in the eschatological implications of the Gospel began with the research of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer in the context of the Kingdom of God and eschatology.<sup>5</sup> Examining the work of New Testament scholars, Wainwright also cites the positive contribution of Charles H. Dodd in regard to the manner in which the Kingdom was already present in the person and ministry of Jesus. He rejects the notion of “realized eschatology,” however, as invalid because it presents eschatology as nothing more than a dimension of the present. Like Joachim Jeremias, Wainwright maintains: “there remain some reported sayings of Jesus which speak of the coming of the Kingdom as future.”<sup>6</sup> Eschatology thereby suggests an anticipated future.

Granted that the Kingdom is both present and yet still future, Wainwright follows Oscar Cullmann’s salvation-history approach, where the present and future of the Kingdom are to be taken as temporal in reference.<sup>7</sup> There is, however, a sharp distinction between the two theologians in their conceptions of time. For Cullmann, time is linear and chronological, that is, an ascending movement of past, present and future. The first

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<sup>3</sup> We find the different attempts of the New Testament writers to interpret “present” and “future” with reference to the Kingdom of God. See (Mk 2:15-17; 6:30:44; Mt 11:19; 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Lk 5:27-39; 9:11-17; 13:22-30; 15:1-2; 19:1-10; Jn 6:3-15, 39-58).

<sup>4</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 13.

coming of Christ is seen not as the absolute end of history, but rather as the midpoint in time.<sup>8</sup> Christian worship is thus to be understood as “a focal instance of the tension between present and future...the meeting of the congregation with the Lord in the Spirit: with the same Lord who came once and who will come again.”<sup>9</sup> For Wainwright, such an approach is unsatisfactory, since it threatens the transcendence of God over time, which “Augustine’s doctrine of creation *cum tempore* and not *in tempore* was designed to safeguard.”<sup>10</sup> If time is seen as a linear progression, Wainwright argues, the divine transcendence of time becomes problematic, so as to compromise the continuing identity of God in the context of Christian worship.<sup>11</sup>

Rudolf Schnackenburg offers a version of eschatology most acceptable to Wainwright.<sup>12</sup> Both of these theologians attempt to hold the “vertical” and the “horizontal,” the “already” and the “not yet,” together in one picture, while allowing for a discussion of the progression of time, history and eternity, as well as God’s transcendence over time. Wainwright, however, finds reason to give attention to the “already” of history, especially in terms of the Kingdom of God. Here Christ is “the One who has come, who continues to come in a hidden manner, who will come as the personal bond between what already is in the present and what will be in the future.”<sup>13</sup> This notion of the future revelation of what is at present only glimpsed is central to Wainwright’s eschatological approach to the Eucharist.

The heart of his eschatological perspective is this: just as Jesus Christ is the “Amen” of all God’s promises (2 Cor 1:20), so the future Kingdom already determines the present. The definitive Kingdom is then the substance of God’s eternal purpose for humanity and all creation, yet humanity and all creation will reach their destiny only through development in time. Here Wainwright turns to Jürgen Moltmann and Gerard Sauter. Both stress that

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<sup>8</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 15.

God is the God of promise and is to be eschatologically conceived as the coming God.<sup>14</sup> The ground for this confirmed promise is what God has brought about in the death and above all in the resurrection of Christ for the salvation of the world. Since the resurrection of Christ is the anticipation of what God wills for humanity as a whole and for the world, Christians have the opportunity to order their present actions in hope of the new life for all creation.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the relationship between the present and the future of the Kingdom allows room for the significance of history, and therefore for the movement of humanity and all creation towards the future glory. In line with this promise of fulfilment, Wainwright emphasizes the “categories of *purpose* and *destiny* in our own eschatological considerations: divine purpose for creation, and creaturely destiny in the divine purpose.”<sup>16</sup> In this way, we can understand that Christians can shape their lives towards the final Kingdom, even though that decisive eschatological event is God’s own work. Eschatology is thus understood as hope for the fulfilment of God’s promise and for the coming of the eschaton into the present.

Throughout his presentation, Wainwright’s primary concern is not only to do justice to the importance of the neglected biblical texts for a renewed theology of the Eucharist, but also to develop in a systematic way the various insights into the eschatological character of the Eucharist displayed by the ancient liturgies and the early Christian tradition.<sup>17</sup> He seeks to retrieve a shared eschatological vision of the Eucharist in the experience of the early Church and in the biblical traditions of the Eucharist.

Our purpose in this chapter is to explore the centrality of Wainwright’s treatment of the Eucharist as a foretaste of the messianic banquet. Firstly, we will concentrate on the eschatological reality of the Eucharist in terms of the “messianic feast” (*Antepast*), the “advent of Christ” (*Maranatha*) and the “firsts fruits” of the Kingdom,<sup>18</sup> dominant images that reveal the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. Secondly, we will examine his concept of the Eucharistic bread and wine in relation to the transfigured creation and

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<sup>14</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 6.

begin to explore the biblical, liturgical and theological evidence for the eschatological content and import of the Eucharist. Finally, we will assess his proposals for a renewal of Eucharistic eschatology and conclude with a consideration of the Eucharist understood as hopeful feasting in the completed Kingdom.

### **3.2 The eschatological reality of the Eucharist**

According to Wainwright, the traditional theological treatises tend to concentrate exclusively on ontological questions of Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine, or on the sacrifice of the Cross and its relation to the Eucharistic action. The eschatological significance of the Eucharist as the communal meal of the whole people of God, and its relation to the messianic banquet has largely disappeared from Christian consciousness.<sup>19</sup> Wainwright observes that traditionally theologians "saw the Eucharist as looking back to the past event of the Lord's death much more than as looking forward to the future event of his coming. They were concerned with the relation between present and past rather than with the relation between present and future."<sup>20</sup> From such a perspective, Christ's death is not regarded as the promise of the future fulfilment to be given by God. Eschatology is not the theme of the future; it is already present in the fruits of Eucharistic communion for the individual recipient. The Christian community, therefore, lost sight of the ways that Christ's coming to his people in judgement and salvation is revealed in the Eucharist.

We now turn to a discussion of the three dominant notions (Antepast of Heaven, Maranatha, firstfruits of the Kingdom) which Wainwright explores to express the eschatological hope for the messianic banquet. Each of these elucidates different aspects of the feasting in the Kingdom, illuminates the vision of the feast, and enables a series of contrasts to be drawn between future feast and the "taste" of the feast that is now experienced in the Eucharist.

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<sup>19</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 1.

### 3.2.1 The messianic feast: The Antepast

For Wainwright the Eucharist is first of all a *meal*. The meal is “a basic category if the eschatological content and import of the Eucharist are to be properly appreciated.”<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, the antepast of the Eucharist is the first taste of the fullness of the Kingdom and the Kingdom is the feast of the fullness of the antepast. Wainwright then draws in more detail on images of feasting in the Scriptures, seeking to develop the characteristics of this feast of the Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> We explore three major aspects:

#### (i) The Old Testament preparation

Wainwright readily acknowledges the contribution of the Old Testament to the Christian understanding of the antepast image. Eating and drinking, particularly in the cultic setting, is considered to be a way of encountering divine blessing. Meals are related to critical moments in the history of God’s chosen people, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the Sinai Covenant speaking of God’s liberating action in history as well as hope of God’s future banquet (Ex 24:8-11).

The Covenant was regarded as the core of God’s relationship with Israel, which on God’s part is seen as promise and faithfulness, and on the people’s part as a response of faith. This was a God who operated in their local history, leading them into the freedom of a new life. At the center of this covenantal relationship is the conviction that God will dwell in the midst of the people. A meal is connected with the Covenant in Exodus: food was used as sacrifice to establish the Covenant sealed in blood (Ex 24:8). This ritual was then followed and celebrated by a common meal: “they beheld God, and they ate and drank” (Ex 24:11). We note that at the moment of the inauguration of the Covenant, the object of hope is already combined with the themes of eating and drinking in the presence of God and the vision of God in his glory.<sup>23</sup> This early hope was, then, lived out in the reality of their turbulent and painful history, and there emerged various symbols

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<sup>21</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 19.



that expressed the desire of this hope for a future event of salvation including, above all, the symbol of the Kingdom of God in which the imagery of the meal was of great importance.

Over time, the image of the meal apparently developed a more eschatological orientation and became the central focus of the liturgical event for Israel of Passover, of remembering God's saving power (Deut 12:7; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 27:7). Much of the later history of salvation can be seen as a series of reinterpretations of the nature of this eschatological hope. In wisdom literature, for instance, the image of the feast of wisdom is described where "true life is found in eating and drinking the bread, water, and wine of wisdom" (Prov 9:1-5; Sir 5:3; 24:19-21).<sup>24</sup> This vision came to be identified with the eschatological banquet spoken by the prophets in terms of peace, harmony and feasting (Isa 2:2-4; 25:6-9; 54:11-55:3; 65:11-13), of the hope for a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34), of fruitfulness and the removal of hunger (Ezek 34:25-30). In short, this image of the eschatological banquet was initially a description of the way God cared for God's people. It eventually developed into the expectation of the Messiah presiding over the future messianic banquet, in which the Passover is a meal of anticipation of this eschatological event.<sup>25</sup>

## **(ii) Feasting in the Kingdom according to the New Testament**

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<sup>24</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> See Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 21. While these examples speak of feasting in the present, there are also abundant passages that point to future messianic feasting. In particular, Isaiah offers visions of a future feast for all peoples in terms of the abolition of death and a day of salvation and rejoicing. "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation'" (Isa 25:6-9).

Wainwright moves from the inter-testament period by developing the strong messianic orientation as feasting in the Kingdom of God. According to the New Testament, the meals of Jesus' ministry stand as great signs of the coming feast in the Kingdom. His table fellowship with people from all walks of life is, as Wainwright puts it, "a throwing forward into the present the first part of the future feast."<sup>26</sup> As the Passover commemorates the covenant between God and God's chosen people, so the Eucharist is the sign of the covenant Jesus has opened to all. He is the new Moses leading God's people in a new Exodus, through his suffering, death and resurrection. As such, the meals during Jesus' ministry have messianic significance, in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, transposing this impact from Passover to Eucharist. Wainwright states:

We may therefore confidently suppose that in the time of Jesus the Jews looked for the coming of the Messiah in the same night as that in which the great deliverance from Egypt had been wrought. This messianic expectation would then mark the meal during which, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus instituted the Eucharist.<sup>27</sup>

Here it is important to recognize that, at the heart of Jesus' public ministry and teaching, was the symbol of the reign of God, which he saw as the great feast in the new age, the messianic and eschatological banquet. In the synoptic writings, for example, there are several instances of Jesus envisioning the eschatological fullness of salvation in terms of feeding or feasting. The coming of this new age is presented as a time when hunger will be satisfied (Lk 6:21; Mt 5:6), as an expression of God's promise to all - "people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God" (Lk 13:22-30), as the reversal of the structures of power and the distribution of food - "He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Lk 1:51-53), as a favourite way of proclaiming God's offer of salvation (Mk 2:

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<sup>26</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 23.

15-17; Mt 11:19; Lk 15:1-2; 19:1-10), and as an open table-fellowship in the form of a wedding feast (Mt 22:2-14; Lk 14:15-24). The same eschatological motif can be found in various feedings of the multitude (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39 and Lk 9:11-17). All were satisfied, thus pointing towards the eschatological fullness of God's Kingdom, as inaugurated by Jesus. Wainwright then suggests that in this vision of the messianic banquet prefigured in the Old Testament, and against the background of all the other meals in the ministry of Jesus, we can speak of the Eucharist as the meal of the Kingdom.

### **(iii) The Eucharist as meal of the Kingdom in the liturgical and theological traditions**

Wainwright's survey of the classical liturgies, Eucharistic prayers and theologians of both East and West shows that the Eucharist, from a variety of perspectives, is envisaged as Christ's banquet, at which he is present not only as food and drink, but also as host and participant in the meal. The Eucharistic table thus appears as "the heavenly table (*mensa caelestis*) at which is enjoyed the heavenly banquet (*convivium caeleste*), of the heavenly gifts (*dona caelestia*), of the heavenly bread (*panis caelestis*) and the heavenly cup (*poculum caeleste*), the whole being a heavenly mystery (*mysterium caeleste*)."<sup>28</sup>

Although in the early Christian liturgies, the Eucharistic meal is already regarded as a heavenly reality, there is a strong awareness that future blessings still remain in store. So if the future feast is the enjoyment of God's gift as food in a feast that is uninterrupted,<sup>29</sup> then how are we to understand the relationship between present and future? Wainwright notes that the significance of the relation of the Eucharist as meal to the Kingdom is fivefold:

- 1) The Eucharistic meal expresses both "the continuity and the difference that mark the relation between the present and the future forms of the Kingdom, between its earthly and its heavenly forms."<sup>30</sup> It is an earthly meal, not a full-course messianic

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<sup>28</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>30</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

meal. Of present Christian experience, it can be said that eternal life is *already* really experienced, but *not yet* in its fullness.<sup>31</sup>

- 2) In the Eucharistic reality, God has chosen to enter into such a communion of life with all humanity. We acknowledge and enjoy God's presence and the Kingdom to the extent that we allow ourselves "to be fed by God from His very being."<sup>32</sup> Christ is, in this sense, "food, table-fellow and host."<sup>33</sup> Through the Eucharist, the Christian community is nourished by the divine gifts of bread and wine, and yet continues to be dependent on God for its preservation in the final Kingdom.
- 3) The Kingdom includes the whole of creation. Since all creation is dependent on the transcendent God for existence, the Eucharist expresses the ontological unity of the earthly and heavenly, of the material and the spiritual, of the body and soul. "It is a sign of the new heaven and the new earth on which risen men and women will enjoy perfect fellowship with God in the consummated Kingdom."<sup>34</sup> The Eucharistic eschatology is thus universal in scope.
- 4) Moreover, material creation definitely has its positive value given to it by its spiritual destiny of mediating personal communion between God and human beings. The Eucharistic bread and wine, the elements of nature and culture, become the medium through which God and humanity meet and commune.
- 5) Finally, the Eucharistic meal expresses the communal nature of the Kingdom. It is a meeting place for all to share in the one bread, one body at the one table of the Lord (1 Cor 10:17) as it participates in and yet awaits for the perfect reign of God. In this Eucharistic vision, a greater community "will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29; Mt 8:11). The Eucharistic meal is thus an event of communion.

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<sup>31</sup> See Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. The Eucharist is based on the symbolic reality of a meal, and the purpose of this eschatological meal is to give a glimpse of what the Kingdom of God will be like, that is, the future transformation of the whole cosmos into a New Creation. Our joy will be complete and "God will be all in all." In the conclusion of the book, he emphasizes that "the Eucharist is a periodic celebration: in the final kingdom the worship and rejoicing, as in the life of heaven, will be perpetual." 147.

<sup>32</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58-59.

<sup>33</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 59.

It is for all these reasons that Wainwright refers to the Eucharist as *antepast*, that is, the first taste of the new age. The living bread for which Christians pray and hope is “at one and the same time both earthly bread to meet the hunger and need of the present day, and also the future bread which will satisfy the elect in the eschatological Kingdom.”<sup>35</sup> The Eucharistic meal is thus “the *reality-filled promise* to be eaten in *hope* of the final Kingdom.”<sup>36</sup> Here and now, however, Christians are already tasting and sharing the great messianic banquet that Christ has prepared for them in anticipation.

### 3.2.2 The advent of Christ: Maranatha

The Eucharist as the feast of the Kingdom is given another focus in Wainwright’s treatment of the *Maranatha* in the perspective of the final advent of Christ.<sup>37</sup> This prayer of the early Church has a double meaning. It is a confident expression of longing for the Parousia (Come, Lord Jesus!) and, at the same time, an acknowledgment of the Lord’s coming in the Eucharist in sacramental form (The Lord has come and is present). This is why Paul writes to the Corinthians that the Lord’s Supper is a proclamation of his death “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). This Pauline text also supports and justifies an investigation of a possible connection between the Eucharistic memorial of Christ and his final advent.<sup>38</sup> For Wainwright, the *maranatha-memorial* experience opens up the vision of the Kingdom, which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it. If we take the *maranatha* acclamation as a “present perfect,”<sup>39</sup> it is even more important to understand that, very early on, this prayer was replaced by the expression: “*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*”<sup>40</sup> Wainwright notes that this statement then “found its place in Eucharistic liturgies for the good reason that it can

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<sup>35</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 60.

<sup>38</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 68.

<sup>39</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. If “we take *maranatha* as a present perfect: it is then an acclamation of the presence of the one who is still to come and yet who promised His presence to the two or three gathered in His name: The Lord is here!” 70.

<sup>40</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. For Wainwright, in any case this prayer “is such a constant feature of Eucharistic liturgies that it merits our attention as we examine the relation between the coming of Christ at the End and His coming at the Eucharist.” 70.

suggest the present coming of the one who has come and who is still to come.”<sup>41</sup> The celebration of the Eucharist therefore, also concerns the advent of the future in the present.

Wainwright also identifies other elements in the early Christian rites and writings that emphasize the future dimension of the Eucharist. He refers, first, to the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday and, second, to its celebration facing the East.<sup>42</sup> Through most of Christian history, there has been a close connection between Eucharist and Sunday, between the Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Day. There is supporting evidence, Wainwright claims, in the New Testament, which shows that Sunday was the day of Eucharistic assembly.<sup>43</sup> In 1 Corinthians 16:2, for example, Paul directs each person in the community to put something aside on the first day of every week towards his collection for the Church in Jerusalem. Acts 20:7-12 also reports that the Church at Troas, on the occasion of Paul’s visit, gathered on the first day of the week to break bread. Another indication is to be found in Revelations 1:10: “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day.” This is regarded as the earliest known occasion on which Sunday is called the Lord’s day. The Didache also provides evidence of a weekly Sunday Eucharist: “Every Lord’s Day assemble yourselves: break bread and give thanks...after confessing your transgressions that your sacrifice may be pure.”<sup>44</sup> Eventually, the eschatological significance of Sunday constitutes a recurrent theme in patristic literature: the day of resurrection, the day of the new creation, and the day of the Parousia.<sup>45</sup>

From this perspective, it is possible to understand the tradition of looking towards the East, and hence to grasp a sense of the interconnectedness of the Eucharist and the resurrection. The worshipping community turned toward the rising sun with the eschatological anticipation of the coming of the Risen Christ as the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2, Heb 3:20; Lk 1:78).<sup>46</sup> At the centre of the Eucharistic worship of

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<sup>41</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 71-72.

<sup>42</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 74-75.

<sup>43</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 76-78.

<sup>44</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 76.

<sup>45</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 77.

<sup>46</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 79.

the early Church was its orientation towards the future. It was both the Eucharistic memorial of Christ made present to the participants (*anamnesis*) and the foretaste of the great banquet in heaven, already with them through hope (*prolepsis*).<sup>47</sup> The future is a reality that impacts on Christians in the present.

We turn now to the question as to how the Eucharist expresses or points to “the day of divine judgement?”<sup>48</sup> Here Wainwright offers a number of suggestions. According to the New Testament, there is a strong sense that, because salvation has been effected in the ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus, “all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5:10). If Christians “have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5), it is clear that judgement has taken place already, according to the way in which they respond when they are confronted by Christ (Jn 3:18; 5:24). There is therefore “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away...everything has become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Here the expression “in Christ” points to the fact that it is by baptism that the final judgement is anticipated, for God “has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14). While this newness of life has been established, however, it is not complete. Wainwright explains:

It is our argument that the Eucharist is a repeated projection of the last judgement, which each time partly fulfils, and therefore strengthens, the promise of judgement and pardon, which we received in hope in our baptism. The Jesus who bore on the Cross the condemnation due to man’s sin has been made Lord and appointed by God to be the universal judge at the last day (Acts 10:42), and already the Lord who comes in judgement at every Eucharist.<sup>49</sup>

What is affirmed in this perspective is that, since the Eucharist is the memorial sign of the eschatological presence of Christ, renewing all things and drawing all things to himself, there is definitely a connection between the Eucharist and judgement. For Wainwright,

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<sup>47</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 68, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 80.

Christ's coming at the Eucharist is "a projection in the temporal sense that it is a 'throwing forward' of Christ's final advent into the present."<sup>50</sup> Judgement is already present, inasmuch as the Christian community responds to the encounter with the living Christ in the Eucharist.

The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is thus at once a judgement on the Christian gathering and a continuing call to conversion. This aspect of the Eucharist connected with the themes of judgement is found in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34. Eating and drinking without discerning the body is, in Paul's view, the cause of sickness among many and of the death of some. The selfish behaviour of the Corinthians meant that they were turning the *Lord's* Supper into their *own* supper, so committing both an ecclesiological and a Christological offence. Here failure to discern this body means "failure to recognize in the bread and wine the vehicle of the Lord's personal presence."<sup>51</sup> It is this intrinsic relation between the Eucharistic body of Christ and his ecclesial body that places the Eucharist in the context of judgement.

Conversely, Wainwright draws on the insight of Käsemann to note how Paul's thought "moves from the eschatological future...to the fact that the Corinthian Christians are already eating and drinking judgement to themselves."<sup>52</sup> Such an eschatological character of the Eucharist as anticipation of the divine judgement also appears in Matthew 26:28, however, with its language of covenantal sacrifice: "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Here, each celebration of the Eucharist is, as Wainwright comments, a moment of truth and repentance.<sup>53</sup> It decisively clarifies who Christians are before God and defines their

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<sup>50</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 92.

<sup>51</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 81.

<sup>52</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. Thus in the Eucharist, "what is revealed on the Last Day becomes in a certain way already a present reality." Here Wainwright refers to the insight of Käsemann: "When the Lord comes on the scene, it is also the universal Judge who appears...His presence never leaves us unaffected. We do not, by our own disrespect, render his gift ineffective or make the presence of Christ unhappen. We cannot paralyze God's eschatological action. Salvation scorned becomes judgement...The sacramental coming of the Lord always sets men in the perspective of the Last Day and therefore itself bears the mark of what God will do at the Last Day. It is a kind of anticipation, within the Church, of the Last Day." 82.

<sup>53</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 83.



eternal destiny. We can find this dual theme of remission of sins and judgement in the patristic literature and in the ancient liturgies of both East and West. The liturgical and patristic evidence indicates that the Eucharistic celebration is the occasion of Christ's coming as Saviour and Judge.<sup>54</sup>

In short, as Christ becomes present at each liturgical celebration, the Eucharist fulfils in part the promise of both judgement and forgiveness that Christians received in their baptism. The prayer *Maranatha* thus becomes a Eucharistic cry of both mercy and judgement, as Christ assumes the role of the universal judge when he is already "really present" in his eschatological form with the Church at every Eucharist.<sup>55</sup> In other words, Christ's advent is made accessible to the Christian community within the present order so the believers can discern in this memorial ritual act what their ultimate hopes might be. In the Eucharist, what is revealed in the future fulfilment thus becomes in a certain way "already" a present reality.

### 3.2.3 The firstfruits of the Kingdom

As the memorial feast of the Kingdom, the Eucharist is seen as the *firstfruits* of the sanctification of all creation. For Wainwright, this symbolism anticipates a great feast in the future Kingdom, where all will be transformed by the power of God's gifts.<sup>56</sup> In the New Testament witness, the Risen Christ is called "the first-born within a large family" (Rom 8:29), "the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (Col 1:18), and "the firstfruits of those who have died" (1 Cor 15:20); and the Church is called "the firstfruits of God's creatures" (Jas 1:18). These representative New Testament passages present us with a vision of the fulfilment of the Kingdom in which the whole creation will come under the total rule of God. Central to this eschatological hope is the resurrection of Christ, who was God's agent in creation (Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2) and will also be the agent of consummation. "All things are unto him" (Col 1:16), "all things will be summed up in him" (Eph 1:10) and he will deliver the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24).

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<sup>54</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 80.

<sup>56</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 94.

In this biblical perspective, Wainwright explores the *firstfruits of the Kingdom* in direct connection with the Eucharist.<sup>57</sup> He notes that Christian worship is anchored both in the present experience of salvation and in light of the heavenly assembly when all will come together, sharing the divine life, to the perfect praise of God, in a new creation filled with God's glory.<sup>58</sup> Such an image of the firstfruits, closely connected with the Eucharist, serves to unfold the essence of the divine plan in Christ that can be described as the universal renewal. In other words, the fundamental hope of the Eucharist can be called transformation: "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31), "all things have been made new" (Rev 21:5), there will be "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Here then, if the Eucharist encompasses the firstfruits of the Kingdom as the future feast in which Christ will present himself to the One sitting on the throne and will receive the worship of the community of God's people (Rev 5:8-14; 7:9-12),<sup>59</sup> how are we to understand the *who* as much as the *what* and *how* of the Spirit leading creation to its final eschatological consummation?

In the light of trinitarian theology and patristic writings on the Eucharistic consecration, Wainwright claims that the Word and the Spirit set the Eucharist in the perspective of the ultimate condition when God "will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).<sup>60</sup> The Scriptures suggest that both the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity play an active part in the economy of salvation. The Word and the Spirit, as the divine agents of creation and re-creation, are also associated with the Eucharistic action. There is no opposition between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit in the Eucharistic consecration. Their functions in this action, however, are not identical. Wainwright explains the work of the Word:

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<sup>57</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 94.

<sup>58</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 95.

<sup>59</sup> We read in the book of Revelations: "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready" (Rev 19:7), and "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). Then, "they will see him face to face and his name shall be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again, and they will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever" (Rev 22:4-5).

<sup>60</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 95-97.

He spoke creation into being, and He therefore has the power...to change the Eucharistic elements by His word. I think we may extend this argument and use it in another way. We may direct our thoughts toward the Kingdom and say that the Word is also the agent of the *eschatologically* new creation. At the Eucharist we may see Jesus Christ as speaking the *re-creative* word, which transforms the old creation into the new.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, the Word at the Eucharist recreates what has already been created. There is no competition between the Word and the Spirit.<sup>62</sup> The Spirit creates and renews (Ps 104:30) in co-operation with the Word. Here Wainwright observes that the Scriptures and early liturgies yield further insight in regard to how the pneumatological scope of the Eucharistic celebration is to be correlated with the Christological approach. The Spirit is active in the rebirth of people (Jn 3:5-7; Titus 3:5). It is through the Spirit that we shall be raised (Rom 8:11) in our spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:44). Thus, as with the Word, so with the Spirit, the “Lord and giver of life” (Jn 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6), who is active in creation, in renewal and resurrection, is also active in the Eucharistic celebration. According to Paul, because Christians were “marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13), the Eucharist would be seen as “the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1: 14).

The transforming work of the Word and the Spirit is, therefore, connected with the concept of God’s glory.<sup>63</sup> This eschatological viewpoint is found throughout the New Testament. Jesus Christ revealed the divine glory to people (Lk 2; 32; 9:32; Jn 1:4), but “not yet” in a permanent and universal manifestation. According to John, Jesus’ prayer of consecration after the Last Supper narrative is a central text for coming to terms with his communication of the divine glory to the disciples: “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one” (Jn 17: 22). Likewise, in Paul’s view, Christians, “with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). As Wainwright comments, however, this divinely derived glory “will not be *revealed* until Christ returns with glory

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<sup>61</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 98.

<sup>62</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 99.

<sup>63</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 102.

and our bodies are raised to be like His glorious body (Rom 8:17-25; 1 Cor 15:42-44; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Col 3:3-4; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Pet 4:13-14; 1 Jn 3:2), and we enter God's final kingdom and glory (1Thess 2:12)."<sup>64</sup> This is why the Eucharist is considered as "the sacramental anticipation of a universe totally transfigured by the glory of God, receiving glory from him and rendering glory to Him."<sup>65</sup> In other words, the Eucharist is provisional and anticipatory because God's glory is not yet visibly perceived, received and totally reflected by the whole humanity and creation. Christians glorify God in the Eucharist, though the fullness of divine glory is reserved for the Kingdom. Wainwright remarks:

The Eucharist bears, moreover, the mark of incompleteness in that it is as yet only part of mankind and of creation that receives and renders God's glory, and that not perpetually. But within these limits the Eucharist is a real expression of the divine kingdom, and an expression, which contains within itself its own dynamism as the glory strives to become visible and to embrace the whole nature and humanity.<sup>66</sup>

Here the Eucharist and eschatology intersect, containing the paradox of the "already" and the "not yet" of the Kingdom of God. This explains why the Eucharistic liturgy emphasizes the glorious coming of Christ. As a real expression of the Kingdom, a sign and an indication of the firstfruits of the Kingdom, the Eucharist "contains within itself its own dynamism as the glory strives to become visible and to embrace the whole of nature and humanity."<sup>67</sup> The Eucharist is incomplete without the Parousia.

### **3.3 The bread and wine and the transfigured creation**

Wainwright begins his discussion on the Eucharistic bread and wine in terms of their relationship to the transfigured creation with a sharp critique of former traditional theologies, particularly the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. He is opposed to this way of speaking about the Eucharistic change. He describes how his view of the reality of bread and wine is different from the Catholic tradition:

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<sup>64</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 102.

<sup>65</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 103.

<sup>66</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 104.

<sup>67</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 104.

Now if one starts from the eucharistic consecration understood as transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, then by a simple prolongation of the lines one arrives at a notion of the transfigured final creation as ‘substantially’ Christ, with the new heavens and the new earth as ‘accidents’; but this is hard to distinguish from pantheism or from the total absorption of all things into the Divine. On the other hand, if one starts with the vision of a transfigured creation in which Christ feeds with His people at His own table on the abundant fruits of the new earth, then in coming to the Eucharist one arrives at a view of Christ feeding His people at the holy table on (consecrated) bread and wine; but there is no transubstantiation of the bread and wine into His body and blood.<sup>68</sup>

Here Wainwright indicates that the point of departure for an understanding the Eucharist in its relation to the final Kingdom is to view the Eucharist as “an (anticipatory) feeding with Christ, at His table, on the fruits of the new creation.”<sup>69</sup> In this eschatological prospect, he seeks to stand both in line with the Old Testament notions of eating and drinking in the presence of God, of being fed at God’s hand, and with Jesus’ meal activity throughout his ministry in the New Testament (Mk 14:25; Mt 26:29; Lk 22:15-18, 29-30). Wainwright also turns to the theme of John 6 and its imagery of feeding on Christ and stresses: “If the Christian life, now and for ever, is a feeding on Christ, then the Lord’s supper, as the celebration in which Christians eat and drink, must play some role in that feeding on Christ.”<sup>70</sup> In this Christological perspective, the significance of life in the final Kingdom is, according to Wainwright, a threefold reality: *life in Christ*, *life with Christ*, and *Christ living in us*.<sup>71</sup> Christians already live “in Christ,” and all things will be summed up “in Him” (Eph 1:10). Paul and John also express this eschatological vision in terms of the divine indwelling in the believer (Gal 2:20; Jn 14:17; 15:4-11). It is this newness of life, which the Christian community comes together to celebrate.

In order to safeguard the transcendence of God, Wainwright provides a significant theological basis for an understanding of the imagery of feasting with Christ as both host

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<sup>68</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 106.

<sup>70</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 106.

<sup>71</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 106.

and food. He proposes the following four considerations for a theological discussion of the Eucharist:

- 1) Just as God's transcendence is theologically prior to God's immanence, for God is prior to all creation, so here too, in the case of the Eucharist, the prominent role of Christ as the *giver* of the banquet should be stressed. Although Christ is the transcendent giver, there is a personalist sense, namely, the giver is *in* the gift. Thus, faithful eating and drinking in company with Christ certainly involves being transformed by his presence.<sup>72</sup>
- 2) A greater emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the Eucharist can make clear that the divine presence embraces the whole Eucharistic event, both the assembled community and the food which is to be eaten. In this way, the danger of confining Christ's presence to the elements can be overcome. As eschatological reality, the Eucharist reveals that God works Christologically and pneumatologically, because it is in the Spirit that Christ comes to the Church.<sup>73</sup>
- 3) There is, nevertheless, a significant relationship established by Jesus between the bread and wine and his person. This relationship is to be understood as an "extension of personality."<sup>74</sup> The bread and wine are the extended personality of Christ in the sense that, at the Eucharist, they are allowing themselves to be used, as it were, at the sacrament, to fulfil Christ's purpose. Here, by serving perfectly Christ's purpose and completely carrying out His will, the bread and wine become the firstfruits of that renewed creation.<sup>75</sup>
- 4) It is in the Eucharist that the glorious Christ is received, begins and continues his transforming work within the individuals and the Christian community. Since this Eucharistic communion is understood as "the *pignus* of eternal life or future glory,"<sup>76</sup> the transformation of the participants begins now but will be completed only through the resurrection.

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<sup>72</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 107.

<sup>73</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 108-109.

<sup>74</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 109.

<sup>75</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 110.

<sup>76</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 112.

Wainwright then turns to the approach of M. Schmaus in drawing attention to the Eucharistic communion in terms of a personal encounter with the Risen Christ.

Wainwright notes:

Christ's resurrection is the exemplar of the general resurrection and of the final transformation of all creation which He Himself will effect; and already the glorious Christ, in whose person the end is even now present, comes to meet His people, to draw into closer union with Himself those who will freely allow Him to do so and gradually transform them into His own likeness. Eucharistic communion is the privileged place of this encounter with Christ.<sup>77</sup>

The celebration of the Eucharist is thus considered as an eschatological fellowship, because it points beyond itself to the coming of the final Kingdom. Christ is the first example of the glorified life of all creation, and the Eucharistic communion in the present is the pledge of eternal life that bonds the participants ever closer to that final Kingdom.

Following the biblical and theological traditions of the Eucharist, moreover, Wainwright proceeds to elaborate the meaning of the Eucharist as eschatological communion:

Firstly, he stresses that the encounter with the glorified Christ in the Eucharistic communion includes our communion with one another, with the whole of humanity and the cosmos. In the Eucharist, through the gifts of bread and wine as the firstfruits of the new creation, Christians open themselves to the real presence of the future. For Wainwright, this essential relation between Eucharistic communion and participation in the Kingdom of God is clearly in accord with the Eucharistic perspective of the discourse in John 6. "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day...for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink...those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them" (Jn 6:53 -58). In this text, eternal life or participation in the Kingdom is understood both in personalistic terms as gift given by Christ, and in the sense that Christians already have eternal life and yet still await the resurrection and the life beyond. Thus, eternal life has an historical as well as a future dimension.

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<sup>77</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 113.

Secondly, if the whole Eucharistic community is, by the Word and the Spirit, corporately set in relation to the Kingdom then, according to Wainwright, the Eucharistic communion is understood as “creative of the Church’s unity.”<sup>78</sup> The fundamental biblical text here is found in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” This view is, of course, in agreement with the emphasis of Thomas Aquinas that “the res of the Eucharist, its effect, are the Church’s unity-in-love.”<sup>79</sup> The Eucharistic communion both presupposes and strengthens the unity of the Church.

Thirdly, with reference to the *vertical* model of eschatology, the Eucharist is seen as “participation in the worship of heaven.”<sup>80</sup> Here, in one way or another, the Eucharistic prayers make the Christian assembly repeat or join in the cry of the heavenly company: “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory*” (Isa 6:2-3). In the Old Testament there is certainly an anticipation of the eschatological feast of joy, an expectation of universal revelation of the divine glory: “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isa 40:5). Whatever the context of John’s revelations, it appears that the connection between eschatology and Christian worship is firmly rooted in the book of Revelation as the “all-embracing scope of the glory of God.”<sup>81</sup> The heavenly Jerusalem is filled with glory (Rev 21:11,23; 22:5). The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. “Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” (Rev 22:17). This vision then comes to the conclusion with the cry of the Church: “Amen. Come, Lord

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<sup>78</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 113-115.

<sup>79</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. For Wainwright, it is only recently that theology has come to give prominence again to the theme of the Eucharist as “constructive of the Church, and particularly of its unity” (1 Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-13). According to Thomas Aquinas, “*Corpus mysticum est res in Eucharistica, res huius sacramenti est unitatis corporis mystici*.” Wainwright also notes how the Fathers of the Church, such as Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, John Damascene, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom and Isidore of Pelusium saw Eucharistic communion as the source of unity in one body. For “the reception of the divine mysteries is called communion because it unites us with Christ and makes us sharers in his Kingdom.” Thus, we all “become one body of Christ, and one blood, and members one of another, being made corporal with Christ.” 116.

<sup>80</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 117.

<sup>81</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 117.



Jesus!’” (Rev 22: 21). In short, in the light of this one prayer for the advent of Christ, we can understand the relationship between the Eucharist and the Parousia. Final fulfilment, certainty of salvation, and eternal hope are all expressed here in terms of the Eucharist as eschatological banquet.

### **3.4 Critical reflections**

We already discern the significant ways in which Wainwright’s approach suggests certain imbalances in the traditional theology and enriches it with a recovered appreciation of the eschatological content of the Eucharist as a foretaste of the banquet of the Kingdom. He has shown how the study of the Eucharist may be shaped anew by the rich New Testament and patristic heritage that recognizes the relationship between the transforming action of the Spirit upon the bread and wine and the transformation of Christians into Christ’s body. Ultimately, such Eucharistic eschatology confronts Christian hope by raising several existential questions concerning Christian responsibility and commitment towards the future glory, which the Eucharist expresses and effects. In what follows, however, for our purpose, some observations may be made concerning Wainwright’s eschatological approach to the Eucharist.

Firstly, Wainwright has combined an outstanding collection of sources including the Old and the New Testament traditions, classical religious hymns and creeds, early Christian traditions of worship and liturgical arts to examine the Eucharist in the light of eschatology. His investigation is not something simply elaborated in accord with a scholastic system of metaphysics. Rather, he adopts a distinctive style to suit his methodology, namely, the liturgical perspective of theology. In his own creative manner, Wainwright is faithful to the dominant biblical themes, to the prophetic and eschatological tradition of the Eucharist. What happens in the present already has the character of the future reality. Hope for what we are and for the future of the world is affirmed in the Eucharist, for it celebrates, in the form of anticipation, the fulfilment of all creation in God.

Secondly, it is in the Eucharistic celebration that the community of believers is manifested and regarded “as expressive of unity and as creative of unity”<sup>82</sup> towards the final Kingdom. Here Wainwright’s approach is valuable in its stress on the need for intercommunion. As he strongly argues for his theory of intercommunion:

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between truth as we may at present apprehend it and love as we are commanded to practise it, eschatology then impels us to choose *love*, and that means intercommunion... When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between a particular pattern of internal order and the missionary witness to the kingdom to be made before the world, eschatology then impels us to choose *missionary witness*, and that means intercommunion... When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between the church as institution and the church as event, eschatology then impels us to choose *event*, and that means intercommunion.<sup>83</sup>

Wainwright touches on the inter-communitarian character of the Eucharist as a proleptic manifestation, within the realities of history, of an authentic life of communion. He thus opens the way for a clear and significant re-examination of missionary witness to the final Kingdom in terms of Christian unity. While the ecumenical movement still sees obstacles

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<sup>82</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 141.

<sup>83</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 144-146. Intercommunion is a vexed question in the Roman Catholic Church in particular.<sup>83</sup> Yet an understanding of the Eucharist, as “holy communion” and as eschatological gift, is inherently open to the further experience of intercommunion and Eucharistic hospitality among Christians. Although numerous members the Christian Churches have engaged in ecumenical conversations and made a great progress in recent decades, we are yet to see any significant movement of the Christian Churches towards each other. However, intercommunion has more than one interpretation. Jeffrey Vanderwilt provides a brief examination of the current norms for Eucharistic sharing among Christians. He writes: “For Protestant Christians, these values include hospitality, unity by stages, and recognition that the Eucharist is Christ’s and not our own. For Catholics, these values include unity, apostolic succession in ministry, validity, and the recognition of pastoral necessity. For Orthodox and other Eastern Christians, these values include communion, economy, and the recognition of schism.” See Jeffrey Vanderwilt, “Eucharistic Sharing: Revising the Question,” *Theological Studies* 63.4 (2002), 827. Ecumenical conversations, however, have moved by and large beyond accounting for differences on controverted issues to a common renewal of Eucharistic theology that may rest upon different foundation. See David N. Power, “Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation,” *Theological Studies* 57 (1996), 587, 610. See also Walter Kasper, “The Future of Ecumenism,” *Theology Digest* 49.3 (2002). “The goal of ecumenism, says Walter Kasper, is not organic church union but unity in diversity, and the way to unity is not conversion to the Catholic Church but to Jesus Christ.” 203. For a similar view, see Wolfgang Klausnitzer, “One Church or Unity of the Churches?” *Theology Digest* 43.3 (2001); See Edward Kilmartin, “The Lima Text on Eucharist,” *Catholic Perspective on ‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,’* ed. Michael A. Fahey, (Washington: University Press of America, 1986). See Gerard Kelly, “Intercommunion and Eucharistic Hospitality,” *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Margaret Press (Sydney, Australia: St Pauls, 2001), 112-115. All of these developments have helped prepare the way for a series of ecumenical agreements on various issues such as Eucharistic memorial, Eucharistic presence, and even Eucharistic sacrifice.

for intercommunion, Wainwright provides the basic criterion for achieving unity. He highlights “love” as the central and eschatological message of Jesus, that is, the only reason for hope of becoming the “one body of Christ” (1Tim 1:1; 1 Cor 10:17; 11:33; Gal 3:28). It is the eschatological character of the Eucharist that can help us to address the question of intercommunion and identify directions for further ecumenical work. The Eucharist can be understood not only as the final goal but also as movement, a progress towards this realization, namely, an eschatological event of communion.

Thirdly, to say that the Eucharist “epitomizes the divine Mystery”<sup>84</sup> is to connect the Eucharist with the mystery of the Kingdom. Theologically, this notion of the Eucharist as mystery is very important in a number of ways. As deeply rooted in the biblical message of hope, the Eucharist enlightens faith in God as Holy Mystery, who is continuously present and active in the history of human events. This is the dominant concept of the New Testament itself, as the early Christian community eagerly looked to the fulfilment of God’s transcendental promises. The Eucharist is a participation in the worship of heaven.

Since the mystery is primarily understood as “the secret counsel of God fixed before all ages, to bring all to salvation in Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:25-27; 1 Cor 2:6-10; Eph 1:9; 3:1-12; 6:19; Col 1:24-29; 4:3; 1 Tim 3:16), the idea of the Eucharist as mystery of the Kingdom is fundamentally in line with the Christian understanding of the transcendence and immanence of God. Wainwright is fundamentally concerned that “it is a divine mystery how God can give Himself to His creature and yet remain ‘outside’ as the giver, how God can be ‘known’ by men and yet remain unfathomable abyss. If this will remain a mystery in the final Kingdom, then so must the meal which the Lord has given us as sign of the Kingdom also be characterized by the same mystery.”<sup>85</sup> In short, Wainwright is able to bring together God’s transcendence and immanence, God’s being beyond time and God’s being involved in the world of time. He notes that, at the Eucharist, “the bread and wine become the firstfruits of that renewed creation which will be so entirely

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<sup>84</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 154.

<sup>85</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 107.

submitted to the divine lordship that it will enjoy total penetration by the divine glory while yet remaining distinct from the transcendent God it worships.”<sup>86</sup> Thus the mystery of the Eucharist stands at the heart of the question of the relation between transcendence and immanence.

Fourthly, in a related way and with great concern to maintain the transcendent character of God, Wainwright argues in favor of the vertical-horizontal model of Eucharistic eschatology, in which God may penetrate time, and time is, as it were, enveloped by eternity. There is, however, no “realized eschatology” in the sense that the “not yet” of the future is completely exhausted in the “already” of the present experience in the Eucharist.

The eternity invades time in a moment, the supernatural breaks into the natural, the heavenly bursts upon the earthly scene, and at each moment the individual may be confronted with final judgement. Yet time goes on: the Parousia of Christ is still awaited, we are not in our resurrection bodies, the perfect community does not yet rejoice together in the unclouded vision of God.<sup>87</sup>

The whole problem of continuity and discontinuity can be brought into focus by a theology of the Eucharist that begins with God’s promise and recalls Christ as the *eschatos* of hope given to all creation. He is “the One who has come, who continues to come in a hidden manner, who will come as the personal bond between what already *is* in the present and what *will be* in the future.”<sup>88</sup> This understanding provides the basis for redefining the unity in difference between the holy and the profane, thus allowing progress in the establishment of the Kingdom.

Wainwright rejects every dualistic concept of the historical sphere and that of God’s eternal purpose. Since at the Eucharist, the future invades the present to fill the moment with the content that is part of God’s eternal purpose, the experience of this event must draw us to a greater participation in history. So his view that “the Eucharistic celebration does not leave the world unchanged” is relevant in suggesting a return to the historical

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<sup>86</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 110.

<sup>87</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 15.

realism within which Christian worship makes sense.<sup>89</sup> Christian hope of the final Kingdom would be, therefore, the opposite of one that suggested a withdrawal from the world, from cultural and secular activities. Here the strength of Wainwright's eschatological approach to the Eucharist is that, by its very nature, it fosters the embodiment of the message Christians proclaim. The Eucharist puts the building of the future at the centre of history and, consequently, establishes positive correspondence between the life of the Church, the life of the world, and the divine Kingdom with its values, such as freedom, love, peace and justice. So Christian hope for salvation is an eschatological historical continuum, which will ultimately come to its consummation.

Fifthly, according to Wainwright, the Eucharist appreciates and celebrates the inherent value of God's created cosmos and the gracious will of God to save all. As God is continuously present and active in the world, God's promise is the only reason for eschatological hope: "From the whole of humanity God chooses the Eucharistic community, and from the whole of the rest of creation this bread and wine, in order to show forth His purpose for the whole universe."<sup>90</sup> The eschatological vision of the Eucharist enhances the possibilities of future salvation and fulfilment for all humanity and the cosmos.

While Wainwright has not written a complete treatise on the connection between eucharistic hope and universal salvation, his eschatological insights regarding the unity of the whole cosmos and the inclusiveness of all reality open up new possibilities for reconsidering the controversial doctrine that all will be saved (*Apocatastasis*) that might be consonant with the Christian faith. He states: "To obviate the charge of universalist heresy, though I would prefer to risk that charge if the alternative was to give up hope that all men will be saved (Rom 11:32; 1 Tim 2:4)...In the Eucharist, the accent certainly falls on the gracious will of God to give Himself to men in a way which makes free human obedience both possible and a joy."<sup>91</sup> It is noteworthy that such a model of qualified universalism finds expression quite explicitly in the Christian liturgy and has been widely

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<sup>89</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 150.

<sup>90</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 149-150.

<sup>91</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 150.

associated with the eschatological thoughts of the Fathers (such as Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa) and the contemporary theologians (such as Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar).<sup>92</sup>

Besides the valuable insights afforded by Wainwright's eschatological approach to the Eucharist, it also presents certain problems, which require further attention. Two of these criticisms, however, need to be made here:

Firstly, while Wainwright's liturgical method of approaching theology is impressive, at the same time it is fair to suggest that his liturgical and biblical theology needs updating, by entering into critical dialogue with a more anthropological style of eschatology and other resources present in our culture. Although Christian realism is not confined to any system of philosophy, when it asserts itself with regard to the future, it must be able to confront secular varieties of hope. It appears, for example, that Wainwright does not incorporate in his work the benefits of social sciences and the various critiques of religion (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud). Eminent sociologists and philosophers with strongly humanist perspectives (Bloch, Weber, Durkheim, Becker) are not mentioned at all.

It would be interesting to see what new contribution Wainwright can make more specifically to the conversation between theology and social science, critical thought and modern anthropology and how Christian worship in light of eschatology can open up new possibilities for the crisis of hope, the questions of despair, the autonomy of human

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<sup>92</sup> See G. Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life - A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Wainwright writes: "The substantial argument resides in the inconceivability of the opposite intention towards any of his creatures on the part of a Creator whose motive in creation is irreducibly love. A love which took self-giving to the point of suffering crucifixion is likely to be deep enough to persist while ever there is any chance of response. God's grace may then be expected to assume and develop even the slightest human motion towards love. Considerations of theodicy will point to particular divine care for the individual whose own capacity for love has been intolerably restricted by nature or society. It may be that the only way to fail salvation is by wilful refusal. Programmatic universalism would be a totalitarian threat to the freedom which must characterize any human response in kind to the love of God towards us. Deliberate closure to the love of God to the point of irretrievability spells death. That such death should be subjectively experienced, permanently and eternally, makes no sense. Hell will be empty, though God may continue to bear in his heart the wounds he incurred through taking the risk of love in creation. This vision matches, I think, the liturgical practice of the Church. Prayer is made for the whole human race in all its needs and in all its needs and in the hope that all people will come to enjoy salvation in the divine Kingdom." 459-460.

consciousness, existentialism and personalism, suffering and death. Our times face new social crises, demands and critical challenges, and a solution may be found in a theology of the Eucharist that speaks to the dynamics of hope and to the search for meaning and fulfilment. Here, in my opinion, the influential sociological literature of the twentieth-century, which records human insights and wisdom as much as philosophical writings should have a special place in this entire theological thinking. In general, philosophical reasoning sharpens the questions to be asked, and thus illuminates the condition of human beings and their world in all its aspects. My point is that while Christian worship can be a primary and privileged expression of theology, without locating the meaning and purpose of human history in the realized view of eschatological hope, Eucharistic theology can be “idealistic” and inadequate.

Secondly, it is regrettable that Wainwright dismisses the doctrine of *transubstantiation* without adequate justification and without any attempt to seek a further theological intelligence of the Eucharistic presence in eschatological terms. We shall take up this issue in more detail in Chapter 8, considering the similarities and differences between the five eschatological approaches of our theologians, so as to develop a more positive account of the Eucharistic presence. For our more limited purpose, one wonders if Wainwright adequately understands the Catholic position, given that the intent of this doctrine is actually to avoid magical views about the sacrament.<sup>93</sup> We can agree with his criticism, that in post-Tridentine theology, the doctrine of the Real Presence was impoverished or excessively simplified. Attention was focused on an instantaneous change in the elements brought about in a valid rite, so that it seemed as if the presence of Christ could be produced and confined to the elements. Such a theology tended to neglect

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<sup>93</sup> What is criticized is considered as weaknesses in its philosophical explanation. Of course, there has been the danger of viewing the change in an exaggerated materialism or physical bodiliness. But this is the very thing that the introduction of the concept was meant to safeguard against. From a deeper study of the history of doctrine, we may take account of the fact that the deepest intention of the Tridentine doctrine was to set the parameters for faith, and so transubstantiation is maintained as “a suitable and proper term” to communicate the essential Catholic insight regarding the Eucharist. The term should be understood not as explaining *how* the Eucharistic change takes place, but rather as affirming the reality of Christ’s presence and of the mysterious and radical change, which takes place. See Raymond Moloney, “Eucharist,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 350.

the New Testament and patristic tradition recognizing Christ's manifold presence, which the Eucharist expresses and brings about.

However, to say, as Wainwright does, that "We should therefore in particular avoid any doctrine of the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine which threatens to give more prominence to Christ as food than to Christ as host and table-fellow"<sup>94</sup> seems unsatisfactory, in that it tends to see no need for a clarification of sacramental terminology. In fact, what is primarily challenged by modern criticism of the doctrine is the use of Aristotelian causal categories to describe the reality of this presence and the problems it has created. In more recent Catholic theology, new interpretations have been proposed, invoking a more personalist approach and one more in keeping with the new notion of symbol in theology.<sup>95</sup> The point of these interpretations is that changes in context and use entail changes in meaning and identity. Such an approach also situates the change within the context of interpersonal, sacramental encounter between the Risen Christ and the Christian community, the context where the change has meaning. Here, in a way that is more apt to do justice to the presence of the Risen Christ among the believers, Tony Kelly writes:

In this perspective, the real presence of Christ can be understood not as though he were "contained" in the Eucharistic elements, but more in that the bread and wine are "contained" in Christ in a new and final manner. The reality of Christ does not so much supplant the realities of the bread and wine but, rather, enables these elements of creation and human culture to attain their fullest reality in him. By being transformed into his body and blood, the bread and wine are not less than

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<sup>94</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 108.

<sup>95</sup> See Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 224-252; Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (London, Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 90-96; Frank O' Loughlin, *Christ Present in the Eucharist* (Strathfield, N.S.W.: ST Pauls Publications, 2000), 45-77. For a more ecumenical discussion on the Eucharistic presence, see Gerard Kelly, "Intercommunion and Eucharistic Hospitality," *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Margaret Press (Sydney, Australia: St Pauls, 2001). In its first agreed statement, the so-called Windsor Statement published in 1971, we read: "The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of glory. In the Eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new humanity: elements of the first creation become pledges and firstfruits of the new heaven and the new earth." 70. See also John McKenna, "Eucharistic Presence: An Invitation to Dialogue," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999), 294-317.



they were previously, but fully and finally what they are meant to be: “For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink” (Jn 6:55)<sup>96</sup>

This way of thinking about the change that occurs in the bread and wine bypasses the traditional philosophical conceptuality. Kelly recognizes both the sacramental sign of Christ’s presence and the personal relationship between Christ and the Christian community, which is the result of that eschatological presence. Such a concise elaboration of the doctrine of the Eucharistic presence and the change of the bread and wine in various aspects of eschatology communicates the reality of the Eucharistic mystery more readily to contemporary culture and modern sensibility than the traditional metaphysical approach. Since, however, the Eucharist belongs to the mystery of God’s relationship with humanity, any model of presence would be inadequate for an understanding of Christ’s sacramental presence, because the mystery can never be fully explained by intra-mundane categories.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Wainwright is to be appreciated as one of the few contemporary theologians to produce a major treatment of the inherently eschatological nature of the Eucharist. He has considered three dominant images, which expresses central dimensions of the Eucharist: the messianic feast, the advent of Christ and the firstfruits of the Kingdom. These diverse and significant features provide a framework for constructing a comprehensive understanding of the subject of hope as it is expressed in the biblical themes, liturgical texts and theological traditions of the Eucharist.

As has been discussed, Wainwright’s eschatological approach contains a polarity of the “already” and the “not yet,” concerns the individual in community, implies both a divine

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<sup>96</sup> See Tony Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2001), 86. In this very logic of self-giving love, the bread and wine brought to the Eucharist become in reality (ontologically) the crucified and risen humanity of Christ, our spiritual food and drink by power of the Holy Spirit. It is true in the biblical context that the Eucharist is prefigured or based on the symbolic reality of a meal in which Christ gives nothing else and nothing less than his free gift of self. The celebration of this eschatological table-fellowship could, of course, be taken right back to the Passover and the covenant meal on Mount Sinai (Ex 12-13, 24), and even to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

gift and its human appropriation, embraces the material as well as the spiritual, allows progress in the establishment of the Kingdom, includes a moment of judgement and renewal, and is universal in scope. He stresses that the Eucharist provides a foretaste of the eternal Kingdom and expresses the eschatological relation between the present and future, time and eternity, provisional and ultimate reality of the Kingdom.<sup>97</sup> The whole emphasis of his work is on the hopeful feasting as already a sign of the new heaven and the new earth in which risen humanity will enjoy perfect fellowship with God in the consummated Kingdom. As he expresses it:

At every Eucharist the church is in fact praying that the parousia may take place at that very moment, and if the Father ‘merely’ sends His Son in the sacramental mode we have at least a taste of that future which God reserves for Himself to give one day.<sup>98</sup>

It is in the Eucharist that, by its character as “a taste of the other, a real taste, but not the fullness,”<sup>99</sup> Christians are drawn into the tension of waiting upon even as they wait for the fulfilment of history in Christ. The Eucharist is thus a concrete sign and image of God’s promised Kingdom.

As a sign and image of the Kingdom, the Eucharist “is not identical with the Kingdom of God itself, and yet it shares the nature of that Kingdom.”<sup>100</sup> In other words, the Eucharist announces and initiates the coming of the Kingdom of God. This concept of anticipation serves not only to indicate the connection between present and future salvation but also provides a way of understanding God’s promise in Christ, that is, the foundation of Christian hope, in terms of continuity and difference. This is also the true heart of the eschatological dimension of the Christian life, because it is in the Eucharist that the glorified Christ, the eternal consummation of history, becomes present in time, renewing, and confirming the reality of eschatological hope and working out God’s future. We can agree with Wainwright that the Eucharist necessarily involves a continual openness to becoming what will be, and thus inspires images of the future in the light of the past and

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<sup>97</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 147.

<sup>98</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 67.

<sup>99</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>100</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 153.

in the reality of the present. It participates in history and yet points to eschatological reality. In short, the shape of Wainwright's eschatological approach to the Eucharist is determined by the whole horizon of the life and ministry of Jesus, which is the announcement of the coming reign of God. On this basis, the Eucharist is understood as a foretaste of the messianic banquet. It expresses the desire for communion with Christ in eschatological fullness. Thus there is in the Eucharist a straining forward to welcome Christ, the one who died and rose and will come in glory. We now turn to explore Durrwell's approach to the Eucharist as the real presence of the risen and glorified Christ.

## Chapter 4    François-Xavier Durrwell: The Eucharist as The Real Presence of the Risen Christ

### 4.1 Introduction

French biblical scholar François-Xavier Durrwell approaches the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology from the perspective of the Paschal Mystery in many ways similar to Wainwright's treatment, but with some differences as will become apparent. While Wainwright recognizes the close connection between the Eucharist and the meal of the Kingdom, Durrwell understands the Eucharist as a sacrament of the Parousia. Durrwell also adopts a different method of approach from that of Wainwright. Where Wainwright combines a collection of sources including the Scriptures, early Christian traditions of worship and liturgical scholarship to present a systematic reflection on the Eucharist and eschatology, Durrwell constructs a biblical theology of the Eucharist and its relationship to the eschatological significance of the Christ-event.

Born in Alsace in 1912, Durrwell later joined the Redemptorist Order. He had intended to become a missionary but, after taking his degree at the Biblical Institute in Rome, he taught Scripture for twelve years. He later became the provincial superior of his religious order and professor of theology at the Redemptorist Seminary in Strasbourg.

Durrwell's major work, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study* (1960),<sup>1</sup> presents a comprehensive synthesis of the biblical texts dealing with the resurrection of Christ. In this study, Durrwell argues that the resurrection of Christ is to be understood as a permanent and eternal divine action: in the resurrection, Christ is raised to the fullness of glory, the eschatological plenitude of divine sonship.<sup>2</sup> Other works have since appeared on the doctrine of the Eucharist, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ* (1974),<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F.X. Durrwell, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> See Durrwell, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, 130.

<sup>3</sup> F.X. Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, trans. S. Attanasio (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1974).

an eschatological approach to the Eucharistic presence, and *L'Eucharistie: Sacrement pascal* (1980),<sup>4</sup> a more intensive study of the Eucharist in light of the Paschal Mystery.

Catholic Tradition holds that in the Eucharist Christ in a unique way is really present in his fullness with the Church. The nature of Eucharistic presence, however, has posed difficult questions for theology. What after all does it mean to be really present? To what extent must we speak of the real presence? How is the idea of change to be adequately expressed? Traditional sacramental theology developed the doctrine of *transubstantiation* to express the uniqueness of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the radical change in the bread and wine. During the controversies and confusion of the Reformation period, this teaching was reaffirmed and clarified by the Council of Trent.

We note, however, that the purpose of the Tridentine doctrine, like all doctrines, is to set parameters for Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> So the term "transubstantiation," as officially employed by the Church, is not an absolute, but rather a most fitting word (*convenienter, proprie*) for affirming the reality of Christ's presence and for the mysterious and radical change. It is theoretically possible to express the specificity of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist in a different manner. Some major developments in contemporary reflection have sought to bring a new understanding to the traditional notion. Such terms as *transignification* or *transfinalization* present an alternative style of approach, which is more acceptable to contemporary consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

Considering the most modern approaches as well as the scholastic theory, Durrwell observes that they have "one point in common: the point of departure. They start out from earthly realities: the bread, wine, meal, the gathering, the symbolism employed

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<sup>4</sup> F. X. Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal* (Paris: Cerf, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> See Gerard Kelly, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of Transubstantiation," *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Margaret Press (Sydney, Australia: St Pauls, 2001), 57-60.

<sup>6</sup> See Raymond Moloney, "Eucharist," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 350. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (London, Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 90-91; Edward Schillebeeckx, "Transubstantiation, Transfinalization, Transignification," *Worship* 40 (1966), 360. See also Joseph M. Powers, *Eucharistic Mystery* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 125-127.

on earth in human relations.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, these earthly realities could never provide, so Durrwell argues, an adequate explanation for the Christian mystery, for “the painting of a master must be contemplated in its true light in order for its beauty to be grasped.”<sup>8</sup> He then devotes himself to a very different method of approach. In his contribution to the reinterpretation of the doctrine of Eucharistic presence, Durrwell claims that, at the heart of the realities of this world, “it is always from the Beyond of these realities, that is to say, from their eschatological depths, that the Christian message comes.”<sup>9</sup> He continues:

Christian reflection must start out from eschatology through which a reality is Christian in order to be true, faithful to its subject. The principle of intelligibility of the Christian mystery is in [the mystery itself]. Neither the bread, nor the wine, nor the meal, nor the gathering, whether grasped according to a philosophy of intention or of nature can verify the Eucharistic presence. The key of the mystery is elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

Durrwell’s position is explicit: “The Eucharist opens from within. It is in the house itself that its key must be sought.”<sup>11</sup> He attempts to demonstrate that it is in the Eucharist as the Paschal Mystery that the key to the eschatological character of the sacrament can be found. Here by the terms “Paschal Mystery” he means essentially the events of Christ’s death and resurrection, the events of his Passover to new life as the risen and eschatological Lord.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the interconnection of the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery, taking the Paschal Mystery as the point of departure. Firstly, we will discuss Durrwell’s theology of the Paschal Mystery as a basis for an eschatological approach to the Eucharist. If the Eucharist opens from within, our question then concerns what eschatological character of the Eucharist would emerge when it is explored in the light of the Paschal Mystery. Secondly, we will pursue questions regarding the different ways of describing the Eucharist as sacrament of the Parousia. Thirdly, we shall consider the modality of the Eucharistic presence as it is situated in

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<sup>7</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 29.

the Paschal Mystery. This chapter will conclude with a critical reflection on Durrwell's approach to the Eucharist as eschatological mystery.

## 4.2 The Paschal Mystery as starting point

Durrwell's Eucharistic study aims to be thoroughly biblical and grounded in a Catholic perspective. Contrary to the pattern of traditional studies on the Eucharist, he deliberately seeks no recourse to a philosophical system, but remains firmly within the limits of a biblical theology. He insists that the meaning of the Eucharist resides in what lies beyond earthly realities.<sup>13</sup> He proposes that the Eucharist can only be understood in the context in which it was instituted, that is, a Passover meal. It is apparent that Durrwell here interprets the Eucharist as the sacrament of the eternal paschal meal, the feast of the Kingdom of God. As he expresses it:

To understand the Eucharist as though it were a book, it is necessary to read it in the same way in which St. Paul understood the Bible and in a way in which the sense of all Christian reality is to be grasped: starting from the Paschal Christ, who is the eschatological mystery. The theology of the Eucharist is teleology, a discourse setting out from the end-time...Already the Synoptics place the Eucharistic institution in the eschatological context in the perspective of the feast of the Kingdom (Mk 14:25), the paschal meal in its fulfillment (Lk 22:14-18): they understand it in this relationship.<sup>14</sup>

Durrwell then draws on the New Testament and patristic sources to argue that all Jesus's preaching on the Kingdom found its "point of crystallization"<sup>15</sup> in the Eucharist as a celebration of the Pasch of Christ. He observes:

Firstly, the account of the Last Supper begins with the announcement of the Passover "fulfilled" and celebrated in the Kingdom of God and concludes with the evocation of the new wine that Jesus will drink in this Kingdom (Lk 22:15-18; Mk 14:25; Mt 26:29). In fact, from the beginning of the Church, the Eucharist has been called

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<sup>13</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> See F. X. Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. This is my own translation from the French original text of the author. "L'eucharistie, ce livre à déchiffrer, il faut le lire à la manière dont saint Paul comprenait la Bible, à la manière dont on cherche à saisir le sens de toute réalité chrétienne: à partir du Christ pascal, qui est le mystère eschatologique. La théologie de l'eucharistie est une téléologie, un discours à partir de la fin...Déjà les Synoptiques placent l'institution eucharistique dans l'axe eschatologique, dans la perspective du festin du Royaume (Mk 14:25), du repas de la pâque en son accomplissement (Lk 22: 14-18): ils la comprennent donc dans cette relation." 29.

<sup>15</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14.

*Paschale mysterium*.<sup>16</sup> There is abundant evidence, Durrwell argues, within the New Testament and patristic literature that the early Christians came to see the connection between the Eucharist and the Pasch of Christ, that is, the mystery of his death, his resurrection and his presence in the world. As Durrwell remarks:

In the patristic texts, gleaned from among many others, the conviction is expressed that the sacrament concerns the Paschal Mystery and that the reference to the death and resurrection [of Christ] is essential...It is certain that Jesus has instituted [the Eucharist] at least in the Paschal climate and that the evangelists have constructed their accounts to illustrate the Paschal motif. The choice of the context interprets the Eucharist as Paschal meal. According to Luke: "Jesus has ardently desired to eat this paschal meal before he suffers" (Lk 22:15-18). Inserted in this way, after the consummation of the Passover meal, looking forward to a future and every paschal meal in its fullness, the Eucharist presents itself as the paschal liturgy.<sup>17</sup>

Thus following the Old Testament Passover ritual, the accounts of the Last Supper are charged with eschatological symbolism and meaning. This meal, as celebrated at the Passover time, contains within it the memorial of the past events of Israel's history, and intimately links the sacrificial death of Jesus with the eschatological advent of God's Kingdom.

Secondly, the Eucharist is evoked by the name of spiritual food, for the Body of Christ, which Christians receive in communion, is that of "Christ-Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45), Christ in his Paschal Mystery, that is, in the eschatological plenitude of his resurrection.<sup>18</sup> In other words, because the Eucharistic meal is the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:20), the food promised and given is the body of the glorified Christ (1 Cor 11:29); it is the heavenly reality. As Durrwell argues:

Earthly flesh is of no use; eaten like an earthly food, it would have no meaning for eternal life, "It is the spirit that gives life, and the flesh has nothing to offer.

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<sup>16</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. This is my translation into English. "Dans ces textes patristiques glanés parmi beaucoup d'autres, s'exprime la conviction que ce sacrement est pascal, que la référence à la mort et à la résurrection est *essentielle*...Il est certain que Jésus l'a institué du moins dans une atmosphère pascalle, que les évangélistes en ont composé le récit 'en fonction du motif pascal.' Le choix de ce contexte interprète l'eucharistie comme un repas pascal. Selon Luc, Jésus avait 'desiré ardemment manger cette pâque avant de souffrir' (Lk 22:15-18). Insérée ici, après la pâque abolie, face à la future et toute proche pâque de plénitude, l'eucharistie se présente comme un rite pascal." 35-36.

<sup>18</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 36.



The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are of life” (Jn 6:61-63), or eschatological realities.<sup>19</sup>

Understood in this fashion, nowhere is this meaning better expressed than in the Eucharist as the sacrament of the real presence of the Risen Christ. The bread and wine are, in a real sense, the spiritual food and drink of the resurrection, the fullness of the mystery of Christ. According to Durrwell, since the notion of the Eucharistic body joins with the notion of the risen body, the Eucharistic and the eschatological are explicitly connected.

Thirdly, the Gospel of John, as Durrwell understands it, describes the whole life of Jesus as a journey towards his resurrection. It is the “hour” for which he was always preparing (Jn 2:4; 12:27). The Passover is thus the context both for the Last Supper and for the imminent death of Jesus (Jn 13:1; 19:14). As Durrwell notes:

The paschal hour is proclaimed in the transparency of signs, which indicate the future. Before presenting the sign of the multiplied bread, the evangelist [John] is careful to make clear as in the account of the Temple being reconstructed in three days or at the beginning of the recital of the Passion: “Now, the Passover was at hand” (Jn 6:4; cf. 2:13; 13:1). The bread from heaven, promised in the signs, belongs to the paschal meal. This celestial bread is, however, “the flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). The Eucharist is bound up with the mystery of the death and the glory Christ.<sup>20</sup>

Christ’s death is thus essentially related to his glorification; otherwise his death would hold no salvific meaning. Christ’s death is understood as a Passover, a passage, a rising up to God (Jn 13:1; 6:62). Because this summit of Christ’s movement towards God is, moreover, presented in the form of eternal glorification, the resurrection remains ever present and ever actual. Thus as a celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the Eucharist is eschatological; it embraces the death, resurrection and glorification of

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<sup>19</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Durrwell, *L’eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “L’heure pascale s’annonce dans la transparence de signes avant-coureurs. Avant de présenter le signe des pains multipliés, l’évangéliste a soin de préciser, comme avant la parole du Temple reconstruit en trois jours, comme au début du récit de la passion: ‘Proche était la pâque’ (Jn 6:4; cf. 2:13; 13:1). Le pain du ciel promis dans le signe appartient au mystère pascal...Cependant ce pain céleste est ‘la chair (livrée) pour la vie du monde’ (Jn 6:51). L’eucharistie appartient au mystère de la mort et de la gloire de Jésus.” 36.

Christ, in whom the Kingdom of God is established and the summit of salvation history is achieved.<sup>21</sup> As Durrwell explains:

The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ, who in his paschal event is made present to the Church, being offered to her in the death in which He is glorified... The Eucharist is [also] the sacrament of the resurrection of Jesus among his disciples; Luke reports it in the account where the Lord shows himself to the two disciples “in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:35).”<sup>22</sup>

In this way the Eucharist is connected with the resurrection in the one saving Paschal Mystery. Durrwell recognizes that “the whole Eucharistic institution, in St. Paul, is suffused in the Paschal Mystery; the very death that proclaims the Eucharist is that of the Lord” (1 Cor 10: 3; 11:26).<sup>23</sup> When God raised Jesus from the dead, God marked him out as “the holy and righteous one” (Acts 3:14), as the one in whom “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19). If Christ preserves eternally his own true character in the actuality of his paschal sacrifice, then, Durrwell argues, the resurrection does not follow the death of Christ, but rather coincides with it.<sup>24</sup> In the Eucharist, the resurrection is thus presented as Christ’s coming in glory. The death and the glory of Christ constitute a unique mystery in the Eucharist.

On the basis of his study of biblical texts, Durrwell approaches the Eucharist as an eschatological meal, a communion with the Risen Christ. In other words, the Eucharist is “the Paschal Christ who comes into His earthly Church.”<sup>25</sup> It is in the Eucharist as the paschal banquet, the sacrament of the Kingdom that the eschatological significance of the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ is celebrated. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ in his Paschal Mystery.<sup>26</sup> Beyond earthly realities and philosophies that attempt to explain them,<sup>27</sup> the explanation of the Eucharist is contained in the Paschal Mystery itself.

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<sup>21</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “L’eucharistie est le sacrement du Christ qui, en sa pâque, se rend présent à l’Église, s’offre à elle, dans la mort en laquelle il est glorifié... L’eucharistie est le sacrement de la résurrection de Jésus parmi ses disciples; Luc le signifie dans le récit où le Seigneur se manifeste à deux disciples ‘dans la fraction du pain’” (Lk 24:35). 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14. See also Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14.

### 4.3 The Eucharist as sacrament of the Parousia

We move now to a consideration of the Eucharist as sacrament of the Parousia. For Durrwell, the notion of *Parousia* refers in the New Testament to the coming of the crucified and Risen Christ in glory: “It speaks of His epiphany, that is, his appearance to the Church.”<sup>28</sup> Its significant role is not to bring the history of salvation to a close, but “to fulfill it in us in its entirety.”<sup>29</sup> The fullness of salvation is nothing other than the Paschal Christ, “who renders Himself present to his Church, and to whom the Church unites herself.”<sup>30</sup> So the Paschal Mystery not only reveals that, through his death, Christ opened himself to the infinite gift of new life, but also points to his coming to Christians with the gift of himself, including new life for them. Here the Christ of the Parousia is the Paschal Christ, eternal in the death by which he is glorified and sent to the Church.<sup>31</sup> In this perspective, Durrwell identifies two related points.

#### 4.3.1 The coming of Christ as permanent actuality

Durrwell returns to the New Testament sources and observes that Jesus never ceases to proclaim his coming. He is always “the One who comes” (Mt 11:3; Jn 11:27). At the beginning of his ministry he comes to announce the coming of God’s Kingdom (Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:17; Lk 4:14-30). The advent of the Kingdom eventually becomes merged with the coming of the Son of Man in the glory and power of God. Durrwell observes that the theme of the resurrection is implicitly introduced in the narratives of the Synoptic writers as an interpretation of his coming in glory. (Mt 26:64; 28:18). In this way, the resurrection is regarded as the irruption of the eschaton into the world (Phil 2:9-11; Rom 10:9).<sup>32</sup>

Durrwell argues that, in the name of the resurrection, “one accords to Jesus the title of Lord, which is that of the final coming” (Phil 2:10; 2; Thess 2:14). This, he argues, is why the early Christians maintained the close connection between the glorification of

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<sup>28</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

Jesus and his final coming. They recognized the resurrection as “the Good News realized” (Acts 2: 27-36; 13:32) and the coming of Christ among his people as the arrival of all God’s blessing (Acts 3:25; 26:23), that is, the total fulfilment of the divine promise (Acts 13:32). We can find a similar insight in John’s Gospel. The proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus is incorporated in the theme of the Parousia and epiphany: “I am going away and I shall come” (Jn 14:18-28) or “In a short time you will no longer see me, and then a short time later you will see me” (Jn 16:16). What is affirmed, as Durrwell understands it, in these New Testament sources, is that “eschatology is accomplished in the death of Christ in which He is glorified in the fullness of God.”<sup>33</sup> The Christ whose arrival is awaited is “already” present in the Eucharist.

From this biblical perspective, Durrwell emphasizes an understanding of the Parousia as a permanent actuality. All the eschatological attributes of Christ, such as lordship of history and ruler of creation, are a reality from the moment of the resurrection, the moment of his being lifted up in which he is raised on the Cross (Jn 12:32; 19:37). As “the lamb standing upright in glory and slaughtered (Rev 5:6), he is always “the Son of God in his truth” (Rom 1:4), “loved by God, the Father” precisely in his glorifying death, the summit of his self-giving love,<sup>34</sup> for Christ himself is the Paschal Mystery. Nothing can be added to the moment when Christ is accorded the fullness of glory.

Thus the Pasch of Christ is, in Durrwell’s view, the *mystère parousiaque*,<sup>35</sup> that is, the mystery of Christ’s coming to and his presence in the Church. In other words, only in the light of the eternal mystery of death and resurrection has the Parousia, signified by the coming of the Kingdom of God, already been inaugurated. The Paschal Mystery is “at one and the same time the Parousia.”<sup>36</sup> Death and resurrection and final coming are brought together as essential and complementary elements in the one mystery of the Eucharist. This affirmation is considered to be at the heart of paschal theology, and therefore to be pointing to the inner eschatological significance of the Eucharist.

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<sup>33</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 42.

<sup>36</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 18. According to Durrwell, even St. Paul strongly insists on “the Day of the Lord” as a reality of the future, keeping the name for the Parousia in its totality, but cannot refrain from saying it is already present. “You know well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night... But it is not as if you live in the dark... we who belong to the day” (1 Thess 5:2-8; Rom 13:12; 1 Cor 10:11; Col 1:12).

### 4.3.2 The Eucharistic Christ as the eschatological Lord

For Durrwell, all the sacraments are means of salvation, which recall and celebrate the death, resurrection and coming of Christ. They are all means of Christ's presence in his redemptive action. We can speak, however, of the Eucharist as the sacrament "par excellence" and also as the means "par excellence" of the coming of Christ into the world.<sup>37</sup> As Durrwell explains:

The Christ of the parousia is the paschal, eternal Christ in the death in which He is glorified and sent forth, the Christ living always in the mystery of the redemption, *in the never transcended instant of the realization of this mystery*. For, on the one hand, the glorifying action of God in Christ is an action of absolute fullness; it is, therefore eschatological knowing neither tomorrow nor becoming; it is the action of God who begets his Son in eternity (Acts 13:33; Rom 1:4). On the other hand this eternal action of God does not follow the death of Christ, it coincides with it... The death is *meritorious* of salvation; it is an act through which Jesus receives salvation which is the creating and glorifying action of God; the glorification accordingly does not follow the death, the salvation is not given after the reception that is accorded to it, it is given in the death itself.<sup>38</sup>

In his glorifying death, Christ lives at the level of God, that is, the eschatological fullness and completion of the Paschal Mystery. This, Durrwell argues, is why the New Testament speaks only of the coming of Christ and ignores any mention of a return, "except in some parables in which, having departed, the Master must return in order to be present anew."<sup>39</sup> The longing for his Parousia is thus linked with the present experience of Christ in the Eucharist. It is in his paschal sacrifice that God accomplishes salvation. Salvation is Christ himself in his glorifying death.

In the everlasting mystery of his death and resurrection, He is not only the Savior; He is the salvation, with the fullness of which the Church is filled. This affirmation is at the heart of the paschal mystery. Such a salvation can neither be distributed nor applied: it becomes ours when Christ comes and gives himself in communion... Jesus calls Himself the bread of life; He is the Lamb immolated and sanctified in the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins (cf. John 1:29-33; 7:37-39; 17:19; 19:34-36). One eats the bread in order to live of it;

<sup>37</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 22. See also Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 37, and Durrwell, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, 130-132.

<sup>39</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 18. See also his note 27. "The materiality of the image requires that the coming present itself as a return." 59.

one also eats the Paschal Lamb in order to be sanctified. This is why Jesus says: “Take and eat, this is my body given up for you.”<sup>40</sup>

Accordingly, the coming of Christ is always related to his salvific presence in the Church. It is, as Durrwell claims, “an aspect of the mystery of death and resurrection: the latter is the fullness of incarnation, that is to say, the full sanctification of Christ in God and total mission in the world, total oblation to God and universal oblation to mankind.”<sup>41</sup> So in the light of this one coming of Christ, that is, the Incarnation completed in the Parousia, we can understand the interconnection of the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery.

#### 4.4 The eschatological modality of the Eucharistic presence

The eschatological nature of the Eucharistic presence is clearly evident throughout Durrwell’s approach as a whole. He seeks to situate the sacramentality of the Church and particularly the symbolic character of the Eucharist in terms of the Paschal Mystery in order to understand the significance of the mystery of Christ’s eschatological presence. In this respect, since Christ enters into the stream of the human existence “only in the measure to which He is its terminus...His presence, however real, will never be anything but one coming.”<sup>42</sup> This explains why the Parousia belongs to the Pasch of Christ and is seen as its interior dimension of fulfillment.<sup>43</sup> So when Christ comes to the Church in the Eucharist, his advent is eschatological.

We now proceed to a consideration regarding the eschatological modality of the Eucharistic presence by way of theses which Durrwell explores in the light of the Paschal Mystery.

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<sup>40</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. Eschatology, as Durrwell sees it, does not contradict what goes before; “it does not enter into the world by housebreaking or by altering it, by evacuating it, by substituting it for itself, because it is the profound reality of this world.” 28. In other words, although Christ has already possessed his cosmic power as the final fullness of the world, he does not exercise violence on them, especially when he submits himself to a substance of this worldly creation, the bread and the wine in the Eucharist. The whole creation continues to move on to meet Christ through “a movement of interiorization in which, by passing beyond its original state, it comes to find itself finally revealed in all its truth.” 28.

#### 4.4.1 A presence as final reality of the world

Since in the paschal event Christ is raised to the fullness of glory (Col 1:19), we can understand that Christ is present in the Eucharist as the ultimate reality, as the *Eschaton* who is personally coming to the Christian community.<sup>44</sup> To highlight this eschatological significance of the mystery of Christ, Durrwell draws on various Pauline statements: “Christ is the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10), the revelation of the mystery of God (Rom 16:25, 26; Col 1:26; Eph 1: 9,10; 1 Cor 2: 7). Further, the glorified and Risen Christ is “the first-born of all creation” (Col 1: 15), “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15: 20). In virtue of this we realize that “all things were created through him and for him” and “he holds all things in unity” (Col 1:17).<sup>45</sup> So when Christ comes into presence in the Eucharist, “His coming is eschatological.”<sup>46</sup> The Eucharist is, therefore, the real presence of the Risen Lord who “acts in His eschatological power, in the power that He exercises as terminus and fullness of the world.”<sup>47</sup> Christ is present in this world as he is its *Eschaton*.<sup>48</sup>

It is only with the resurrection as the absolute glory of Christ that we can fully understand the eschatological relationship between Christ and the world. In the resurrection this relationship emerges in clear light: Christ appears, so Durrwell argues, as the “Alpha” of the world, because “He is its Omega, the eschatological fullness.”<sup>49</sup> Here what is affirmed is that eschatology has been introduced into our world by the Christ-Event. He is at the centre of this world of which He is the Lord of all, the “Head” (Col 1:18), in whom all humanity, all history and the whole cosmos are definitely moving together towards the time of fulfilment. Such a cosmic interconnection of all things is the meaning of Christian hope, which is now celebrated in the Eucharist. It is, however, for Durrwell, only within the context of the faith of the Church that we can recognize the eschatological presence and plenitude of the Risen

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<sup>44</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27.

<sup>47</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. Durrwell speaks of the eschatological significance of the Eucharistic presence: “L'exaltation en Dieu ne l'enlève cependant pas au monde, elle fait de lui la plénitude du monde, la place au Cœur et au sommet vers quoi toutes choses sont créées (Col 1:16). C'est de là que vient la présence eucharistique, de ce sommet de plénitude, de cette ultime profondeur où tout est fondé, de ce future qui est le terme de notre appel à la communion” (1 Cor 1:7-9). 50.

<sup>49</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27. See also Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 91.

Christ as the coming of the eternity in time. Faith alone can perceive this final reality of the future world appearing in the Eucharist.<sup>50</sup> Christ comes and, by coming to the Christian assembly as the eschaton of the world, he will bring to fulfilment all the fruits of his paschal sacrifice. The *Eschaton* is thus interior to the world as its ultimate and profound reality, present to the world through the divine power exercised within and upon it.

#### 4.4.2 The Eucharistic Bread and Wine: Sign of transformative presence

If the whole work of salvation lies in the mystery of the paschal and glorified Christ, then the whole universe can find, in him, its ultimate life and transformation.

According to Paul, everything is created in Him and towards him (Col: 16), and is caught up in him (Eph 1:10), because he will fulfil all things (Eph 4:10). In this perspective, the Eucharist, whose natural elements are bread and wine, is a symbolic recognition of the shared life and common destiny of all transfigured creation.

Conversely, for Durrwell, Christian hope can speak of salvation in the sense that it “comes upon the whole of creation without annihilation, without spoliation, without alteration: it enriches.”<sup>51</sup> Here the whole process of salvation is contained in and modeled on the Paschal Mystery of Christ, who is ultimate source of all affirmation. As Durrwell explains:

The new creation super-completes the other. It surcharges it with being, and it is always a fulfilment according to the biblical meaning of this word, a super-creation. Christ is the first-born of this work of salvation, a man-God in the super-eminent perfection of human truth. No doubt He had to pass through death. Nevertheless He was not annihilated by death, but exalted. Now the whole work of salvation inscribes itself in the mystery of this first-born [being], Christ glorified, the eschatological terminus of the world not in order to alter it but in order to create it.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. Christ comes in the Eucharist and “His coming provokes the faith that welcomes.” 26. See also Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “Telle est la présence eucharistique. Elle est la venue finale en notre temps, la plénitude future paraissant à la surface du monde actuel. Ce pain est eschatologique, une nourriture rassasiant et qui suscite le désir. La foi seule peut percevoir cette présence, elle dont le regard est prophétique, capable de saisir, à travers la visibilité des choses, la réalité du monde futur.” 51.

<sup>51</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 32.



Hence, God saves by transforming, and God transforms by elevating. The presence of Christ in the bread and wine is that of his Risen Body. In the Eucharist, the bread and the wine become fully and finally what they are meant to be: “the true bread and the true drink” of the eternal Kingdom (Jn 6:55).

For Durrwell, moreover, besides this Eucharistic transformation of the bread and wine, there is another earthly reality transformed into the Body of Christ: “the totality of the faithful who, through the sanctification of the Spirit, also become the body of Christ.”<sup>53</sup> Here Durrwell looks on the Christian community as being incorporated into the new creation and the Eucharist as contributing in a major way to its final transformation. Such Eucharistic experience appears in Pauline writings: “Though there are many of us, we form a single body” (1 Cor 10:17). Although Christ has triumphed and finally taken possession of what is already his, the grace of the Spirit transforms the believers without stripping them of their primary identity. This transformation takes place in the context of their faith, assuming them into the person of Christ to the extent where Paul can speak of his life as that of Christ: It is “Christ who lives in me,” and “the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

For Durrwell, then, Christians do not lose their personhood nor do they cease to be their own bodies, but rather they are made members of Christ’s body (1 Cor 1:30; 6:15). If God’s salvation is “a salvation that super-completes without altering,”<sup>54</sup> then, in this sense, Durrwell argues, Christians become truly what they receive, namely, persons in communion. They become “Christian through the eschatological dimension with which the Spirit enriches them by virtue of which they become all the more human.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, the Christian community is “the fundamental sacrament of the presence and the action of Christ: she is not emptied of herself but filled (Eph 1:23; Col 2:9) in her primary being”<sup>56</sup> by the Risen Christ who makes of her his own body.

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<sup>53</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 32.

<sup>54</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 34.

<sup>55</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 34.

Since Christ is, moreover, the *Eschaton* of the whole created humanity and nature, everything subsists in him. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the immediate presence of the glorified Christ, not only to the Church but also to the whole cosmos, which is to be transformed in him. In this extended sense of the mystery of Christ as the total fulfilment of the divine promise (Acts 13:32), the Eucharistic bread and wine thus symbolize what the whole universe is to become. Such an eschatological approach to the Eucharistic presence respects the created world. Moreover, in regard to earthly realities and history, the Eucharist not only restores all humanity and all things in creation, but also at the same time directs them to eschatological fullness.

#### 4.4.3 The mode of presence in the Church

In Durrwell's theology, everything about the Eucharistic presence turns on the role of the paschal and Risen One, who is the "first-born" of all creation (Col 1:15) and its eschatological fullness. From this perspective also, he recognizes that it is the Parousia that creates the Church. What the Church is waiting for is the fullness of this coming and of her own mystery. As he explains:

The Paschal Mystery is unique, and at the same time, the resurrection and presence, and it is not contained in time. The Church is born in this initial encounter with the Resurrected One who comes...for her resurrection: [she] is born in the Parousia and communion with the paschal Christ, and moves towards this same Parousia, towards the fullness of communion with the paschal Christ.<sup>57</sup>

Here Durrwell comes to an interpretation that while the Eucharist is something holy, a means of divine praise and sanctification, food for our journey, a meal in which the bonds of community are formed, it is, above all, "the sacrament of the heavenly banquet; one must be [part] of the body of Christ in order to nourish oneself on it."<sup>58</sup> Everything within it necessarily depends on this Parousia. At this point Durrwell proceeds to a further exploration of different ways in which we can understand the concept of Christ's eschatological presence in the Church.

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<sup>57</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. "Le mystère pascal est unique, à la fois résurrection et présence, et n'est pas enclos dans notre temps. L'Église est née dans la rencontre initiale de Resuscité qui vient...par sa résurrection: née dans la parousie et la communion du Christ pascal, elle va vers cette même parousie, vers la communion de plénitude au Christ pascal." 46.

<sup>58</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 46.

Firstly, since the word *Parousia* expresses “a coming, a presence in the making, and such is properly the Eucharist: a Parousia,”<sup>59</sup> the Eucharist indicates a presence that comes to the Church, pointing to the full manifestation of Christ’s eschatological communion with Christians. The *Eschaton* comes by drawing the Christian assembly to come to it. While this eschatological presence has already been established, it is, however, not complete. Here Durrwell situates the Eucharist within the context of the pilgrim Church, and thus views Eucharistic presence as an imperfect presence. Such imperfection of the Eucharist is not, as Durrwell understands it, due to any deficiency on the part of Christ, whose Paschal Mystery is a total “donation of Himself.”<sup>60</sup> This imperfection arises rather from the earthly condition of the Church, since she is not yet capable of a complete response to the real presence of the Risen Lord. She is not yet fully consummated to the Paschal Mystery.<sup>61</sup> So in the Eucharist Christ gives his body and blood for the building of the Church of the Parousia.

Secondly, if the Parousia is the essential part of the Paschal Mystery intended for the Christian community, Christ’s presence is *a presence of donation*.<sup>62</sup> The significance of this event of Christ’s self-giving love, as Durrwell considers, is twofold. Firstly, it suggests that Christ’s sacrificial death is a giving of self of the Son to the Father (Eph 5:2).<sup>63</sup> This act of giving takes place at the moment when there is a corresponding acceptance of the offering made. As Durrwell explains: “The death of Christ is donation of Himself in the measure that the oblation is received, in the measure that divine acceptance, which is the glorification of Christ, corresponds to the death.”<sup>64</sup> Secondly, it stresses that in the Eucharist Christ is present in offering himself to those who receive him. In the eternity of his glorifying death, Christ is universally given up, becoming love and gift, “the flesh given up for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51), and life-giving bread, “he who sacrificed himself as a ransom for them all” (1 Tim 2:6). Christ has become the “wisdom and virtue, the holiness and freedom” (1 Cor 1:30), and “the path of Christian access to God” (Heb 10:20). The Eucharist is thus a celebration of Christ’s saving presence, an event of eschatological communion, which is realized in a free acceptance of the offer of salvation.

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<sup>59</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 47.

<sup>60</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 47.

<sup>63</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 22, 47.

<sup>64</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 22.

Thirdly, the Eucharist is the presence of the sacrifice of Christ; it is *a presence of immolation*.<sup>65</sup> Just as bread is meant to be eaten, and wine to be drunk, the Church enters into communion with Christ only by joining him and by participating in his paschal self-giving.<sup>66</sup> As Durrwell explains:

In Christ sacrifice and meal form one undivided liturgy: in his death to the flesh, which is limited upon itself, yet in his resurrection in the Spirit who brings about fellowship (2 Cor 13:13); it is at the same time sacrifice and nourishment. It is our Passover (1 Cor 5:7), our sacrifice and our meal. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Passover of Christ and the paschal communion (1 Cor 10:16).<sup>67</sup>

The concept of paschal communion, as Durrwell understands it, is central to the Eucharistic presence. It is “the viaticum of Christian death throughout our life on earth.”<sup>68</sup> In this way, the community of people that gathers for the Eucharist becomes “Christian through the communion of death and resurrection” with the person of Christ (Rom 10:14; Col 2:11).<sup>69</sup> All presence of Christ is thus presence in his paschal sacrifice. The two aspects are inseparable; each implies and explains the other.

Fourthly, as a community of believers, the Church shares in the *personal* mystery of Christ who himself becomes her eschatological reality. For Durrwell, the characteristic of this presence could be summarized in “one word: it is personal.”<sup>70</sup> It is, on the one hand, that Christ attains the summit of his personal mystery, namely that, in the gift of himself he has become in full reality “the Son who is nearest to the Father’s heart” (Jn 1:18 and 13:1,32). Christ’s death is a complete surrender to the divine plenitude of love. On the other hand, Christ is present among Christians through the personal relationship that he forms with them. Such a mutual presence between the Risen Christ and his faithful is *real* presence on the level of person, which

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<sup>65</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “Dans le Christ, le sacrifice et le repas forment une liturgie indivisée: dans sa mort à la chair qui est fermée sur elle-même, en sa résurrection dans l'Esprit qui est communion (2 Cor 13:13), il est, à la fois, sacrifié et nourriture. Il est notre pâque (1 Cor 5:7), notre sacrifice et notre repas. L'eucharistie est le sacrement et de la pâque du Christ et de la communion pascale (1 Cor 10:16).” 69.

<sup>68</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 49.

<sup>69</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 23, 49.

<sup>70</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 49.

constitutes the essential element of faith and the Eucharistic experience of the early Christian communities. As Durrwell remarks:

These early communities were ignorant of many of our theological precisions, at times going so far as to forget essential aspects. Did not St. Paul feel obliged to recall the sacramental character of the Eucharist, that it was instituted on the eve of the passion, that in it is proclaimed the death of the Lord? But one had always known that it is “the Lord’s Supper” in which Jesus is present to the community gathered around His table (“the Table of the Lord”). This faith and this experience are richly illustrated in the narrative of the pilgrims of Emmaus in which the heart of the disciples is in the joy of the presence, in which they recognize the Lord “in the breaking of the break” (Lk 24:35). The presence is still veiled, but it bears in itself the promise of plenitude and thus arouses the desire: Maranatha!<sup>71</sup>

Thus the Eucharist is basically the personal coming of Christ to the Christian community. For Durrwell, since the presence of Jesus constitutes the gift of the Last Supper, the words of the Eucharistic institution emphasize the personal character of Christ’s presence: “This” is not merely a sacred food, but “my body” is identical with the person, expressing its presence.<sup>72</sup> This is also true of his bodily presence in the bread and wine which symbolizes a deeper personal presence. As Durrwell notes, when “a desire bears not on a food but on a person, the word ‘eat’ belongs to the language of love, it speaks of a search for the entire mutual presence, for total reciprocal possession.”<sup>73</sup> As such, to “depersonalize the Eucharist would be to deprive it of its efficacy.”<sup>74</sup> Christ’s glorified state allows him to join himself in the Eucharist to the Christian community in the most personal manner.

#### **4.4.4 A presence as Trinitarian**

Since the Eucharistic presence of Christ points to the eschatological fullness of the Paschal Mystery, the Father and the Spirit are also present and actively taking part in the celebration of the Eucharist. Durrwell claims that the Eucharist is “a Trinitarian mystery.”<sup>75</sup> It appears as the Trinitarian modality of God’s self-giving: Christ gives

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<sup>71</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 50.

<sup>74</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Durrwell, *L’eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “Le Christ n’est pas seul concerné, le Père est impliqué dans le mystère du Fils en sa pâque, ainsi que l’Esprit. L’eucharistie est un mystère trinitaire.” 65.

himself in the Eucharist, as the Son of the Father, to the extreme limits of his love, which is but the love that the Father has for the world in the fellowship of the Spirit.

This Trinitarian identity of Christ is, moreover, manifest in his Paschal Mystery when the Spirit raises him from the dead, confirming that he is the beloved Son (Jn 10:17), whose sacrifice was pleasing to God. The salvation of the world is fulfilled in the power of the Spirit who makes Christ “the Christ-who-comes”<sup>76</sup> and gives himself in communion. As Durrwell remarks:

God is really and completely involved in the Passover of Christ, where the heavenly and Trinitarian mystery is unfolded... The Eucharist, the sacrament of this mystery, is placed on the table... All three [Persons] participate in the liturgy. Together they make the Passover to be eternally present to the Church... Together they also celebrate the sacrifice, each one in accordance with the Trinitarian role.<sup>77</sup>

Such a Trinitarian understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice gives the expression to the total mystery of God’s redeeming love at work. It is in the Spirit that God raises and glorifies Christ. When he comes into presence in the Eucharist, in the bread and wine, in the Christian assembly, it is also through the power of the Spirit that these earthly realities are incorporated into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). The Eucharist thus has the symbolic character of the Trinitarian God’s self-communication to the Church in order that the Parousia may be realized.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. God “has called us into communion with his Son” (1 Cor 1:19), for God raises him in the strength of God’s power, “communicating to him the Spirit which is the divine power of creation as well as infinite holiness and making him share his own lordship” (Phil 2:9-11; 3:21; Mt 26:64; 28:18; Rom 1:4; Eph 1:19-22). 28.

<sup>77</sup> Durrwell, *L’eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. “Dieu est très réellement et tout entier impliqué dans la pâque du Christ, où le mystère céleste et trinitaire se déroule, se dévide dans l’humanité, afin de la lover entièrement en lui... L’eucharistie, sacrement de ce mystère... Tous les trois participent à la liturgie. Ensemble ils rendent la pâque éternelle présente à l’Église: le Père, en ressuscitant son Fils dans la visibilité de réalités terrestres, le pain, le vin, l’assemblée; le Christ, en se les soumettant par la puissance de sa résurrection; L’Esprit Saint, en les ‘sanctifiant’ par incorporation au Christ. Ensemble, aussi, ils célèbrent le sacrifice, chacun selon son rôle trinitaire.” 66.

<sup>78</sup> Durrwell, *L’eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. Durrwell’s eschatological perspective on the Eucharist as “sacrifice trinitaire” or “un mystère trinitaire” deserves our special attention. He understands that since the Resurrection proceeds from the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father and in the Spirit, then precisely it is in the power of the Resurrection that the Eucharist is instituted. In other words, as he writes: “L’eucharistie est instituée dans la toute-puissance du Père qui engendre le Christ dans le monde, créant et sauvant le monde.” The Eucharist appears as the goal of the saving works of the Trinity and as the privileged place where God’s eschatological power breaks into the world. Christ and the Holy Spirit are acting in conjunction with each other in their mission and mutual service for eschatological fulfilment. 82-83.

#### 4. 5 Critical reflections

Durrwell's approach to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharistic presence marks a significant shift, interpreting the Eucharist not in terms of the earthly realities, but in the perspective of the Paschal Mystery. Moving beyond the traditional metaphysical approach to the Eucharistic presence and focusing on the glorified Christ as eschatological plenitude, Durrwell offers rich possibilities to contemporary theology. Let us now consider the significant areas of this theological development.

Firstly, Durrwell's Eucharistic theology is based on a return to the biblical sources. He argues that we must start out from eschatological fullness and completion of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>79</sup> In short, it is from within that the Christian mystery sheds light on itself, that is, from the eschatological plenitude of Christ's resurrection (Jn 2:18-22; 8:28). Here Durrwell's concentration on eschatology provides potential for understanding the Eucharistic presence and suggests the choice of a more appropriate language. He is not seeking to describe the workings of the Eucharistic change. His study is neither descriptive nor philosophical but biblical and theological. His approach clarifies that the Eucharistic bread and wine are consecrated in the Spirit of the Kingdom. They exist in a unique way in the glorified Christ, "in whom everything has its being" (Col 1: 17), and thus become the sacrament of his real presence in this world. Such an eschatological approach to the Eucharistic presence, in keeping with the perspectives of the New Testament and the early writings of the Church, discloses a richness, not always fully appreciated in the recent past.

In Durrwell's theology, *transubstantiation* does not annihilate the reality of bread and wine, but rather transforms by elevating them to their transcendent, eschatological perfection. The consecrated bread and wine are not less than they were previously, but finally become the true "bread from heaven" (Jn 6:32-35) and the "cup of blessing" (1 Cor 10:16), the true food and drink as the full and direct self-communication of Christ to believers. This theological approach is both faithful to the truth expressed in the

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<sup>79</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. He therefore clarifies his position in an alternative fashion, restoring the eschatological experience by noting: "now the best theology of today, the theology of biblical inspiration, claims for the Eucharist the real presence of the sacrifice as well as the presence of Christ of eternal glory."<sup>11</sup>

biblical and conciliar tradition and meaningful with regard to its contemporary expression.

Secondly, in his rediscovery of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, Durrwell makes a valuable contribution to contemporary theological discussion. Seeking to find an understanding of the Eucharist in the Paschal Mystery, Durrwell offers a profound and potential study for those interested in the retrieval of a sense of mystery, a way of celebrating transcendent mystery, of generating and sustaining the eschatological character of the liturgy.<sup>80</sup> Gathered at the Eucharist, the Christian community realizes that this is the meeting place *par excellence* with transcendent realities. It is in this heavenly banquet of the eschatological Christ that the Church realizes herself as eschatological community, in which Christians enter into personal communication with the glorified Christ who gives himself in the Eucharist. The Eucharistic celebration can be, at best, an actual instance of this eschatological transformation itself, and not a sterile ritual, calling Christians to look beyond what lies in front of them and moving them to a deeper religious experience.

Thirdly, by moving beyond the physical concept of time and adopting the perspective of the eschatological plenitude of the Paschal Mystery, Durrwell has succeeded in bringing together the three fundamental aspects of the Eucharist, namely, sacrifice-presence-communion in terms of eschatology. This is one of his important and theologically significant insights. For Durrwell, the mysteries of the Incarnation and grace, the death and resurrection, and glorification of Christ are not three distinct mysteries, but are all aspects of the one Paschal Mystery, of the divine self-communication. His synthesis makes clear that Christ himself is the fullness of grace, containing all other graces (Jn 1:14-16). Here we can see that the Eucharistic presence is the eschatological gift of Christ himself, embracing all the gifts of redemption and sanctification.

Fourthly, Durrwell's theology of the Eucharistic presence can contribute to an enrichment of the theology of *epiclesis*, which deals with the transformative action of the Spirit, not merely in the celebration of the Eucharist, but in the whole of the

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<sup>80</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 52.



Christian existence. In contrast to the traditional theology, where the role of the Spirit remained theologically underdeveloped, this approach presents the coming of the Spirit as the bond between the Eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God. Durrwell recognizes that “the Parousia of Christ is fulfilled in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>81</sup> The Christ who acts in the Eucharist, and the body of Christ, which Christians receive in the Eucharist, is the “Lord-Spirit,” the eschatological Person, in whom is the fullness of grace and the Spirit of God. Thus the Eucharistic community is the community of the Spirit of Christ. Such a theology of the Eucharist as the invocation of the Spirit can also make a valuable contribution to the retrieval of the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology. The Eucharist is not only a memorial of Christ’s passion and death, but also a celebration of all the hopes hidden in human existence, which are “already” realized and will be fulfilled through the Spirit.

Fifthly, this Eucharistic eschatology is further advanced by Durrwell’s integration of the Christological, Pneumatological, Ecclesial and Trinitarian dimensions attested to in the New Testament and in the Eucharistic prayers. Vatican II, in the *Constitution on the Church*, clearly states that the eschaton will come about by the agency of Christ, and hence, in union with Christ, the Church is incorporated into the same divine generation: “Christ lifted up from the earth, has drawn all men to himself (Jn 12:32). Rising from the dead (Rom 6:9) he sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through him set up his Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”<sup>82</sup> All of this makes sense in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, which occurs within a Trinitarian context. The Eucharistic canons are prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, through Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Eucharist is the proper access to this Trinitarian life, and Trinitarian theology elucidates the Eucharist, not only revealing the eschatological nature of the Church, but also the inner dynamics of love, communion and life of the Divine Persons.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 28-29.

<sup>82</sup> Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 48, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1988), 407.

<sup>83</sup> For a profound reflection on the interconnection between the Eucharist and the Trinity, see Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Brookline, Massachusetts: WCC Publications, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998). The author points

This essential connection between the Eucharist and the Trinity is obviously emphasized in the liturgy, from the opening sign of the cross in the name of the Triune God to the Trinitarian blessing at the end of the Eucharistic celebration. As such, the very possibility of the interconnection of the Paschal Mystery as a whole with other doctrines of Christian faith is established. One of Durrwell's most important contributions to a contemporary Eucharistic theology is to open up the possibility of considering how eschatology is foundational in shaping Christian thought in all areas of theology.

Besides the major insights afforded in Durrwell's approach, however, it presents some problems.

Firstly, Durrwell arrives at an understanding that in reality there is only "one coming of Christ."<sup>84</sup> The Christ of the Parousia is the Paschal Christ, eternal in the death by which he is glorified and given to us in the Eucharist. Because the Parousia is a permanent actuality, nothing can be added to the moment when Christ is accorded the fullness of glory. While not denying the thrust of such a "realized" eschatology, Durrwell's position merits some criticism, for the coming salvation of the world is "already" inaugurated in Jesus Christ but is "not yet" complete. For Durrwell, eschatological expectation is not so much a looking forward to a certain event, which will happen in the future, but rather apprehending the presence of the glorified Christ in the Eucharist. It is in a real sense a timeless eschatology. The eschatological moment is very much *now*, when eternity breaks into time in the Eucharist.

We note that Durrwell does not deny a future of eschatology. But his emphasis on the already complete nature of God's end purposes in the resurrection of Christ lacks the crucial element of a "yet-to-be" attained and realized promise, which the Scriptures affirm. How then will we talk about the promised Parousia, regarding the expectation of Christ's final coming? We see that a life of hope is one of "straining forward to

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out: "According to modern theological scholarship (biblical and liturgical), the Eucharist was 'lived' in the early Christian community as a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God, a proleptic manifestation within the tragic realities of history of an authentic life of communion, unity, justice and equality, with no practical differentiation (soteriological or otherwise) between men and women. This is, after all, the real meaning of what St. John has called 'eternal life.' And because of this Eucharistic experience, according to some historians, the Church came up with the doctrine of Trinity, the grandest expression ever produced in theology." 4-6.

<sup>84</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*, 45.

what lies ahead” (Phil 3:13) in Christian witness to the Christ who has not only come and is not only present but will come again in the future. In the theologies of Wolfhart Pannenberg<sup>85</sup> and Jürgen Moltmann,<sup>86</sup> the history of God with the world is not merely a manifestation of what God is already in the Godhead itself in eternity. Rather, God really has opened the divine life to be experienced in history.<sup>87</sup> Yet there is an important dimension of the future coming of God in history with humanity.

Given the centrality of the Christ-event, which is understood as having absolute significance for the future of humanity, history and creation, Dermot A. Lane in a similar vein argues that we must “recognize that the first coming of Christ is from one point of view unfinished and so there is an important claim about the second coming of Christ as the *terminus ad quem* and the completion of the work of Christ.”<sup>88</sup> In this way, the world is “not yet” redeemed; the final act of the drama of salvation has not been played out. The Christian community, therefore, continues to pray: “Your Kingdom come” (Mt 6:9), and “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20), and to celebrate the Eucharist “until He comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Thus eschatology must mediate this twofold element of the “already” and the “not yet” of the Eucharistic event.

Secondly, eschatology affirms the value of human actions and social praxis in both this life and the next life. How is Eucharistic theology to be oriented to the practical aspects of personal, social and ecological hope and commitment to transformation of the historical world? It would appear that Durrwell’s theology over-emphasizes the sense of mystery and ignores the sense of mission of the Eucharist. Christians cannot speak honestly of Christ’s presence to them in the Eucharist, if this presence does not carry over into their ethical responsibilities, into a living out a life that reflects the promises contained in the sacrament. The Eucharist in Durrwell’s theology can appear only as a spiritual communion in such a way as to implicitly support the *status quo*

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<sup>85</sup> See Christiaan Mostert, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2002).

<sup>86</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God - Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

<sup>87</sup> See Bruno Forte, *The Trinity as History* (New York: Alba House, 1989). The author looks at the dynamism behind the love of the Father, Son and Spirit, united in the same divine mystery, and attempts to reconsider history from the perspective of the Trinity, reading the origin, the present and the future of the world in light of revelation. The Christian God is described as a living and loving God, alone capable of bringing sense, hope and power to human life and works of all.

<sup>88</sup> Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996), 19.

within the Christian community and in human society. There is a real need, however, for a renewed understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, which has profound significance for Christian ethics and for the mission of the Christian community in the world. The question of the essential relationship between the rite and social responsibility is unresolved and overlooked in Durrwell's treatment of the Eucharist presence. But the Eucharist is both a mystery and a reality of the world. A Eucharist celebrated in prospect of the coming reign of God must give rise to a new social vision grounded in the eschatological promise of the Kingdom.

Thirdly, it is unfortunate that Durrwell fails to take into account contemporary critical thought and values, and the findings of modern science concerning our understanding of the world today. His theology is more biblically focused and strongly revelation-centered rather than philosophical and social. It risks over-emphasizing the ultimate transcendence and overlooking the anthropological aspect of salvation, and thus runs the danger of over-spiritualizing the sacrament. The point is that if either movement is emphasized to the detriment of the other, the full meaning of the Eucharistic presence cannot be conveyed.<sup>89</sup> Christian tradition understands that the Eucharist is the gift of God's saving work in Christ, and also that it is related to the people of God in their very human situation. Although the Eucharist has its mysterious elements, the bread and the wine, the matter of the sacrament, are products of nature and culture. We see then that a theology of the Eucharist needs to develop an appropriate system of conceptualization, drawing from sociological theory, psychological insights, history and anthropology so that these sciences can open the way for a better understanding of its sacramental reality.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. Arising from this study is a certain issue, which I consider presents a challenge to further research and the need to develop an appropriate system of conceptualization, drawing from philosophical resources and other disciplines within cultural and historical contexts. Although Durrwell has developed a distinctive style to suit his shift from philosophical system to biblical data, he also acknowledges that "it is up to the speculative theology to define the relationship between earthly reality and eschatology, to show that it is not impossible for the bread to become the sacrament of the body of Christ in a certain way." 52.

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of the Eucharistic presence in the Post-modern perspective, see Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being. Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994). In this insightful and interdisciplinary study, the author uses the methods of phenomenology to examine particularly the Eucharist. He comes to terms with many theological and cultural issues raised by modernity.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

Our study has explored Durrwell's eschatological vision of the Eucharist in light of Christ's Paschal Mystery. He argues that the "whole treasure resides within the Eucharistic mystery itself."<sup>91</sup> It is a real wonder how "the mystery is understood when the mystery is revealed: it is Christ who preaches Christ."<sup>92</sup> Such an understanding of the Eucharist as a memorial of the Paschal Mystery emphasizes the faith that Christians share in common and, at the same time, brings out the eschatological nature of Christ's paschal sacrifice, assuring them of the hope in the resurrection of the dead. It appears then that theology has the constant task, not only of presenting the Eucharist in a way which is meaningful to contemporary people, but also of seeking to rediscover the transcendent reference and to share the mystery with the world, which is the whole basis of the sacrament. Recognizing the Eucharist as a *mysterium fidei* allows for a creative celebration that gives immediate meaning, but also points to something beyond itself. The Eucharist, which is relevant to Christians as a common meal in the contexts of their journey through history, ultimately unites them with the Risen Christ and the Trinity itself. It is in the Paschal Mystery of Christ that the Eucharistic presence can find its explanation.

In this way, it is Durrwell's achievement to maintain that any understanding of the Eucharist as eschatological presence must restate the doctrine of *transubstantiation* not in terms of earthly realities, but in the light of the Paschal Mystery. The Eucharistic celebration makes present, not only the mystery of Christ's passion and death, but also the mystery of his resurrection as the eschatological glorification. Durrwell's focus is clearly not the metaphysical and ontological questions regarding the Eucharistic presence. He seeks to present a fuller understanding of biblical statements on eschatology, rather than adhering to the traditional approach. He criticizes the previous efforts of classical and modern theories for failing to account for the eschatological character of the Eucharist, so essential in the biblical tradition. According to Durrwell then, only in the perspective of the one coming of Christ as the *Eschaton*, can we understand the relationship between the Eucharist and eschatology. Here the visible elements of creation, the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, become

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<sup>91</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 51.

<sup>92</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 10.

for Christians the first fruits of the new creation in the conviction that God has sealed the final outcome of history in the glorified Christ.

We have also seen that in his search for an understanding of the Eucharistic presence, Durrwell argues that the Parousia of Christ is the key to Eucharistic doctrine, its synthesis and explanation.<sup>93</sup> Since the Eucharist is seen as already the Parousia of Christ, everything is not submitted to a future that is indifferent to what Christians now experience. The eschatological Christ who is awaited is the One who has already come before in his passion and resurrection, in the outpouring of the Spirit, in his presence in the Eucharist. By being united with the Eucharistic Christ and nourished by the food and filled with the drink of the eternal Kingdom,<sup>94</sup> the Christian community exposes itself to the future glory of the whole of creation. Such is the theology of Durrwell, which approaches the Eucharist as the real presence of the Risen Christ, “who holds all things in unity” (Col 1:17). In other words, the Eucharist celebrates and enacts the deepest reality of Christ’s paschal event that is the eschatological power upon which all finite reality depends. For God has made him a “life-giving Spirit,” empowering him to bring forth the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) as the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45), the *Eschaton*. God has established the final Kingdom in eschatological hope.

Having considered the eschatological approaches to the Eucharist of Wainwright and Durrwell, we note that, in spite of some differences in method and in focus, both theologians establish a firm and inseparable relationship between the Eucharist and the all-embracing significance of the mystery of Christ. For Wainwright, the Eucharist is the eschatological banquet in which Christ is present not only as food and drink, but also as host and participant. In Durrwell’s theological exposition, however, there is a

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<sup>93</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 51

<sup>94</sup> Durrwell, *L’eucharistie: Sacrement Pascal*. Durrwell spells this out in some detail: “Cette présence est réel, car le monde a ses racines dans son avenir, dans le sommet vers quoi il est appelé, dans le Christ qui est la plénitude. Dieu crée par appel – ‘il appelle à l’existence ce qui n’est pas’ (Rm 4:17) – il crée par attraction vers la plénitude qu’est le Christ, et dans la participation progressive à cette plénitude finale... Cette présence est intérieur à la création, de l’intériorité propre au sommet où tout commence, au centre de la plénitude vers tout quoi est attiré. Ceci rejoint la constatation déjà faite: le mystère eschatologique, celui du Christ pascal, est en lui-même parousiasque, est l’envoi du Christ au cœur du monde: ‘Il est monté au-dessus des cieux, afin de remplir l’univers’ (Eph 4:10)... Le pain et le vin, comme toute réalité de ce monde, ont dans la plénitude future les racines de leur être. Ils ne sont pas contredits en eux-mêmes lorsqu’ils sont eucharistiques, ils sont ‘convertis’ en une vérité qui leur est propre, mais dans un total dépassement. Ils sont changés, fortifiés, en leur enracinement, au point qu’ils deviennent ‘le pain véritable, le vin du Royaume.’” 91-92.

rediscovery of the interconnection between the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery. Since in the paschal event, Christ is raised to the fullness of glory, he is present in the Eucharist as the ultimate reality, as real food and drink of the Kingdom. For Durrwell the Paschal Mystery reveals that it is through his self-giving death and resurrection that Christ opened himself to the future glory. From this perspective, we now proceed to consider Martelet's approach to the Eucharist in the light of the resurrection in the next chapter, giving particular attention to the resurrection as the foundation of Christian hope.

## Chapter 5     **Gustave Martelet:** **The Eucharist and the Transformation of the World**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The French Jesuit Gustave Martelet explores the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology from the perspective of the resurrection of Christ. Engaging Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the eschatological meaning of the universe, Martelet brings together two fundamental aspects of the Christian faith: Eucharist and resurrection. His theology, like that of Durrwell, presupposes and builds on the theological significance of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Unlike Durrwell, he takes the resurrection as his point of departure and shows how the resurrection of Christ, as the eschatological event of history, is the foundation of Christian hope. In the Eucharist, it is the Risen Christ who gives himself to the Christian community completely and transforms the world of history into what that world will become.

Born in Lyons, France, in 1916, Martelet became a member of the Society of Jesus in 1935 and pursued literary, philosophical, scientific and theological studies. Ordained priest in 1948, he studied for a doctorate in theology in Rome. He has been Professor of Fundamental Theology and Dogma at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Lyons since 1952. He attended the Second Vatican Council as theologian for the French-speaking bishops of Equatorial Africa. His theology is primarily concerned with contemporary questions of general anthropology, Christian ethics, Christology and the spiritual life.

Martelet's *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*,<sup>1</sup> was a major theological study and published some thirty years ago in France. In this work, he offers an insightful analysis of eschatological significance in relation to the human destiny and that of the whole cosmos. In the introduction to the book, Martelet refers to the words of St. Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor

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<sup>1</sup> Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, trans. Rene Hague (London: Collins, 1976).



15:13-14), and those of Jesus in John's Gospel: "I am the resurrection and life" (Jn 11:25) and "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn 6:51). In this perspective, Martelet explains:

The Eucharist is the Resurrection; it is the risen person himself become our food. It is man's nourishment deified by Jesus, the viaticum for us, the supreme nutrients, the nutriment of this life which leaves death behind; it is the incorruptibility which Christ gives to this world in the bread and wine which he blesses and so transfigures.<sup>2</sup>

Martelet situates a theological understanding of the Eucharist in the context of the resurrection. In the Eucharist the saving death of Jesus is commemorated and his risen life is communicated. As Martelet explains: "If Christ is not risen, then the Eucharist is in vain, and its supper is a hollow void."<sup>3</sup> Martelet thus chooses to construct his entire Eucharistic theology upon what he considers to be the fundamental testimony of the New Testament: Christ is raised into the reality of the resurrection and he is the *Eschaton*. In his Eucharistic self-giving, in his death-transcending resurrection, Christ is "the centre of gravity of world history,"<sup>4</sup> the Eucharistic expression of the destiny of humanity and the universe.

Our exploration of Martelet's theology will include: firstly, his understanding of the Eucharistic symbolism and its meaning in the light of the resurrection; secondly, his theological reflection on the human condition from that perspective; and thirdly, the eschatological character of the Eucharist. Some critical comments on how Martelet approaches Eucharistic eschatology, as a whole, will then be considered. Our questions concern how it is that Martelet approaches the Eucharist as the body of the Risen Christ? What does he mean by the Eucharistic Christ as the eschatological event and his fundamental emphasis on the future glory of the whole cosmos?

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<sup>2</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 12.

## 5.2 The Eucharistic symbolism and its meaning

For Martelet the greatest problem of faith belongs to the order of symbol, because a symbol refers to a mystery.<sup>5</sup> When the Christian community celebrates the memorial of Christ's Passover, it enters into the world of mystery. The Eucharist is above all a mystery of faith. In an attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of the Eucharist, Martelet begins with a discussion of symbolism. In his view, simple things as bread and wine are symbols of human life and death, of our physical condition and needs, of our cultural and social activities, and our desire for companionship and relationship with the cosmic order.

What precisely is symbol? In place of a formal definition of symbol, Martelet emphasizes two of its principal characteristics, namely: union and separation. In speaking of symbol as an agent of unity, he reminds us of the etymology of the Greek *sum-ballein*, meaning, "to throw together."<sup>6</sup> The verb also refers to the action of bringing together, in order to unite, to assemble or make one what was originally separate. This understanding leads Martelet to view Jesus Christ as the fullness of the symbol, for in his incarnation, death and resurrection, Christ is "the fully actualized gatherer-together of God and men, of the eternal and the passage of time."<sup>7</sup> If Jesus Christ is the only great symbol, in the sense that he is in himself a fully perfected union, then the very action of union brings out the difference between the divine and human natures that are being held together.<sup>8</sup> In Christ "all things hold together" (Col 1:17), but not fully so, until he has gathered together and, as the Cosmic Christ, fully redeemed humanity with the whole cosmos.

Martelet notes that if the *sym-bol* unites, "it is because a situation exists in which there is division."<sup>9</sup> For example, when Christians come together to worship, they become one body, having the one spirit, engaged in the one activity, yet each person retains his or her individuality. The symbol, as Martelet explains, is simply a sign; it evokes reality but

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<sup>5</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 24.

does not bestow it; it relates to reality, but it is not the reality itself. When “what it stands for is effected, it then, in the very accomplishment of its purpose, disappears.”<sup>10</sup> Thus symbol is never identical with the reality which it symbolizes. This understanding of symbol as unity and separation has a number of consequences in Martelet’s theological approach. It provides a framework for viewing the experience of God in terms of presence and absence. People make symbols of God and, in doing so, they can recognize the abyss that separates God from the created order. In this way, says Martelet, “in us there is something of an absentee.”<sup>11</sup> As he explains:

Thus the Risen Christ himself is still subject, in the Church, in the world, and in the Eucharist, to what one might call the interregnum of symbols and signs. It is not that Christ is unreal or mythical, but that he is still dependent upon a form of the world, which is not yet completely assimilated to himself. So he remains an Absentee, not from inability to communicate himself or because he has nothing to say, but because he respects the historical structures of man’s world.<sup>12</sup>

This paradox of union and separation is to be regarded, not as something to be solved, but rather as a mystery of faith. It is in the Eucharist that Christians, in fact, welcome and celebrate the presence of the Risen Lord. As a celebration of the Church, the Eucharist holds together, but keeps separate, the historical world that is evolving and the trans-historical world that is already reborn in the sacrament. Since the Eucharist holds these two worlds in balance, it is a symbol of the presence and absence of the Risen Christ. All that is required, however, is that Christians have faith in the Eucharist as sign of the resurrection.

Martelet maintains that, if faith in the resurrection is of central importance to our Christian hope, it is necessary to understand Christ’s resurrection from the point of view of evolutionary theory and symbolism. He employs Teilhard de Chardin’s insights to describe the process involved in the symbolizing of humanity. According to Teilhard, humanity is evolving from matter to spirit through a series of complex movements of

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<sup>10</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 28.

energy that are associated with “*entropy*” and “*neg-entropy*.”<sup>13</sup> Entropy refers to the material dissipation of energy in the evolutionary process. It causes an increase in disorder. Death is its outcome. Neg-entropy, on the other hand, refers to the opposite current of energy directed towards a state of order or richer forms of evolution. It determines the structures of the world. Humanity grows and develops in relationship with the universe, and gradually emerges towards its highest manifestation in spirit.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, the absolute neg-entropy is revealed in Christ’s resurrection. As Martelet explains:

He alone, in all the world, is the complete transgressor of the iron law which sets an inexorable term to all life’s successes and imposes upon every living being the initially beneficial...If Christ’s resurrection has a real meaning from the cosmic point of view, it is that it is the decisive revelation in history of what we can henceforward call *absolute neg-entropy*...imposing on the world-system, where life can never exist without death, an entirely new type of existence in which life is for ever and ever without death.<sup>15</sup>

Viewed in this way, the resurrection of Christ has a meaning for all forms of life. Christ raised from the dead has become “the supreme mutant,” or more precisely, history’s only “Transfigured.”<sup>16</sup> He is the new origin from which all things are born again. Christian hope is thus centred on Christ as the first person to emerge successfully through death to new life in the Spirit.

### 5.3 The symbols in the Eucharist and the human condition

In Martelet’s eschatological approach to the Eucharist, the resurrection of Christ becomes indispensable for interpreting the whole of the historical process in all its parts. He claims that we can “believe that Christ, through his risen body, is the principle of a life so absolute that it embodies on the cosmic plane the ultimate hope of a world that has been created for the Resurrection.”<sup>17</sup> With this background, Martelet proposes a thesis for an

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<sup>13</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 52.

<sup>14</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>16</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>17</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 82.

understanding of Eucharistic symbols and the human condition. To this we now turn our attention.

### 5.3.1 Bread and wine as symbols of nature and culture

The symbols of bread and wine in the Eucharist not only communicate Christ to us, but also signify and recall that we are compounded of culture, community, body and mortality. Human beings are reflected in them and so enclosed in them. Although “in such a cultivation or culture, God is always the supreme artisan,”<sup>18</sup> we cannot deny the simple truth that, as Martelet observes, “wheat and bread, vine and wine so clearly depend upon the work of human beings that it has become impossible for us to offer them to God without saying that they are also the fruit of cultivation and of man’s free decisions.”<sup>19</sup> As such, from being regarded as symbols of nature, bread and wine introduce into the Eucharist “a faithful, highly concentrated, reflection of what we are and what we do.”<sup>20</sup> This is the basis of the authenticity of the bread and wine as symbols.

Martelet explains:

Bread and wine mean that nothing man has accomplished in history has any value if it does not foster, gladden and develop man’s very being. Let us go straight to the heart of the matter. God did not make himself steel or nylon; he made himself flesh and blood, food and drink, word, love, presence and gift of self, source of communion and life. In his incarnation and his Eucharist God is strictly inseparable from love and bread.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of the mystery of the incarnation, the Eucharist then becomes for humanity “a food that sustains life and a drink that fosters love.”<sup>22</sup> Bread and wine, as works of the human hands and culture, are recognized and defined as one of the means for life-enhancement and sanctification of the world. Here creation and culture subject themselves to God in order to bring about the Incarnation by virtue of their being united with Christ, thereby constituting his Eucharistic presence in history.

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<sup>18</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 35.

<sup>22</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36.

### 5.3.2 Table and Community

Martelet considers the interdependence of the Eucharistic symbolism of bread and wine and the community, which produces them and brings them to the common table. He notes, “It is true that the Eucharist is sacrifice, but it is so as the Lord’s Supper; it reproduces the Last Supper and, not without a recalling of the meal shared with the risen Christ, it also anticipates the marriage-feast of the Kingdom.”<sup>23</sup> This unity of symbol of the Eucharist and human community presupposes anthropology. Although the need to eat and drink is common to all people, there is more than this, a deeper human need, which the individual cannot meet satisfactorily except in communion with others. The Eucharist primarily entails “meeting, sharing, commensalism and union.”<sup>24</sup> It discloses what human life by God’s grace of salvation is intended to be, namely, an event of communion, a life together in mutuality and fellowship. To eat and drink at this Eucharistic table is to be united with the body of the Risen Christ, so as to participate in the divine life by sharing life with each other.

Martelet insists, however, that, as a public and open meal in relation to the common good of humanity, the Eucharist “cannot escape from the world problems that the provision of food forces upon humankind.”<sup>25</sup> The bread and wine bring to the table of the Eucharist not only the symbols of the world’s culture, but also of the world’s distress. Christians cannot eat and drink at this table without a commitment to live in accordance with that which is symbolized. Martelet argues that Paul’s attitude to the Christian community at Corinth, “When you meet together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk” (1 Cor 11:20-21), is still valid.<sup>26</sup> This is a sort of social problem, which the Eucharistic table raises for Christians today. They cannot share the bread of life at this table – where all are

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<sup>23</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 38. “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this?...For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor 11: 21-27).

welcome and none goes hungry – and continue to ignore any form of discrimination or any social, or economic policy that results in hunger or other forms of deprivation. So to participate in this common meal as a symbolic celebration of a transformed world order is to acquire a new social and political vision. The Eucharist as a symbolic action, therefore, provides a testing ground wherein Christians are challenged to work for justice and equality in the world. The full symbolic value of bread and wine as acknowledgement of God's gifts of creation, and especially of the gift of life, points to a new sharing and reconciling community, which is in turn a sign of the coming Kingdom of God.

### 5.3.3 Nourishment and corporality

The symbolism of bread and wine also discloses human bodiliness. Human beings live in their bodies; they have needs, rooted in the world by their corporality as members of a particular society, culture and tradition. How then can we see the Eucharistic symbolism as bodiliness, a lived relationship with the world, which engages us in the very depths of our corporality? Martelet explores the question of corporality in terms of five fundamental principles:

Firstly, in regard to the body with needs, he recognizes that “food and drink, prepared and offered in their most eloquent forms, signify that man cannot do without nature if he is to live.”<sup>27</sup> As human beings, we cannot escape our biological conditioning; food and drink are a necessity for all. There are correspondingly certain sacred rights and duties for human life. Martelet cites the teaching of Vatican II, especially in *Gaudium et Spes*:

[All] offenses against life itself...all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures; all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons: all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization...they militate against the honor of the creator.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, par. 27, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York:

The Eucharist “brings out the glaring incompatibility of its celebration by Christians with the injustice of the world’s food distribution.”<sup>29</sup> Eating and drinking is a sign of the reality of an innate relationship between human beings and nature through their corporality.

Secondly, Martelet considers the body in its relationship to the universe.<sup>30</sup> As he argues, “Man is so well harmonized with the world only because it is from the world that he comes. Since he is corporeally a product of the earth, it is not by accident or by compulsion that he is of cosmic stature, but by genesis and identification.”<sup>31</sup> Here Martelet owes much to Teilhard de Chardin’s approach, namely, “my matter, or my own body, even more profoundly is not a *part* of the universe that I possess *totaliter*: it is the totality of the universe possessed by me *partialiter*.”<sup>32</sup> To exist is to co-exist with the universe. Being a human person “means integrating in one’s self the meaning of the world and occupying a cosmic situation.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, according to Martelet, even though all is interconnected in the entire universe, the body is still “an entirely personal act of expression”<sup>34</sup> throughout the whole of life. The body is the very expression of the subject as already and always part of the whole creation.

Thirdly, to view the body as expression is to highlight that the human person is “a being of self-manifestation – in a word, of language and therefore also of body.”<sup>35</sup> To exist is to come out into the open for oneself and for others. So the body is regarded, not as a *thing*, but always fundamentally as the very sign of a *subject*.<sup>36</sup> As “the soul’s field of expression” or as “the symbolic reality of man,”<sup>37</sup> the body is generic in all individuals,

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Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 928. See also Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42. See also Teilhard de Chardin, “What Exactly is the Human Body” (1919), *Science and Christ* (London: Collins, New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 13.

<sup>33</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42.

<sup>35</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 43.



standing in relation to the world, but never losing its individuality and difference. In other words, as body, the human person expresses his or her individuality in relation to others.

Fourthly, Martelet describes “the body as instrument.”<sup>38</sup> This idea, for him, is similar to the notion of mediation, which is used, for example, in John’s Gospel to understand “the mystery of Christ, in whom humanity appears as the instrument of his divinity.”<sup>39</sup>

Martelet here follows Gabriel Marcel’s philosophical anthropology that defines the body as absolute instrument whereby “it is seen as a means fully integrated with the unique growth in being of the subject.”<sup>40</sup> As such, the body is “an instrument only in the sense that it is in itself the exercise of human effort, of invention, of trying, of ‘praxis.’”<sup>41</sup> In this way, the inseparable unity of body and spirit is confirmed. As Martelet argues: “The body is never external to the subject which learns how to use it.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, the body and the spirit are not opposed, but rather united, harmonized, and existing in dialectical relationship with each other: “One cannot exist without providing the genesis of the other.”<sup>43</sup> Since the body is “the soil” in which the spirit grows, and “as body ripens, so does spirit come into flower,” we cannot retain the body-spirit dualism of the past.<sup>44</sup> The human person is, therefore, formed dynamically by a constant effort of integration, in the course of which body and spirit disclose, confirm and accentuate their inseparable unity.

Fifthly, Martelet focuses on the body as symbol of interconnection. The fact that the body is symbol, as he understands it, means: “I exist for myself and for others (for God, too) only as *thrown (ballein)* into a constitutive relationship *with (sum)* the universe.”<sup>45</sup> Just as one cannot be oneself without the body, one cannot be oneself without the world either. So the body, as innate relationship with the cosmos, also determines one’s identity as person. In light of this anthropology, to exist is initially to enter into organic and vital

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<sup>38</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 43.

<sup>39</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 44.

<sup>41</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 44.

<sup>42</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 46.

relationship with those most universal elements, such as water, air, earth, sun and fire.<sup>46</sup> It is because human beings exist in solidarity with the cosmos that the Eucharist in no way renders our human condition suspect, inasmuch as it is corporeal. Rather the materiality of the sacramental symbolism is so crucial that it approves our human condition, encouraging an awareness of the value of the body in terms of presence, relationship and encounter.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.3.4 The bread of life and mortality

The Eucharistic symbolism helps us to rediscover the beauty of our bodiliness as expressive and constitutive of the human person. The same symbolism implies, however, the importance of death. The bread that brings people life does not, so Martelet argues, prevent them from dying, since “nourishment, finiteness and mortality are all one.”<sup>48</sup> Death seems to triumph over life. How then is the Eucharist celebrated as “the meal of absolute Life?”<sup>49</sup> Martelet affirms that death reduces all human beings to silence, but does not reduce them to nothing.<sup>50</sup> Here paradoxically is where the meaning of the resurrection steps in; there is something in the human person, which can never be violated or completely destroyed by anything or anybody.

Martelet discusses the question of human irreducibility in the world. In Christian worship, for example, the Eucharistic symbols of bread and wine appear themselves to be still contained within the life-system that is dominated by death. Nevertheless, for the faith that receives them, they are something, as Martelet recognizes, “much more than mere symbols of human brotherhood in death. They are in a real sense, the food and drink of the resurrection, the body and blood of the Risen Christ.”<sup>51</sup> It is the resurrection that gives believers this assurance in the face of death. If the Eucharist is to invigorate such a hope, then Christ, who gives himself, as the bread of life, must be acclaimed as the conqueror of

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<sup>46</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 47.

<sup>48</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 57.

<sup>51</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 48.

death, and as history's only risen-from-the-grave. In Christ, Christians look for and find the Risen One "who has passed through death and has emptied it of its content, and who, sym-bolizing eternally in his renewed body with life that knows no death, invites all [people] to draw nourishment from his resurrection."<sup>52</sup> Thus the relationship with the world is reconsidered in an entirely new way in Christ, in whose resurrected body the creative forces of life are triumphant. Christ is the "first-born" of such a universe that Christians partake of, when they offer the Eucharist.

#### **5.4 Anthropology and resurrection**

What emerges, for Martelet, from the above consideration is the need to construct what amounts to an anthropology of the resurrection, starting from the symbolism of the Eucharist and ending with a question, which concerns the Risen Christ himself. He notes: "We believe that Christ, through his risen body, is the principle of a life so absolute that it embodies on the cosmic plane the ultimate hope of a world that has been created for the resurrection."<sup>53</sup> A commensurate anthropology of the resurrection unfolds in four dimensions: the eschatological fulfilment, the second birth, the total and experiential entry into Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit.

Firstly, Christian hope in the resurrection is one that belongs entirely to eschatology; it is identified with the end of time and related to the glorious transformation of the world in Christ's Parousia. Christians look forward to the future that is their fulfilment. Death is only the sign, written into the cosmos, of their historic finiteness.<sup>54</sup> Their bodies will be transformed and will receive life beyond death. In this perspective, our own remains, as Martelet asserts, "ultimately become the universe itself to which we shall have been committed without it being possible ever to say that we are annihilated."<sup>55</sup> Here, in the human body pledged to resurrection, there is a profound reality, namely: the centre of perception and initiatives, the entire universe, as experienced by us.<sup>56</sup> Since the human

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<sup>52</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 59.

<sup>53</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 79.

<sup>56</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 83.

body enables the human person to be open to the totality of the world, the resurrection of the dead precisely implies the radical reversal of direction at the level of death.<sup>57</sup> Since the real meaning of Christ's resurrection is understood as "absolute neg-entropy,"<sup>58</sup> a new kind of existence is already established in the universe: life forever without death. In the resurrection, therefore, what truly defines Christ's risen body also defines our human bodies. As such, the resurrection is regarded as the beginning of a completely new relationship,<sup>59</sup> which revolutionizes our real development in this world as well as in our bodies.

Secondly, in virtue of this eschatological dimension, Martelet describes the resurrection as "a cosmic birth - a birth wholly made over to life, over which death will never again have any hold, since it rests upon the Lord's absolute sovereignty over the universe and death."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, if the resurrection represents such a revolution in the development of the universe, then the Christ of the resurrection is "in very truth a new origin from which all things are born again...he is entry into new times, which are transformed beyond recognition, even though passionately awaited."<sup>61</sup> Thus the "Cosmic Christ" is the point in which all evolution culminates. He alone is the One to transfigure the world whose full revelation will be the Parousia.

Thirdly, the world will thus enter into Christ's personal glory. This is a total and experiential entry. Christ will permeate it "with a life that has shaken off the servitude of death and will make it symbolize for ever the new humanity of the resurrection."<sup>62</sup> As the fundamental eschatological event, the Risen Christ will himself appear as the true solution to the antagonism between humanity and nature. There is an intimate connection between Christ's resurrection and our own; "one is the exemplar of the other."<sup>63</sup> Christian hope for the resurrection is not an empty one, because it is already realized in Christ. He

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<sup>57</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>58</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>59</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>60</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 79.

<sup>61</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>62</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 88.

<sup>63</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 77.

is the One, says Martelet, who “inaugurates in himself such a condition of the universe.”<sup>64</sup> As the “first-born” of every creature, the beginning and the consummator of the whole world, Christ is the norm and foundation of all eschatology.

Fourthly, Martelet claims that there is a close relationship between the resurrection of Christ and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The message of the New Testament is that the outpouring of the Spirit, which establishes the Church in the world, is directly related to the resurrection (Rom 1: 3-4).<sup>65</sup> Since Christ and the Spirit are intimately associated with one another in the works of salvation, there is no doubt that the resurrection has taken place by the power of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that brings history to its eschatological fulfilment. Martelet describes this Spirit as

A trans-cultural power...an energy that is not merely ‘cosmic,’ which extends beyond, and includes, the world’s structures, and refashions them without annihilating them; it is Love without conditions and so without limits, Spirit really and entirely other than all human spirit, Spirit in one word that is infinite and especially divine; it is what scripture rightly calls *Holy Spirit*.<sup>66</sup>

Hence the meaning of Christ’s resurrection in history is the anthropologically determinable revelation of a Spirit,<sup>67</sup> quite other than human spirit, “enclosed in death and yet not reducible to death.”<sup>68</sup> The Spirit is understood not as an idea, a concept, a mere eminent power, the absolute form of knowing,<sup>69</sup> but rather as “the Spirit of the resurrection, who is not identifiable outside the resurrection itself.”<sup>70</sup> More importantly, the Spirit is the transcendent operator of the resurrection,<sup>71</sup> confirming not only what has been said about the body of the Risen Christ, but also the relationship between the body and the cosmos. With Christ, “the glory of the resurrection is not a matter of position or place but rather a matter of relationship to this world transfigured by the power of the

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<sup>64</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84.

<sup>65</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 85.

<sup>66</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87.

<sup>67</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87.

<sup>68</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87.

<sup>69</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87.

<sup>70</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87.

<sup>71</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 88.

Spirit.”<sup>72</sup> Since Christ’s body is the relationship itself, everything, in the Spirit, is for Christ.

This theological viewpoint suggests the total entry into Christ of the world with all its being. Although Christ is bound more closely than ever to this world, he is bound in a way which is independent of history, for he is “the Supreme Mutant.”<sup>73</sup> Conversely, in the resurrection as the unique event in which history is to be wedded to the transcendent, the mystery of the Incarnation reaches its climax in the realism of Christ’s risen body. In short, Martelet’s anthropology of the resurrection is essentially a positive affirmation of the glorious transformation of the world and its historical significance. So the resurrection is the absolute *Real* of history;<sup>74</sup> it is the Parousia inaugurated in Christ, just as the Parousia is the resurrection fulfilled in the world.

### **5.5 The eschatological features of the Eucharist**

If Christ’s earthly body has not been raised, Martelet argues, the Eucharistic table is emptied of its substance. Christ, in his risen body, established a new relationship with the universe, a relationship that destroyed death and became the principle of new life.<sup>75</sup> This power to transfigure the world will be effective for all humanity at the end of time, but only because it is already at work in history. What, then, does all of this say about the Eucharist and how is the Eucharistic symbolism related to the eschatological movement of history? For Martelet, the full realization of the Eucharistic symbolic action can be interpreted only in terms of the Parousia. We now turn to examine more closely his theological reflection on the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology.

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<sup>72</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 88.

<sup>73</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 88.

<sup>74</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 89.

<sup>75</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 80-90.

### 5.5.1 Eucharist as memorial and presence of the Risen Christ

For a discussion of the Eucharist as memorial and presence of the Risen Christ, Martelet turns to the early tradition of the Church. He finds approaches to Eucharistic theology that are congruent with the whole scope of the Christian mystery. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Risen Lord gives himself and Christians receive this gift, not in terms of his dead body, but in the identity in which he lives on, as the Christ of the resurrection.

In this perspective, Martelet begins with an understanding of the anamnesis of Christ's redemptive death, which is celebrated in the Eucharist, not as a subjective memory but as an objective reality. By this he means: "It is symbol, image, mystery. So the anamnesis imprints upon the whole of the sacred action the mark of a real memory: under the veil of ritual, the redemptive death becomes reality."<sup>76</sup> This memorial action is, in fact, also modeled upon the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the Cross. The Eucharistic celebration is both a *feast* and a *drama* in which the Church is united with Christ as "*one single* being: for he has raised her up to himself in an act of wonderful condescension."<sup>77</sup> How then does the Church emerge into an awareness of her own self in this act of Christ's self-giving love, which subsists in the Eucharist? What role does she play in this dramatic celebration of salvation as a whole? Martelet finds in the Eucharistic theologies of Romano Guardini and Odo Casel a rich image of the constitutive event between Christ and the Church that is particularly appropriate to his theological purpose.<sup>78</sup> As he explains:

The oblation has to pass into the Church and not remain in Christ alone, since love resides in him only in order to pass into her and possess her entirely. No thing nor person in the Church may be withdrawn from Christ's offering; everything must

<sup>76</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 103.

<sup>77</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> See Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. Romano Guardini and Odo Casel are members of the liturgical movement and revival in the second quarter of this century. With Guardini and Casel, as Martelet observes, "attention is concentrated again, and first of all, upon *man*, who must enter liturgically into the mystery, and upon the act spiritually performed in the Church. From this 'theology of the mystery,' as Casel says, there will gradually emerge a new view of the *Presence*; and that, in turn, will lead to a flexible interpretation of the Council of Trent and a better theological answer to the fundamental demands of Eucharistic realism." 99. See also R. Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), and O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1962).

become in her the act of self-giving and of entering into the operation of a perfect communion. ‘Mystically engrafted into Christ as his body and spouse...the Church joins herself by the most intensive self-giving to his offering, so that she becomes one sacrifice with him. Church and Christ form one body, and the bride’s liturgy is a pure recalling of the bridegroom’s love.’<sup>79</sup>

In the Eucharist, Christians do not offer any new sacrifice, but rather they celebrate the memory of Christ’s unique sacrifice that has brought salvation to the world. This memorial is a meal, not a mere remembering of something that has happened earlier. Such remembering is an event of communion, since through and in the Eucharist Christ lives in the Church. More precisely, it is “Christ once again seating himself among them, eating and drinking with them, giving himself to them as nourishment.”<sup>80</sup> This is how the first Christians understood the Eucharist. They celebrated their commemorative meals in terms of the Lord’s Supper, the “breaking of the bread,” which took on the form of an eternal feast, in the heavenly banquet and in the divine presence.<sup>81</sup> The sacrificial offering of the bread and wine is thus the memorial sign and reality of the presence of Christ who has already passed through death and attained to resurrected life in the power of the Spirit. In short, the Eucharist is the mystery of the Risen Christ who is present to the Church in history by means of the signs of bread and wine.

### 5.5.2 The Eucharist as cosmic “transubstantiation”

Martelet understands the Eucharistic presence as historical and as resurrected, which is part of the evolutionary process. He argues, for example, that when “the bread and wine are converted into the body of the Risen Christ, they still remain elements that are immanent in this world.”<sup>82</sup> In this way, the mystery of *transubstantiation* of the bread and

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<sup>79</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 103.

<sup>80</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 104.

<sup>81</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 104.

<sup>82</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 107. Here the concept of “transubstantiation” plays a subordinate part; it is primarily functional; it enables us to attach a name to a transforming act which lies beyond our grasp, but whose effects are known to us by faith: this bread is no longer bread but the body of the Lord, and this wine his blood. What matters, then, is not the word as such, but the thing it envisages, the content of faith, which it enables us to profess. This term is a way of naming this presence as a mystery, which effects a radical reversal in the bread and wine.



wine is not just an isolated mystery, but is part of the transformed structure of the world that has resulted from the resurrection.

In his vision of eschatological newness, Martelet stresses the absolute sovereignty of Christ over the universe and death, which, as we have discussed above, embodies, on the cosmic plane, the ultimate hope of a world destined for the resurrection. Following the teaching of Paul regarding the whole creation being set free from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:21), Martelet argues that we need to go beyond the classical understanding and to see that the transubstantiation of the bread and wine is not confined to the bread and wine. It is “encircled by a halo of divinization...that extends to the whole universe.”<sup>83</sup> From the cosmic elements of bread and wine into which Christ has entered, he is active to master and assimilate to himself all that still remains. Thus, the Eucharist is itself pre-eminently the sacrament of the presence of the Risen Christ. It is through the medium of this bread and wine that Christ takes possession of humanity’s cultural body. Here Christ’s intention is to integrate into the body of his resurrection those elements, which, for humanity, form part of the body of mortality, in order to inaugurate a new relationship between him and the world. Martelet sums up what Christ does:

Christ himself indeed wishes to integrate into the *Body of his resurrection* these elements which, for us, form part of the *body of mortality*. He therefore takes the elements of the world, which *historically* sym-bolize with us in time as our culture works upon them, and makes it possible for them to sym-bolize *eschatologically* with him through the truth of his resurrection. He gives this double world-element the power to become and *to be* for us, here and now, what the whole world will become and *will be*, in virtue of glory, at the time of the *parousia*.<sup>84</sup>

The Eucharistic bread and wine are, therefore, given an eschatological meaning through Christ’s transfiguring power. It is the sacramental anticipation in history of the fundamental identity of the world in the order of the resurrection. Christ does not, however, step outside his domain to intervene in the historical activities of humanity. Rather he reveals to people of faith that he is the innermost meaning of the elements of

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<sup>83</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 173.

<sup>84</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 175.

bread and wine. Christ's presence is thus a presence in symbolic form. As Martelet writes:

In a veiled and partial manner he transforms the world of history into what that world will become in eschatology. Christ gives us our bread and wine as *things that have become in advance*, at the level of sign, what the whole world will become in the blaze of glory - the deathless life of the Body of his resurrection. This he does symbolically, and therefore in a way that is still limited to signs and relative to our own time.<sup>85</sup>

Hence, as the symbol of future glory, the Eucharist foreshadows what will happen to the whole cosmos at the end of time. Through the signs of the bread and wine Christ is really present. For Martelet, however, "faith alone can apprehend its content."<sup>86</sup> Such a challenge of faith consists of two aspects of the Eucharistic symbolism: one affirming Christ's presence already implicit in the historical world, the other pointing to fulfilment at the Parousia. On the eschatological character of the Eucharist, Martelet explains:

The Eucharist is eschatological, for, invisibly and only in its action upon a double element, it anticipates what the parousia will make of the whole world when it transfigures it by the annihilation of death. It is, as has been said, a sacramental parousia: *parousia*, since it involves the Body of the Resurrection, but *sacramental* parousia, since its effects remain related to signs. In view of the fact that this world in which our humanity grows in stature must be a continuing world, Christ's glory cannot appear in it except by way of symbol. 'Elements of the first creation become...pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth.' Thus, without putting a stop to history, the risen Christ prefigures for us its term. He also enables us to have a foretaste of that term...This Eucharistic mystery, however, which, in the form of symbol and the 'shorthand' of sign, realizes the development of the world into the body of Jesus Christ, thereby ensures the *real* presence of the Lord.<sup>87</sup>

Martelet, therefore, presses to an understanding of the notion of transubstantiation in the sense that "just as the Risen Christ is much less contained in the world than the world is contained in him...Christ is much less in the bread and wine than the bread and wine are in him, 'converted' and changed in the newness of life."<sup>88</sup> Such a view refers to the

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<sup>85</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 176.

<sup>86</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 176.

<sup>87</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 177.

<sup>88</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 178.

unique position of Christ in the cosmos. As gift of Christ's eschatological presence, the Eucharist affects the very being of the bread and wine and reveals the future fulfilment of the world as the "new heavens and new earth."

### 5.5.3 Eucharistic transformation

The presence of Christ in the bread and wine is the sign of transformative presence. For Martelet, the Eucharistic transformation means genesis or a new birth into a life that is the perfect fulfilment of the noblest aspirations of humanity. There are two phases in one single genesis. One phase is "the cultural phase which makes the world humanity's historical body;" the other is "the parousiac fulfilment founded upon the resurrection, which makes from the world Christ's glorified body and humanity rising again in Christ."<sup>89</sup> The resurrected body of Christ is thus the first cell of the new cosmos. The power at work in this transformation is that of the Spirit of the Christ of the resurrection and the Spirit working within the evolutionary process. In an attempt to approach this question of eschatological transformation, Martelet describes the following aspects:

Firstly, the Eucharist is related to everyday reality of life, since the bread and wine are the signs that embrace the whole human condition. The Eucharistic symbols are a constant reminder of the Christian ethical responsibility to work for the transformation of the world by the actions of sharing, social justice, friendship and forgiveness. There is an intrinsic connection between responsible participation in the Eucharist and commitment to the world, which Martelet describes as *orthopraxis*, the rightness in acting and its true sign, that is, *orthodoxy*, the rightness in judging.<sup>90</sup> Christians are "accountable for not despising in everyday life"<sup>91</sup> what they venerate so deeply in the liturgy.

Secondly, as the gift of Christ's risen body, the Eucharist is ineffective without a "moment of repentance."<sup>92</sup> The community that celebrates the Eucharist is called, through

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<sup>89</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 164.

<sup>90</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 181.

<sup>91</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 181-182.

<sup>92</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 182.

a radical conversion, to be alert to the social implications of all Christian activities. This practical awareness of others is “an exact measure of our belonging to the Risen Christ.”<sup>93</sup> Eating and drinking with the Risen Lord inaugurates a “new art of living in the world.”<sup>94</sup> The Eucharist is the place from which “true revolution” must emerge. The more Christians appreciate the sacrament, the more they find, says Martelet, that “what is called for relates to a progressive transformation of personality.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, the meaning of the Eucharist must be expressed and embodied in the lives of the believers. Participation in the Body of Christ presupposes acceptance of the daily effort for justice in love,<sup>96</sup> which extends to all people and the whole cosmos.

Thirdly, at the Eucharist, Christians are introduced into the same kind of life that Christ experienced and lived. The Eucharist realizes in them, as Martelet understands it, what the Incarnation effected in Christ or through the Eucharist “Christ introduces us into that for which he destines us by his Incarnation.”<sup>97</sup> This Eucharistic transformation happens both in the liturgical celebration according to “the mode of sacramental symbolism” and in the world according to “the mode of historical manifestation.”<sup>98</sup> Following von Balthasar, Martelet sees this as “the aesthetics of the Incarnation in the Eucharistic meal.”<sup>99</sup> It is an incarnation into new life, just as real as the Incarnation of Christ. It is here, in their bodily celebration of the sacrament, that Christians allow God’s transforming grace to open the depths of their personality to the mystery that is “spirit” and “life.” What Christians are praying for is, as Martelet puts it, “a veritable existential transubstantiation.”<sup>100</sup> So in the Eucharist the Church undergoes a new birth into the Cosmic Christ.

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<sup>93</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 183.

<sup>94</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 183.

<sup>95</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 187.

<sup>96</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 187.

<sup>97</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 188.

<sup>98</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. For Martelet, this is the gift of the Spirit to the church. We do not lose our identity as a group of people engaged in evolutionary growth. Rather we are given a second identity. It is this gift that enables us to surrender ourselves to the transforming reality of the Spirit and put on Christ (Rom 13:14). “We have to be nourished by the transfiguring flesh of the risen Christ if we are gradually to come into the domain of the Spirit, who slowly moulds and remoulds our humanity in accordance with the Truth and Life of his own.” 189.

<sup>99</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 190.

<sup>100</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. This is also connected with the changed relationship with the Christ of the Resurrection and our actions in history. Only faith, however, can bring us

## 5.6 Critical reflections

Martelet certainly brings a different insight to the doctrine of eschatological hope in terms of Eucharistic symbolism and the human condition. He addresses the corporality of human existence, starting from the Eucharist as the Lord's Supper to the resurrection of Christ. Martelet suggests that we can speak of the Eucharist as a supper in the language of the body and not merely of substance, since the presence of Christ in the bread and wine is that of his risen body. This glorified body is the first-born of all creation, the head of the body, the Church, and its final fulfilment (Col 1:15-20). We highlight some aspects of Martelet's theology that are particularly significant advances in relation to the traditional approach to the Eucharist:

Firstly, the resurrection is the crucial context for an eschatological understanding of the Eucharistic presence. Martelet has shown how the concept of *transubstantiation* can be expressed in a way that makes more sense to contemporary human experience in explaining the personal presence of Christ among Christians. He aims to bring together the Eucharist and the resurrection, and so to recapture anew the significance of Christ's eschatological presence. By being transformed into his body and blood, the bread and wine, which incorporate the elements of nature and culture, are summoned into a new being by Christ, so that the Eucharistic presence is realized as a saving, healing, elevating or eschatological presence. Since the resurrection is the triumph of Christ over death, then the Eucharist is a sign of hope, truly affirming the meaning of life.

Secondly, in this extended sense, we can agree that not only those who take part in the Eucharist, but also the whole universe shares in the resurrection of Christ. The bread and wine are themselves part of the new cosmos. The risen body of Christ embraces the whole universe, as the center of his self-expression and communication. In terms of certain affirmations about the general resurrection of the body and the dawning of a new creation, this positive view coincides with the thought of Teilhard, who maintains that

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face to face with what the Eucharist, through the power of the Resurrection, effects in secret in this world for us, transforming and drawing all humanity to the Cosmic Christ. In this way, Christians will be able "to proclaim the glory of the Lord eschatologically revealed in his Resurrection."<sup>192</sup>

“by virtue of Christ’s rising again, nothing any longer kills inevitably but everything is capable of becoming the blessed touch of the divine hands, the blessed influence of the will of God upon our lives.”<sup>101</sup> As such, Martelet takes the future of the world seriously, in a way similar to the understanding of Karl Rahner, who also speaks of a relationship in which the world, as a whole, flows into Christ’s resurrection and into the transfiguration of his body.<sup>102</sup>

Thirdly, Martelet has successfully blended the doctrine of Christian hope with Christian ethics and responsibility for the world. Such ethics and responsibility are, however, purified of human individualistic tendencies, or even anthropocentrism, and thus are given political, social and ecological dimensions in the Eucharist. In this new anthropology of the resurrection, there exists a profound solidarity between human beings and the cosmos. The resurrection is not simply to be concerned with the eternal fate of the individual person, but rather to enter into a perfect bodily relationship with all humanity and the whole universe. In this, Martelet offers a corrective to past eschatological ideas about the human person and reality. For example, he overcomes the dualism that delivers a vision of reality as two separate levels of existence: spirit and matter, sacred and profane, body and soul, the individual and society, nature and history. This approach is an appropriate way of expressing divine transcendence and immanence, a significant contribution towards a constructive theology of the God-world relationship in which all things have their sources for transcendence in God. In short, Martelet’s eschatological view of the Eucharist as symbol of the resurrection thus offers enriching possibilities to the traditional theology of the Eucharist.

Fourthly, in a related way, it might be said that Martelet’s theology is both symbolic and realist as well as dialectical and analogical. He strongly defends the claim that in the Eucharist, the Risen Christ truly gives himself personally and immediately. He becomes “our food...the viaticum, the supreme mutant, the nutriment of this life.”<sup>103</sup> At the same

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<sup>101</sup> See Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1971), 82-83.

<sup>102</sup> See Karl Rahner, *The Content of Faith*, trans. Harvey D. Egan, ed. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 655-656.

<sup>103</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 12.

time, however, Martelet indicates, the greatest problem of faith belongs to the order of symbol.<sup>104</sup> His rediscovery of the traditional understanding of the relationship between symbol and reality is fundamental. The importance and necessity of signs and symbols in the Eucharist, which Martelet attempts to articulate, are viewed as giving us access to a deeper dimension of reality. These symbols embody the reality of the Eucharist in a specific way and do not just point to it. Christ's self-giving love in the Eucharist is immediate. It is a free and undeserved gift, while at the same time it respects the limited human way of grasping this profound mystery completely. Thus through signs and symbols in the Eucharist, we can see humanity and the world in terms of being slowly incorporated into the new cosmos, the risen body of Christ. Here the Eucharist holds the "already" and "not yet" aspects of salvation in balance and assists in this evolutionary movement towards the future fulfilment.

Fifthly, Martelet has made a valuable contribution to the dialogue between theology and science. He has creatively employed essential components of Teilhard's synthesis of science and Christian faith, not only to develop a more adequate anthropology, a total view of human beings and the world and our rightful place in the scheme of realities, but also to show the implications for an understanding of the relationship between the Risen Christ and the material world. He argues, for example, "Christ gives us our bread and wine as things that have become in advance, at the level of sign, what the whole world will become in the blaze of glory – the deathless life of the Body of his Resurrection."<sup>105</sup> This statement provides a substructure which theology and contemporary science could consider for their mutual benefit and enrichment.

Martelet affirms that the history of the world will come to an end, but this will not be a simple ending or destruction, rather the participation of the whole universe in the transformation, the consummation and divinisation of conscious beings into the Body of Christ. There will be nothing outside the scope of the Risen Christ and the Eucharistic world. The resurrection of the body involves the consummation of cosmic history. In regarding Christ's resurrection as absolute *neg-entropy*, that is, the radical transformation

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<sup>104</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 176.

of its relationship to the world, Martelet also takes account of the perspective of humanists, such as Marx and Bloch. Christian hope, therefore, comes to realize in the Eucharist, that it must take history much more seriously and open itself up to a more evolutionary worldview.

Sixthly, referring to the unique role of Christ in the cosmos, Martelet is correct in affirming that the person of Christ is the foundation of eschatology. He makes clear, however, that the Eucharist, celebrated in the context of the resurrection, is the work of Christ's Spirit. It is this Spirit who, in the Eucharist, gives food and drink to the Church from the bread and wine of the resurrection.<sup>106</sup> An acute awareness of the role of the Spirit is evident. Martelet's Eucharistic theology highlights the incarnation and resurrection as the divinisation of humanity and the transformation of the world and as the work of the Spirit in creation. The Spirit is understood as the ever-present life giving Creator, who actively indwells all of the cosmos. In fact, the Spirit already moves Christians, who come together and take part in the Eucharist, into the life of the resurrection, but this dynamic flow of life has the element of waiting in hope as the Spirit suffers with all creation groaning towards the future glory (Rom 8:22-24). This interconnection between Pneumatology and Christology might be made essential constituents of a future Eucharistic theology.

Setting the Eucharist in the light of the resurrection, Martelet has also succeeded in elaborating the eschatological meaning of the Eucharist and the concrete character of Christian hope. The resurrection of Christ is the cause and model of the resurrection of humanity and the whole creation. There are, however, certain issues, which particularly deserve our careful examination.

Firstly, regarding the notion of body as an entirely personal act of expression,<sup>107</sup> Martelet presents an analysis of the human body as "instrument and programme"<sup>108</sup> This assertion

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<sup>105</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 176.

<sup>106</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 188.

<sup>107</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42.

<sup>108</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 43.



presents a problem. We appreciate his emphasis on the ontological unity of the human person against the body-spirit dualism, but to speak of the body as an instrument seems to convey the idea that it can sometimes be used and, at other times, set apart. But a person is the body. It is through the body that a person manifests himself or herself, and it is in the body that the other person is recognized for who he or she is. The body is, as Horner says, “more than the vehicle which carries thought, but the very expression of the subject as always and already part of a world, always and already part of what is other.”<sup>109</sup> The body is a vital part of the person, not simply an instrument, even though we acknowledge that Martelet attempts to point out that the body is “an instrument, strictly unique in its kind, and so linked to spirit that it is spirit itself in somatic form.”<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, it is because we are bodies that the materiality of the Eucharist can make sense. As Chauvet remarks: “The body...is not simply a condition for rites, but their very place. If liturgy requires the body, this is not just because, as “matter” substantially “informed” by the soul, the body must necessarily be involved so that its homage to God is total.”<sup>111</sup> Or, in the words of Emmanuel Lévinas, “Life is a body...To be a body is on the one hand to stand...to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the other, and thus to be encumbered by one’s body.”<sup>112</sup> It is more appropriate to say that the human person is at the same time embodied spirit and inspirited body.

Secondly, Martelet presents a series of symbols, such as the Eucharistic bread and wine, which are the symbols of life and death. There is missing here, however, something of the important components of the whole theology of death, as Karl Rahner would suggest, which relates human death to freedom and which sees it as a moment of active final and definitive self-determination.<sup>113</sup> We cannot deny the fact that death is both a universal phenomenon and an event affecting the whole person. This understanding is not a biological or medical affirmation but a theological one, since we are not merely biological

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<sup>109</sup> Robyn Horner, “The Eucharist and the Postmodern,” *Eucharist: Experience and Testimony*, ed. Tom Knowles (Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing, 2001), 23.

<sup>110</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 45.

<sup>111</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 355.

<sup>112</sup> Quotation taken from Horner, “The Eucharist and the Postmodern.”22.

phenomena, but persons endowed with spiritual freedom and responsibility. While in general, death might be looked at as meaningless or as a necessary part of the life process, from a Christian perspective, our death and dying is a truth that we can embrace, accept and opt for as an act of our own freedom, fulfilment, and self-possession. We are supported in this perspective by the words in John's Gospel: "I lay down my life...I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:18).

Perhaps because of his overriding concern to defend the "absolute emergence" of the human being, who is "never reducible to...and can never be dissociated from the universe,"<sup>114</sup> Martelet appears not to emphasize adequately the universality of death as "an absolute proportion of our faith"<sup>115</sup> that affects the whole person, as Rahner has described it. Death is an event, which strikes the human person in his or her totality, not just "at the level of the material and the biological, but on the plane of self-awareness, personhood, freedom, responsibility, love and faithfulness."<sup>116</sup> Thus the death of each human person becomes a final opportunity to give oneself freely and completely into the love of God in trusting self-surrender. Theology cannot ignore the death of individuals and their hope for the fullness of life.

Thirdly, Martelet's theological approach leaves little room for an understanding of the meaning and effects of evil and sin. It seems that Martelet's eschatological vision is so determinedly optimistic that questions must be asked about evil and sin. Rahner suggests that Christians should develop also a "sober realism" which appreciates the bitterness of life, the radical risk of being human and recognizes the threat of sin and guilt.<sup>117</sup> Though

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<sup>113</sup> See Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, trans. C.H. Henkey (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962), 21-22.

<sup>114</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 56-57.

<sup>115</sup> Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, 21.

<sup>116</sup> See Karl Rahner, "Theological Considerations Concerning the Moment of Death," trans. David Bourke, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11 (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 317-318.

<sup>117</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1999). In this regard, Rahner writes: "It is only then that one can believe and hope and grasp God's promises in the good news of Jesus Christ."<sup>403</sup> Further, he asserts, "Among the central mysteries of Christian and church life we proclaim in the Lord's Supper the death of the Lord until he comes again. We Christians, then, are really the only people who can forego an 'opiate' in our existence or an analgesic for our lives. Christianity forbids us to reach for an analgesic in such a way that we are no

everything will be received, transformed and end in Christ, and the process of humanization is only a preparation for the final Parousia, such a hopeful realism surely involves the courage to accept one's strengths as well one's limitations, facing life in all its ambiguities. Since deep within the human heart lies the possibility of hope as well as the disturbing awareness of finitude, can we believe that human beings, even in their sinfulness, are oriented toward the God of glory?

Fourthly, concerning the Cosmic Christ and the whole evolutionary process, we might wonder whether Martelet's intense optimism is justified. In his anthropology of the resurrection, the whole evolutionary process is directed toward and finds its fulfilment in the Parousia of Christ. But we question whether his approach is primarily set out in light of the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ is held to be the goal and crowning point not only of the supernatural, but also of the natural order. While this viewpoint allows Martelet to bring a humanistic approach and Christian faith together in the Cosmic Christ, he achieves this at the expense of Christ's purpose as the Redeemer of the world. The theological concept of redemption has become less apparent in the Incarnation, within the framework of his scientific vision, that is, the movement of energy associated with *entropy* and *neg-entropy*. It is regrettable that he omits to elaborate more fully upon the salvific meaning of the Cross. As the Eucharistic acclamation, no. IV, proclaims: "By your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free, you are the Savior of the world." Only when death and human sinfulness are recognized, and not ignored, is hope in the Paschal Mystery aroused.

The death of Christ is proclaimed in the Eucharist as the decisive event that has ushered in the new age, the eschatological times. This conviction, however, takes into account the fact that death is not the end, but rather a passage to the resurrection. Or, as Tony Kelly states, "by locating the expression of hope in the Paschal Mystery, we escape any tendency either to displace our hopes into an evolutionary myth or to distort it by

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longer willing to drink the chalice of death of this existence with Jesus Christ. And to this extent there is no doubt that in living out its Christian existence Christianity is required to say in an absolute and sober realism: yes, this existence is incomprehensible, for it passes through something incomprehensible in which all of our comprehending is taken from us." 404.

fundamentalist fantasy.”<sup>118</sup> The grace of salvation is then appreciated and regarded as healing and an elevation of human nature.

## 5. 7 Conclusion

Martelet’s exploration of the interconnection between the Eucharist and the resurrection results in an eschatological hope with a strong emphasis on the glorious future of humanity and the transformation of the whole cosmos. He has considered the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of Eucharistic faith, the supreme event of history, which explains the whole world as a process of growth toward the fullness of life. The Eucharist, therefore, symbolizes the resurrection so closely that to suppress the latter is to eradicate the former.<sup>119</sup> Without the body of the Risen Lord in person, the Eucharistic meal is nothing. In Martelet’s theological approach, the Risen Christ is the Eucharistic Christ. It is through the Eucharist that the Risen Christ becomes the centre of convergence of world history.

The effect of the Eucharist is thus to form believers and the whole cosmos into the one Body of Christ. For Martelet, this effectiveness is sacramental; but as such, “that effectiveness opens out into an end of time in which what is still held back and, we might say, inhibited by love...will be expressed eschatologically.”<sup>120</sup> The Eucharist is the announcement and celebration of the future. It is a sacramental Parousia, which involves the body of the resurrection. Its effects, however, remain related to signs and symbols. All the Eucharistic meals, claims Martelet, “are viatica, provisions of hope taken for a journey, until he shall come.”<sup>121</sup> Here the eschatological focus on the real presence of the Risen Christ also reminds Christians that the Spirit transforms the bread and wine, the symbols of the material universe into the body and blood of the Cosmic Christ. The whole of creation is thus given in the Eucharist a foretaste of the life to come.

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<sup>118</sup> Tony Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite: Explorations in Christian Hope* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1991), 81.

<sup>119</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 60.

<sup>120</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 117.

What is utterly vital for Martelet is that “there is one Mass and one Communion.”<sup>122</sup>

Following Teilhard, Martelet insists that creation, as a whole, must be regarded in precisely these terms. He even defines being in terms of inter-being or communion, being united and uniting.<sup>123</sup> In this perspective, the resurrection of Christ is the centerpiece of Eucharistic eschatology germinating personal, social, and cosmic hope.

At every moment the Eucharistic Christ controls – from the point of view of the organization of the Pleroma (which is the only true point of view from which the world can be understood) – the whole movement of the universe: the Christ *per quem omnia, Domine, semper creas, vivificas et praestas nobis*... As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host assimilates our humanity, the Eucharistic transformation goes beyond and completes the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar. Step by step it irresistibly invades the universe. It is the fire that sweeps over the heath; the stroke that vibrates through the bronze. In a secondary and generalized sense... the sacramental Species are formed by the totality of the world, and the duration of creation is the time needed for its consecration. *In Christo vivimus, movemur et sumus*.<sup>124</sup>

This eschatological approach to the Eucharist has enlarged the concept of “Holy Communion,” which is not restricted to the personal alone, but includes all human beings and the material universe. The Eucharist is thus a celebration, not simply for the sanctification of the person, but for the good of the whole Church and all humanity and indeed the whole cosmos, so that all creation is drawn closer into the Kingdom of God. As Martelet explains, it is the Spirit who acts in the Eucharist and incorporates the world into the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is a sacrament which “prefigures and heralds the Parousia,”<sup>125</sup> and belongs to “the order of the Resurrection.”<sup>126</sup> Here is the risen Body of Christ who establishes a world where death is overcome. Christian hope therefore cannot but be eschatological hope for all. The Eucharist, which is celebrated within in the context of the resurrection, becomes the powerful symbol of hope in the religious and social history of humanity, since it is already the first fruits of a completely refashioned cosmic future.

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<sup>121</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 117.

<sup>122</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 118.

<sup>123</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 118-119.

<sup>124</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 118. See T. de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1971), 125.

<sup>125</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 119.

Having considered the work of Martelet, we already observe that it is only with the resurrection that the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist fully emerges. Bound up with this is the sense that God can bring life out of death. A new sense of being in the world and of being in communion with the Risen Christ emerges that affirms the horizon of Eucharistic hope within which Christians live. Finally, there is the risen Body of Christ who establishes a new world where death is overcome. Thus the Eucharist embodies on the cosmic plane the ultimate hope for a world that has been created for the resurrection. We now turn to von Balthasar, who proposes a different approach to the Eucharist in its relation to the Passion of Christ.

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<sup>126</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 119.

## Chapter 6     Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Eucharist As Sacrificial Celebration of The Eschaton

### 6.1 Introduction

The three theologies, which we have so far examined, look to find in the symbols of the Kingdom of God and the resurrection of Jesus the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology. Hans Urs von Balthasar's eschatological vision of the Eucharist is deeply shaped by the paschal sacrifice of Christ, the eternal self-offering to God on behalf of humanity. His theology, like the theologies of Durrwell and Martelet, situates an exploration of the interconnection within the Paschal Mystery. Yet he attempts to describe the Eucharistic event as the drama of Christ's Passion. In his reflections the profound theological meaning of Christ's *kenosis* emerges, as we now turn to explore.

Among the leading theologians who have most profoundly influenced the re-visioning of eschatology in the twentieth century, is von Balthasar, described by Henri de Lubac, as "perhaps the most cultivated of his time."<sup>1</sup> Born in Lucerne, Switzerland on 12 August 1905, von Balthasar was educated by both Benedictines and Jesuits. His studies in Munich, Vienna, Berlin and Zurich culminated, in 1929, with a doctoral thesis on the *History of the Eschatological Problem in Modern German Literature*.<sup>2</sup> His theology developed in ongoing dialogue with other well-known theologians, such as Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou and Henri Bouillard. On assignment as student chaplain to the University of Basel, he met Adrienne von Speyr, whom he accompanied in her journey to enter the Catholic Church. He observed and showed a strong interest in von Speyr's reports of visions and in her theological writings. Von

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 58. See also Henri de Lubac, "A Witness of Christ in the Church: Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, trans. James R. Dunne (Shannon: Ecclesia Press, 1969), 105. See also H. U. von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. A. Nichols (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 1.

<sup>2</sup> For a short biography of Balthasar, see the Introduction by Aidan Nichols in Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 1-8. See also John O'Donnell, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 1-7.

Balthasar was convinced that she possessed a unique mission for the Church and regarded her as a great inspiration of his life.

In 1969 von Balthasar was appointed to the International Theological Commission, and was actively engaged in the Church's teaching office. In 1984, Pope John Paul II expressed his high regard for von Balthasar by awarding him the Paul VI prize for his services to theology. These services included not only his theological writings, lecturing, conducting courses and conferences, but also his founding of the international Catholic review *Communio*. Von Balthasar died in Basle on 26 June 1988, two days before his investiture as a cardinal of the Catholic Church.

Von Balthasar's theological approach is grounded in Christian tradition, while at the same time offering the tools to read this tradition creatively in order to offer new perspectives. In particular, he recognizes the theme of beauty, a fundamental source for theological reflection. He presents, as Aidan Nichols observes, "the beautiful as the forgotten transcendental, *pulchrum*, an aspect of everything and anything, as important as *verum*, the true, and *bonum*, the good... what corresponds theologically to beauty is God's *glory*."<sup>3</sup> Since the creation is willed by God from eternity and ordered to Christ, the world also reflects the glory of God.

The entire sweep of von Balthasar's theology can be described as revelation-centered.<sup>4</sup> He insists that we pay attention to what is revealed in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the "form of God."<sup>5</sup> Von Balthasar would persuade us that, in Jesus Christ's Paschal Mystery, God has not simply redeemed the world, but also "disclosed himself in what is most deeply his own."<sup>6</sup> What is significant is that the words, actions and sufferings of Jesus Christ form an aesthetic unity, held together

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<sup>3</sup> See the Introduction by Aidan Nichols in Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> See Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. His theology is defined, in other words, as "a mediation between faith and revelation in which the Infinite, when fully expressed in the finite, can only be apprehended by a convergent movement from the side of the finite, that is, adoring, obedient faith in the God-man." 4.

<sup>5</sup> See Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. As Balthasar writes, "He [Christ] goes yet further, in obedience, by stooping lower still, down to the death of the Cross. If the fundamental assertion is thus made of the Logos prior to the creation of the world, then... here refers to the 'form of God', the divine condition. In other words, it indicates not something, which is to be conquered by force, or unjustly, but rather something precious, to be preserved at all cost, though legitimately possessed. And this can be nothing other than the '(form of) glory' ascribed in the last verse of the hymn to the Father, and, in the Kenosis, let go of." 24.

<sup>6</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 29.



by his *kenosis*. As von Balthasar observes, it is precisely “in the Kenosis of Christ...that the inner majesty of God’s love appears, of God who is love (1 Jn 4:8) and therefore a Trinity.”<sup>7</sup> Nichols summarizes this element of von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics:

Love is always beautiful, because it expresses the self-diffusiveness of being, and so is touched by being’s radiance, the *pulchrum*. But the unconditional, gracious, sacrificial love of Jesus Christ expresses not just the mystery of being – finite being – but also the mystery of the *Source* of being, the transcendent communion of love, which we call the Trinity.<sup>8</sup>

It is thus through the kenosis, the total form of Jesus Christ (*Gestalt Christi*) that the Love which God *is* shines through to the world.<sup>9</sup> This contemplation of the sheer glory and power of God’s love lies at the heart of von Balthasar’s theology.

Although von Balthasar did not produce a systematic treatise on the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist as such, the strands of his Eucharistic teaching are found scattered throughout numerous theological works written over a period of many years. In our account of von Balthasar’s theology, we will refer principally to *Mysterium Paschale*,<sup>10</sup> *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I,<sup>11</sup> *Theo-Drama*, vol. IV,<sup>12</sup> and *New Elucidations*,<sup>13</sup> where we find a theology of the interconnection between the Eucharist and eschatology.

One of the keys to von Balthasar’s understanding of the Eucharist can be considered in its relation to the Passion.<sup>14</sup> It is in the context of the Cross that the whole existence of Jesus Christ is understood as “a perpetual, eternal self-offering to the Father”<sup>15</sup> on behalf of humankind. The Church’s Eucharistic sacrifice refers to “this eternal gesture

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation: A Theological Perspective*, ed. Alexander Dru (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 71.

<sup>8</sup> See the Introduction by Aidan Nichols in Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*.

<sup>11</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, trans. E. Leiva-Merikakis, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, trans. T. Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 95. See also Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 113.

<sup>15</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 392.

of his.”<sup>16</sup> Here, through its interconnection with the Paschal Mystery, von Balthasar’s theology of the Eucharist is deeply rooted in the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, the perfect giving of himself, acceptable to God, for the salvation of the world. As he points out in a series of meditations on the significance of the mystery of Jesus Christ:

And so what, in the temporal economy, appears as the (most real) suffering of the Cross is only the manifestation of the (Trinitarian) Eucharist of the Son: he will be forever the slain Lamb, on the throne of the Father’s glory, and his Eucharist – the Body shared out, the Blood poured forth – will never be abolished, since the Eucharist it is which must gather all creation into his body. What the Father has given, he will never take back.<sup>17</sup>

The truth that the Cross means salvation for all and for the whole universe is “a sacred open secret,” already manifest in the gesture with which Jesus offers his Body and Blood as “given” and “poured out.”<sup>18</sup> For von Balthasar, the words of institution, when Jesus invited his disciples to eat and to drink: “This is my Body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19), “This is my Blood...which is to be poured out for many” (Mk 14:24), can provide an appropriate point of departure for our understanding of the Eucharistic meal as the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Cross. As he explains: “‘Given’ clearly means the crucifixion, as its parallel, ‘poured out’ shows; the Last Supper is really a sacramental anticipation of the crucifixion.”<sup>19</sup> In this completely free act of Jesus’ self-giving, love “loves to the end” (Jn 13:1), and the end is that “self-disposition passes over into pure letting oneself be disposed of and being disposed of.”<sup>20</sup> Before Jesus is passively handed over to his violent death, he actively hands himself as food to his disciples (Jn 10:17-18). He disposes of himself in advance of his being disposed of in the context of the Passion. On this basis, then, the Eucharist is located within the drama of the world’s salvation.

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<sup>16</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 392.

<sup>17</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, ix. See also Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. We note that von Balthasar uses “Eucharist” in two senses here. Firstly, Christ is forever the Eucharist of the Trinity. As von Balthasar expresses it, “[Christ] has carried out his kenotic self-giving to the utmost and does not nullify his self-giving, his surrender, his kenosis, but lets it be manifest as God’s actual power and glory. The Crucified, and he alone is the Risen One. For the privilege of thus giving himself he is forever thanking the Father as the Father’s substantial Eucharist, which as such never becomes past and mere remembrance.” 120. Secondly, the Eucharist is Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of the world. The Eucharist is “the opening of the inner divine love out into creation or, again, the transformation of the inner divine communication into Eucharistic communion.” 123. For von Balthasar, the goal of all God’s action is union between God’s self and the creation, since “the triune God’s love poured out over all space and time: this identity is, in itself and in us, the Eucharist.” 126.

<sup>18</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 113-114.

<sup>19</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 114.

<sup>20</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 114.

While there are many significant aspects to von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, the primary purpose of this chapter is to focus on the relationship between the Eucharist and eschatology. In what follows, we offer a synopsis of what von Balthasar tells us about the eschatological nature of the Eucharist, and then a critical comment on what we can discover from his teaching.

## 6.2 The Eucharist and the Last Supper

According to von Balthasar, the Last Supper is an anticipation of the crucifixion.<sup>21</sup> It is an eschatological meal, which manifestly anticipates the end. Von Balthasar notes that the New Testament writers, especially Mark and Matthew, record the sayings of Jesus, when he celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples in the framework of the Passover meal, that he would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the coming of God's Kingdom (Mk14: 25; Mt 26:29). Luke, however, begins his narrative in a way that indicates that Jesus neither ate the Passover himself nor tasted the wine at all. "I have longed with all my heart to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat...I shall not drink...until the Kingdom of God comes" (Lk 22:15-18). For von Balthasar, this negative formulation of the eschatological perspective points beyond itself to the "hour" which has come. As he explains:

It is an hour which cannot be transcended, and to which men must return time and again (as the formulation of the command repeatedly to 'do this' indicates). For beyond it there is nothing, save the bringing to completion of what it freely inaugurates: dying. Yet it is itself eschatological, in that it goes *eis telos*, to the final end of love" (Jn 13:1).<sup>22</sup>

Whether Jesus shared the meal and the cup or not, he certainly gave himself with his own hands as "a spontaneous gift in view of the Passion."<sup>23</sup> For von Balthasar, there are two traditions, which complement each other in describing the content of the "hour" of Jesus.

The first is a report about the meal with its self-distribution and its reference to the enactment of a New Covenant that is expressed through features of Old Testament

<sup>21</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 114.

<sup>22</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 96.

<sup>23</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 96.

ritual (Lk 22:15-20; 27-30). Another is a report about Jesus' last act of service, and the serving mind-set that he established, in a perspective of eschatological fulfilment (Jn 13:1-14:31; 15:1-17:26).<sup>24</sup> Von Balthasar arrives at an understanding that "the interior mind-set (symbolized in the Foot-washing) finally becomes a definitive action in the self-distribution which anticipates and introduces the Passion."<sup>25</sup> Granted the significance of Jesus' inseparably divine and human reality, here the Last Supper is regarded as an act of the *Verbum-Caro*,<sup>26</sup> a divine and eternal giving and readiness to be given, in which flesh-blood and Spirit-life are completely united (Jn 6: 52-57; 63-69). Thus "the Supper and the Cross together constitute the 'hour' for which he had come" (Jn 12:27-28),<sup>27</sup> as von Balthasar explains:

It is the fulfilment of his own love not as a merely personal extravagant outpouring of self; rather, the power he has to give his life for others is bestowed on him by the Father that he may achieve this giving of self as a mandate from the Father (Jn 10:17). In this surrender of himself the Son is the substantiated love of God given to the world, a love which in this handing over of self becomes 'glorified' and 'gives thanks' to itself (is Eucharist): the Father to the Son and, in visible and audible form (Jn 17), the Son to the Father. For Christ the meal is the sealing of his corporeal death: flesh that is consumed, blood that is spilled.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, in the Eucharist, the Church celebrates this memorial of the event of Jesus' self-surrender (1 Cor 11:24-25), but it is not a mere remembering of a past historical event. Since Jesus, who died once for all, is no longer dead, but lives (Acts 25:19) and has promised to come again, the Eucharist is a memorial meal that looks to the future. In this way, the Eucharist points beyond itself to the coming of Christ at the end of time when he will return in glory to transform the memorial meal of the death into the eternal banquet of joy (Mt 26:29; Lk 22:18,30). In keeping this memorial, moreover, the Church affirms Christ's personal presence and union with Christians here and now as the members of his Body, and at the same time looks forward to his coming in glory. In the Eucharist, as von Balthasar explains,

Finally, however, in so far as all Jesus' earthly activity has been taken up and made present in the risen Savior, what had occurred once and for all can and must become present here and now. The meal of the Church, whereby the

<sup>24</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 571.

<sup>28</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 571.

Church comes to be, is the very same as the meal of suffering whereby Jesus surrendered himself unto death; but it is also the same as the eschatological meal, only sacramentally veiled.<sup>29</sup>

In the Eucharist as the true encounter between Christ and the Church in the act of the meal,<sup>30</sup> God's eternal purpose in the world is revealed. In short, the Eucharist and the Last Supper can be understood only in the light of the self-surrender of Christ on the Cross.<sup>31</sup> The Eucharistic meal in its relation to the movement of Christ's prayer at the Last Supper is thus the celebration of the completion of Christ's sacrifice and the realization of all God's saving dealings with the whole world in eschatological hope.

### 6.3 The dramatic dimensions of the Eucharist: The Christ-Church event

For von Balthasar, the Eucharist is foremost sacrifice. As he writes, "it is Christ's sacrifice which he places into the hands of the Church so that she in turn has something to offer to the Father: the only thing of value, the sacrifice of Christ."<sup>32</sup> If Christ's sacrifice is meant to become the sacrifice of the Church, then the Church is always related, at least indirectly, to the "Paschal drama."<sup>33</sup> This explains why the Eucharistic celebration is described as a "dramatic action."<sup>34</sup> Von Balthasar brings out the Eucharistic dimension of this dramatic event:

Jesus hands over his Sacrifice at the Last Supper to his disciples in order that they may perform it in imitation. "Do this in memory of me." He himself passes from his active life to the passivity of suffering, of being overtaken, in which one can no longer be active oneself but must suffer whatever happens. And thus he can hand over to his disciples the active aspect of his readiness for

<sup>29</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 572.

<sup>30</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*. Accordingly, "the Church breaks through and discovers her own true reality as she obeys Christ ('Do this ...') and encounters Christ and herself in Christ, and in Christ the Father in the Holy Spirit. Everything else must be related to this centre if it is to be comprehensible." 573.

<sup>31</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. For Balthasar, it matters little, then, whether the Last Supper was celebrated, as the Synoptics would have it, in the course of a Passover meal, representing the detachment of the one covenant from the other in a tangible way by juxtaposition of the two rites, or whether as in John, that detachment took place in the simultaneity of Passover and cross. He argues that "What is really important is that Christ, at the end of ages, once for all, by his own blood, has passed both through the heavens to the Father (Heb 9:12) and into those sharing the meal, as the sacrificial victim poured out as a libation." 98.

<sup>32</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *A Short-Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, trans. M. Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), 96.

<sup>33</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398.

<sup>34</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398.

God: he gives his sacrifice to them so that they too may have something to offer to God.<sup>35</sup>

But the reality of the Eucharist as a sacrifice raises a number of further questions for us. If Christ's sacrifice is perfect and is realized once and for all, then how can we understand the Eucharistic action of the Church? To grasp the full significance of the Church's Eucharistic offering of Christ's sacrifice, von Balthasar turns his attention to the concept of Christ as "Head of the Church" (Eph 5:23), who alone can offer the sacrifice.<sup>36</sup> In the Eucharist, as von Balthasar understands it, "the community is drawn into Christ's sacrifice, offering to God the perfect sacrifice of Head and members of which Augustine spoke in celebrated terms."<sup>37</sup> From this perspective, von Balthasar proceeds with a detailed analysis of the nuptial relationship of Christ and the Church in an attempt to explore further the organic unity of the Eucharist, in which the "Head" and the "members" are united in sacrifice and Christ alone is the priest.

### 6.3.1 The Eucharistic attitude of the Church as Christ's beloved bride

The nuptial relationship between Christ and the Church has rich allegorical implications for the Eucharist (Jn 3:29).<sup>38</sup> The one who offers the sacrifice is the *Totus Christus*,<sup>39</sup> that is, Christ, the crucified and Risen One together with Christians as the members of his body.<sup>40</sup> Here there are two related points:

Firstly, the nuptial relationship of Christ and the Church emphasizes the love that Christ has for the Church, a love that is selfless to the extent of self-sacrifice and which obliges her to play the bridal part in this drama, which is both active and free. This intimate relationship of Christ and the Church is consummated on the Cross and achieved in such a way that the Church as a whole is bridal in the sense that the sacrifice is a gift "femininely" received from Christ the Bridegroom. If Christ on the

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<sup>35</sup> Balthasar, *A Short-Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, 95-96.

<sup>36</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398.

<sup>37</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398.

<sup>38</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 126–127. See also Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398, 406. Perhaps the clearest text of all linking the relationship of Christ and the Church in nuptial terms is found in Ephesians. "This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:25-32).

<sup>39</sup> Cited in O'Donnell, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, 122.

<sup>40</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. Here "for the privilege of thus giving himself Christ is forever thanking the Father as the Father's substantial Eucharist." 120

Cross offered himself in sacrifice to the Father for us, then even as actively offering in the Eucharist, the Church, his body and bride, still consents and ratifies that offering. Von Balthasar argues that there is no contradiction, for the Church's Eucharistic sacrifice is "at once distinct from that of Christ and identical with his, since it consists in a (feminine) consenting to the sacrifice of Christ and to all the consequences that flow from there for the Church."<sup>41</sup> In the Eucharist, it is Christ who actively incorporates Christians into his mystical body. So Christ and the Church give thanks to God the Father as one in the Eucharistic meal, the Christ-Church event.

In addition to such a significant theological basis for the Eucharistic attitude of the Church, von Balthasar refers to the figure of Mary as the original form of participation in the sacrifice of Christ, for she is there standing, as woman and embodiment of the Church, in the shadow of the Cross to consent to the sacrifice of Christ and also her own.<sup>42</sup> Applying this to the Eucharist, Mary's involvement in the events of salvation provides a real model of the whole worshipping community. Her activity in faith, endowed with her own freedom, is her receptivity. She can only let herself be taken into Christ's availability to God's will.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, the nuptial relationship of Christ and the Church also points to the "wedding feast of the Lamb" with reference to the messianic bridal community. Here we have the whole context of the final chapters in the Book of Revelations, which describe the ultimate consummation of history when the image of the Bride will be transferred from the earthly community to the heavenly city of God (19:7,9; 21:2,9; 22:17). "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:1-2). This final fulfilment of salvation as a marriage feast is one of complete joy, for Christ as the Bridegroom comes forth from God to embrace humanity with a

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<sup>41</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>42</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398-399. See also Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 335-336. For Balthasar's theology of the Church, and in particular his theological teaching about Mary in the mystery of salvation, see H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, trans. M.F. McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983).

<sup>43</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*. Within this perspective, it is possible to say that Mary's role truly constitutes the significant basis of what Balthasar means by the "general priesthood" of the faithful. He puts the idea forward in this context that this status of priesthood and sacrifice, with Mary as "matrix and archetype," forms the background of the ministerial priesthood: "it is the condition that makes the latter possible." 398.

divine love and to make the Church his Bride in this communion of love (Jn 3:29).<sup>44</sup> Here too, the Eucharist is explicative of the foretaste of the heavenly banquet to come.

### 6.3.2 Christ as Priest and the self-offering of the Church

The whole Eucharistic drama is understood to occur within this constitutive event between Christ and the Church, whereby Christ is Priest in the full sense. It is through his self-surrender that Christ “has surpassed and abolished the whole former cult of priest and temple.”<sup>45</sup> Von Balthasar argues that, in the command to “Do this in remembrance of me,” Jesus tells the Church to take action on her own initiative. He explains:

This is possible because in his Passion he himself has become available; he is now at the Church’s disposal. Before Jesus is delivered into the hands of sinners in accord with the Father’s will, he gives himself into the hands of the Church, or more precisely into the hands of those who are to assume, in and for the Church, what had been his own personal responsibility.<sup>46</sup>

For von Balthasar, this understanding is the key to the Church’s participation in the sacrifice of Christ. He argues that, since Christ alone is the High Priest who consecrates (sacrifices) himself so that the believers may be consecrated (sacrificed) in the truth (Jn 17:19),<sup>47</sup> then all the Church can do in the Eucharistic celebration is to let it happen, to let Christ act in accordance with the meaning of his own *disponibilité*.<sup>48</sup> The Church can therefore offer no other sacrifice to God than the crucified and glorified Christ, the true Paschal Lamb. Here, in von Balthasar’s view, “lies the whole meaning of the sacrifice of the Mass.”<sup>49</sup> The Church’s Eucharistic action is but the participation in the eternal movement of Christ towards God. In other words, the whole community of faith is drawn into Christ’s self-offering in such a way that Christians are able, in Christ, to offer this sacrificed reality for their salvation. Two conclusions may be drawn:

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<sup>44</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 127.

<sup>45</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 574.

<sup>46</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 399.

<sup>47</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 404-405.

<sup>48</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 399.



Firstly, the eschatological element in the Eucharist was already there from the beginning, for the eschatological meaning of the “hour” is understood in terms of Jesus as the simultaneous fulfilment of the institutions of the Old Testament,<sup>50</sup> and the Last Supper as a celebration in the context of a Passover meal and his death on the Cross:

Thus we have: the culmination of the legal foundation of the Covenant in ‘my blood of the Covenant’ (Mark, Matthew, cf. Exodus 24:8); of the prophetic promise in the ‘cup of the new Covenant’ (Paul, Luke, cf. Jeremiah 31:31); and the substitutionary theology of Second Isaiah (influenced by the Jewish theology of martyrdom?) in the self-gift and promise ‘for the multitude’ (Mark 14:24) ... whereby the Old Testament barrier which excluded the pagans from eschatological salvation is broken down.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, “there converge in a final way the ideas of sacrifice and meal, ideas always interlinked” (Ex 24:8, 11).<sup>52</sup> He argues that if “the formula pronounced over the bread gives prominence to the meal aspect (to some degree over against the Passover, which was understood by Jews as a *sacrificial* meal), the formula pronounced over the wine with its mention of the outpoured blood and, in that exclusive context, its eschatological perspective, underlies, rather, the aspect of sacrifice.”<sup>53</sup> Applied to the Eucharist, this means that meal and sacrifice form two aspects of one total mystery of Christ. As von Balthasar explains:

What is really important is that Christ, at the end of the ages, once for all, by his own blood, has passed both through the heavens to the Father (Hebrews 9,12) and into those sharing the meal, as the sacrificial victim poured out as libation... The Son thanks the Father (*eucharistein, eulogein*) for having allowed him to be so disposed of that there comes about, at one and the same time, the supreme revelation of the divine love (its glorification) and the salvation of humankind.<sup>54</sup>

While the Eucharist is meal and sacrifice of the end-time, it is also the drama of Christ’s Passover in his willingness to let himself be offered for the salvation of the world. So the insertion of the context of the Cross of Christ into the form of the supper meal is at the same time a sign of the sovereign freedom of Christ’s self-surrender and

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<sup>50</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>52</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 97.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 98-99.

a sign of the permanent validity of this form for the Church.<sup>55</sup> As von Balthasar notes, “The substance of the Eucharist, in its meal-aspect, is the sacrifice of Christ.”<sup>56</sup> The Eucharist as sacrifice becomes the self-offering of the Church, wherein Christians unite themselves in mind and heart with the love and obedience of Christ.

#### 6.4 The Eucharistic sacrifice and the resurrection

Since the gift which Jesus on the Cross made of his self to God and to the world has never been withdrawn, von Balthasar claims that the resurrection and the movement towards the Father make possible, through the power of the Spirit, a new intimacy and mode of presence (Jn 16:16-17). Here it is in the attitude of sacrifice, that is, in his crucified and glorified humanity, that Christ stands forever at the right hand of God in order to enable Christians to participate on this earth in the eschatological mystery of love. As “the Son of God in His truth” (Rom 1:4), “the Lamb standing upright in glory and slaughtered” (Rev 5:6), Christ is forever himself. As von Balthasar explains:

He who was once given, slain on the Cross, poured out, pierced, will never take back his gift, his gift of himself. He will never gather into himself his Eucharistic fragmentation in order to be one with himself. Even as the risen Lord he lives as the One who has given himself and has poured himself out... He lives on simply as the bodily Eucharist, as that thanksgiving which has succeeded in achievement: the gathering in and bearing in himself of the ends of the world in his sacrifice for the glorification of the Father, the sacrifice in which he poured out the grace of the Father to the ends of the world.<sup>57</sup>

Von Balthasar recognizes that the risen body of Christ is Eucharistic, and therefore permanently available in sacrificial given-ness.<sup>58</sup> Because neither the resurrection nor the ascension are a countermovement to the Incarnation, Passion and the Eucharist,<sup>59</sup> the “pouring out” of Jesus’ earthly substance into that of the Eucharist lasts, as von Balthasar puts it, “not only (like ‘means’) until the end of the world, but is rather the blazing core around which...the cosmos crystallizes, or better, from which it is set ablaze.”<sup>60</sup> It is thus that Christ preserves the permanent actuality of his sacrifice, for he is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8). He lives today until the end of

<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 571.

<sup>56</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 401.

<sup>57</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Elucidations*, trans. J. Riches (London: SPCK, 1971), 120.

<sup>58</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 117.

<sup>59</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 117.

<sup>60</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 117-118.

the world in the Eucharist, and eternally he goes on, in his total self-surrender, making himself present to every age.

For von Balthasar it is highly significant that the marks of the Cross enter into the resurrection and glorification. This is not just to prove that Christ, in his identity, is glorified as the Son of the Father, but that it is in his very humanity that he has been transfigured. Von Balthasar writes:

One must realize what is theologically expressed in a profound way by portraying the Risen Christ with the marks of his wounds: the state of surrender during the Passion positively enters and is raised up into the now eternal state of Jesus Christ, and that between his “heavenly” state and his “Eucharistic” state no difference can be posited that would affect their inner reality. When he leaves his destiny and the meaning and the form of his redemptive work to the Father’s good pleasure, to the Holy Spirit’s interpretation and to the Church’s further guidance and fruitfulness, Jesus’ total self-surrender after giving himself at the Last Supper is so conclusive that it can never revert to self-disposition.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the Eucharist, as the intense sacramental gesture of Jesus’ self-distribution to his disciples, and through them to the world, is a definitive, eschatological and irreversible gesture. In fact, the accounts of the resurrection make possible the Church’s access, through the Eucharist, to the drama of Christ’s sacrifice, thereby enabling Christians to partake of the essential infinitude of his bodily-spiritual reality as the Son of the Father. The unique reason for celebrating the memorial of Christ’s Pasch in the Eucharist is to be involved in the events of the Cross, in order to receive Christ’s total gift of himself, and so share in the power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10). Von Balthasar goes on to say:

The Beloved who died for us becomes alive and present for us in the midst of our remembering (*in meam commemorationem*). And this to the end not only that he may stand in our midst in order to let himself be seen and touched; not only that he may eat a fish and a honeycomb before our very eyes; but in order to partake with us a common meal (Rev 3:20) in which he is himself both the host and the food that is served. The accent that renders the Eucharist comprehensible falls on the real presence, in which the living Christ makes himself present to the Church by means of his deed of power.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 118.

<sup>62</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*. 573. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself

The meaning given to our celebration of the Eucharist lies in our participation in the body of the Risen Lord. For von Balthasar, therefore, the whole Eucharistic accent necessarily resides on this encounter of the Risen Christ and the Church in the act of the meal.<sup>63</sup> In the Eucharist, as the memorial and paschal meal, the Church already shares in the resurrection of Christ, when she breaks through and discovers her own true identity as she obeys Christ (“Do this in memory of me”) and truly encounters him and herself in Christ.

### 6.5 Eucharistic communion

By placing the Eucharist in the context of Christ’s Paschal Mystery, von Balthasar helps us understand the impossibility of the idea that the Eucharist is a bare commemoration, a sacrifice of merely vocal praise and thanksgiving. For the Father’s Word, made flesh, is definitively given and is never to be taken back.<sup>64</sup> It is because of his complete obedience that Jesus was “raised up as Kyrios” (Phil 2:11) and “made” such (Acts 2:30). Here von Balthasar recognizes that the risen body of Christ is Eucharistic, and therefore his saving passion cannot remain locked away in history accessible only by mental recall. This Eucharistic meal is “the consummation of all sacral and cultic meals of mankind, which has always realized the naturally mysterious character of eating and drinking (as essential communion with the cosmos and, through it, with divinity).”<sup>65</sup> It is clear that there can be no spiritual thanksgiving without communion in Christ’s sacrifice in the flesh. Christ continues to place his sacrificed Body and Blood in the hands of the Church, to draw her more deeply into his cross and so into the power of the resurrection. In the Eucharist, Christians receive the grace to offer themselves by first offering and then eating the Paschal Lamb.

In this perspective, von Balthasar draws on the Gospel of John to argue that reference to God’s abundant care for His people in the Old Testament is now coming to fulfilment in Jesus; so there is the proclamation “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35, 48) and “the living bread” (Jn 6:51) that offers life forever (Jn 6:51, 58). Here, for von

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conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 3:20-22)

<sup>63</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 573.

<sup>64</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 118.

<sup>65</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 571.

Balthasar, it is significant that in John 6, the author points to the unity of what is otherwise virtually irreconcilable: on the one hand, “the flesh is of no avail” (Jn 6:63-69); and, on the other hand, “eating and drinking the flesh and blood” as an indispensable condition for resurrection (Jn 6:53-59).<sup>66</sup> Thus the true sacramental sign in the Eucharist is the event of eating and drinking; it is not merely a commemorative meal. He observes, therefore:

What is important for the church is not something to be found on the table of the altar, but that by consuming this nourishment the Church becomes what she can and ought to be. Mass without communion (something impossible for the celebrant as representative of the community) is impossible and meaningless for the church as such.<sup>67</sup>

Von Balthasar has attempted to describe the intimate connection between the two elements of the Eucharist: the meal and the sacrifice, arguing that the mystery of Jesus’ inseparably divine and human reality means that his sacrificial act of love is completed in the communion. From this perspective, He proceeds to elaborate the meaning of the Eucharistic communion as a process of transformation in Christ and as an event of Trinitarian presence.

### **6.5.1 The Eucharist as process of transformation in Christ**

Since what is at stake in the Eucharist is the “welcoming the Word under the form of flesh and blood, the decisive factor on the part of the recipient is faith, that is, the readiness to follow where the Word wills and indicates (Jn 6:63-64; 1 Cor 11:27-29).”<sup>68</sup> To receive the crucified and glorified Christ into communion with us is to grant him space in, and power of disposition over, our whole existence, both spiritual and physical and thereby to follow him in his “kenotic condition”<sup>69</sup> – as bread to be

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<sup>66</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 96.

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 574.

<sup>68</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>69</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99. See also Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. Here for Balthasar, it is John the Baptist who speaks of his decrease, that is, his radical renunciation in view of the increasing and fulfilling Christ, in connection with his “complete joy” that the Bridegroom Christ has found the Bride Church. (John 3:29) This means that John’s bodily and mental suffering makes room for the wedding feast that is taking place. In Balthasar’s view, this act of “decrease” has a profound Eucharistic character. Thus, “the notion of ‘Kenosis’ is an emptying out to provide a space that can be filled, and the Eucharist is the permeation of the kenosis with God’s love being poured out in it as flesh given up and blood shed.” 123.

eaten and wine poured out. The Eucharistic meal “becomes the Church’s real sharing in Jesus’ flesh and blood in their condition of victimhood” (1 Cor 10:16-17).<sup>70</sup> Such a participation in the Eucharist takes place as a true eating and drinking, which means “a process of real transformation of another substance into one’s own.”<sup>71</sup> As we have seen, however, because the priority in the Eucharist is always assigned to the action of Christ, it is correct to say that he “transforms us into himself, rather than that we transform him into ourselves.”<sup>72</sup> Thus Christians can find in the depths of their being what von Balthasar understands as the real “Pauline paradox”<sup>73</sup> in terms of Eucharistic experience, namely: “We always carry with us in our body [soma] the dying of Jesus, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus, too, may be manifested in our body” (2 Cor 4: 8-10).<sup>74</sup> The Eucharistic communion is thus considered as a process of transforming us individually and collectively into an ecclesial existence, into membership of Christ’s body.

Convinced that in the Eucharistic event Christ is present and actively incorporating the participants into his mystical Body,<sup>75</sup> von Balthasar considers the Eucharistic celebration as “birthplace and centre of the Church.”<sup>76</sup> As he writes:

The mystery of the Church is born when Jesus freely exercises the power he has to “lay down his life and take it up again” (Jn 10:8), when he exercises this power by giving to this surrender ‘for his friends’ (Jn 15:13) the form of a meal, of eating and drinking his Flesh and Blood (Jn 6:55), an act whereby he fills his friends with his own substance - body and soul, divinity and humanity.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>71</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 121.

<sup>72</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 121.

<sup>73</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 124.

<sup>74</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. Thus, in the Eucharistic event, “if the symbol of eating and drinking is to be a fulfilled sign, it is the believer who offers the whole sphere of his life to the Lord who knocks, and places it at his disposal. This would mean that in the depths of our being the frontiers must now collapse for us, too, as they collapsed – or, to put it better, proved to have been obsolete from the outset – for Jesus Christ in the course of his life and death.” 121-122. For Balthasar, “what Paul describes in this passage is eucharistic experience: how the surrendered body of Christ becomes the inner law of Paul’s body (i.e., of his concrete existence) and how the Eucharist transforms Paul’s bodily existence into an ecclesial existence – in short, into a member of Christ’s body.” 124 – 125.

<sup>75</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 390,394,398. Here Balthasar points to the Augustinian theology of the Body of Christ as we have already considered. It is Christ (the Head together with his members) who offers the sacrifice.

<sup>76</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 570.

<sup>77</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 571.

It is Christ who nourishes and cherishes the Church, and so transforms our bodily existence into the ever-larger community. The Eucharist is thus the supreme experience of communion. Such a memorial celebration of Christ's self-giving love is a remembering that recalls the birth of the Church. The Eucharist makes the Church.

### 6.5.2 The Eucharist as event of Trinitarian presence

For von Balthasar, the Eucharist has its source in the Trinitarian mystery of God's own life. The Eucharistic communion itself is never the private relationship of the Christian to Christ; rather, "it is receiving the Father's gift, the Son, in the Church."<sup>78</sup> As von Balthasar recognizes, "inasmuch as the Eucharist is inseparable from the Church, and the Church is given to 'drink' of the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, the personal relationship of the believer to Christ has already expanded into the trinitarian sphere."<sup>79</sup> Such a communion cannot, however, "exist at all without including Christ's Cross, his abandonment by the Father, his breathing forth the Spirit and his descent to hell."<sup>80</sup> The Eucharist has its presupposition in the Trinity, and thus the whole Paschal Mystery celebrated in the Eucharist is a supreme revelation of God as Trinity. It is something "hidden from the ages" but finally revealed "in Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:3,9,10; 1 Cor 2:6-7; Phil 2:8). He explains:

This implies much more than that he merely stands before the Father as mediator in virtue of his acquired merits; likewise more than that he merely continues in an unbloody manner in heaven the "self-giving" he accomplished in a bloody manner on earth. It ultimately means that the Father's act of self-giving by which, throughout all created space and time, he pours out the Son is the definitive revealing of Trinitarian act itself in which the "Persons" are God's "relations", forms of absolute self-giving and loving fluidity. In the Eucharist the Creator has succeeded in making the finite creaturely structure so fluid – without fragmenting or violating it ("No one takes my life from me" (Jn 10:18) – that it is able to become the bearer of the Triune life.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, in offering the sacrifice, through his given-up Body and poured-out Blood for all, the Beloved Son fulfills his Father's will that all be drawn into the life of the Trinity (Jn 6:57). What is important, in this view, "is always the Incarnation, the

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<sup>78</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 125.

<sup>79</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 125.

<sup>80</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 125.

<sup>81</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 118-119.

embodiment of love and the self-surrender of Christ even unto death and unto the cultic meal of the Eucharist.”<sup>82</sup> Here we touch upon a fundamental insight into Eucharistic theology as an event of Trinitarian presence:

[The] offering of Christ’s sacrifice to God the Father in the Holy Spirit is, first of all, a way of assimilating the mind of Christ, which is *eucharistia*, praise and thanksgiving to God. But this thanksgiving is not like the Old Testament “sacrifice of praise”, that is, a thanksgiving for his glory and his beneficial deeds; rather, it links up explicitly with Christ’s Eucharist to the Father: he thanks the Father for his divine permission to give himself on behalf of sinners, for the privilege of thus manifesting the Father’s uttermost love.<sup>83</sup>

When situated in the Trinitarian perspective, the prevailing accent of each Eucharistic celebration is expectancy and exaltation. The sign that the Father has accepted Christ’s sacrifice shows that the Trinity forms the basis of all Eucharistic prayer. For the privilege of giving himself, “Christ is forever thanking the Father as the Father’s substantial Eucharist, which as such never becomes past and mere remembrance.”<sup>84</sup> Thus as the revelation of God’s design for the salvation of the world, the Eucharist speaks of a dramatic working out of events in the very life of the Trinity and God’s great desire for communion with us in Christ and by the power of the Spirit.

## 6.6 Critical reflections

Among the various theological aspects of the Eucharist, which von Balthasar touches upon, what stands out most clearly is the drama of Christ’s Passion. The Eucharist, in his perspective, is understood as a sacrifice, by way of anticipation at the Last Supper and as a memorial meal subsequently. The eschatological meaning of the Last Supper is expressed in terms of the bread being broken, as Christ’s Body was to be wounded, and the wine being shared, as his Blood was to be poured out, as a participation in the New Covenant. By this dramatic action, Jesus set the stamp of sacrificial offering upon his coming death on the Cross and made it possible for the members of his Body to share already in his self-surrender. This understanding of the sacrifice of the Cross as climactic completion of Jesus’ life and as the culmination of all sacrifice provides the Eucharist with a form in which the historical drama of Christian eschatology

<sup>82</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 575.

<sup>83</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 400-401.

<sup>84</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 120.



unfolds. We now proceed to emphasise von Balthasar's most significant contributions to the Eucharistic eschatology with the following points:

Firstly, his recovery of the eschatological nature of the Eucharist is particularly pertinent for those who are concerned with the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, with convincing questions of clarity on the issue of sacrifice, and the mutual tension and the distinction between Christ's action and the Eucharistic action of the Church. He writes with a sophisticated biblical and theological understanding, integrating the insights from his former works on a theology of the Body of Christ (the perfect sacrifice of Head and members), the nuptial relationship of Christ and the Church (the Bridegroom and his beloved Bride) and the existential perfection of Mary's archetypal faith (the consent of the feminine Church) into a credible synthesis. He acknowledges the traditional distinction between the true sacrifice (*verum sacrificium*) of Christ and what the Church actually does in the Eucharist, that is, to worship (*oblatio*). Von Balthasar claims that the Church enjoys "an intimate harmony with Christ's self-sacrifice, in such a way that her offering (*oblatio*) is part of it (*sacrificium*)."<sup>85</sup> The Eucharistic worship is, in essence, a *memoriale passionis Domini*,<sup>86</sup> and thus the sacramental realization of Christ's act of salvation.

Since the Eucharist is celebrated within the context of the Paschal Mystery, a perpetual and eternal self-offering of Christ to God as well as to all humanity, Christians are truly, "in touch with salvation history and its past through the divine mystery and its supertemporal present reality."<sup>87</sup> In the anamnesis, Christians not only recall and remember the sacrifice of the Christ on the Cross, but also await his coming in glory. The Parousia is the completion of the whole work of grace and belongs to Christ's Pasch. Thus, in von Balthasar's view, "the altar's various aspects must be seen together: the Last Supper, the sacrifice of the Cross, the heavenly altar (since the Cross appears in its eternal aspect) and finally Christ himself."<sup>88</sup> In this way, von Balthasar's theology of the sacrifice helps to bring the essence of the Eucharistic celebration back into an eschatological perspective. It also proposes further exploration of the same theme of eschatology and dynamic unity from different

<sup>85</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 394.

<sup>86</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 572.

<sup>87</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 393.

<sup>88</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 400-401.

aspects of the Eucharist, for example, from the Eucharistic presence in terms of the resurrection, from our communion and personal encounter with Christ, for our self-offering to God, to others and to all creation. Such a renewed interest in the eschatological implications of the Eucharist provides a departure point for a more adequate theology of the Eucharist, which refocuses on the issues of real presence, Eucharistic sacrifice and memory as we live them currently in the Church.<sup>89</sup>

Secondly, it is clear that an inadequate view of the Eucharist as sacrifice and an emphasis on the memorial aspect in the older sacramental theology left an eschatological consciousness in the background. As a corrective, von Balthasar discusses, on the one hand, the enduring significance of the Eucharist as sacrifice and on the other hand, he emphasizes the Eucharist as an eschatological fellowship in terms of the wedding feast (Rev 19:9-10). The sheer glory and ecstasy of the marriage festival is the context of our celebration of the Eucharist. This emphasis on the Eucharist as anticipating the heavenly wedding feast is helpful when applied to the experienced reality of human suffering, and thus a witnessing to the ultimate power of a hope that would transform everything. As von Balthasar explains:

This is the ultimate reason why suffering experienced on the personal level can be regarded as belonging to festive celebration on the ecclesial-sacramental level. The “wedding feast” (Mk 2:19; Mt 22:1ff; Jn 2:1ff, 3:39) is the all-encompassing totality, prepared by God the Father together with the Son and the Spirit, carried out in death and Resurrection in Church and Eucharist; while “fasting” (Mk 2:20), being judged (Mt 22:1ff), the embarrassment of the empty jars (Jn 2:3) and of other insufficient food (Jn 6:7), the “decreasing” (Jn 3:30) are always partial moments within the festive picture.<sup>90</sup>

The Eucharist is the salvific joy of the resurrection and the anticipation of the Parousia. Meaningful experience of suffering, then, is a sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The Christian community is able to reclaim the memory of Jesus’

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<sup>89</sup> See Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*. Although Balthasar is not critical of the concept of *Transubstantiation*, he seems to stress the ecclesial character of communion, that is, indeed eschatological. He writes: “The accent must fall on this encounter of Christ and the Church in the act of the meal: this is where the centre of gravity lies, and not on the miracle of ‘transubstantiation’ considered in isolation. Transubstantiation is a road to the goal... Thus the true sacramental sign in the Eucharist is the event of eating and drinking... It is evident that the mystery itself cannot be ‘explained,’ neither the ‘transubstantiation’ of bread and wine into Flesh and Blood nor the other far more important happening which can analogously be called ‘transubstantiation’ of Christ’s Flesh and Blood into the organism of the Church... What is important is not that we know *how* God does it, but that we know *that* and *why* he does it.” 573-575.

<sup>90</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 125-126.

own mission and follow his way even in the face of ambiguity and darkness, failure and disappointment:

In the event of sharing, the Eucharist signifies at one and the same time a limit, and the over-passing of that limit. Until this point, the disciples have ‘continued with’ him (Luke 22:28). From now on, they will be ‘scattered’ (Matthew 26:31), and yet, since they have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, they are taken beyond their own limits into him...they become thereby receptacles in which (as in his members) he can suffer as he will.<sup>91</sup>

Here in Christ’s self-surrender, fidelity, freedom and unswerving commitment to God’s project, Christians can see how hope would be ultimately fulfilled. The celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ in the Eucharist reminds Christians that they are faced with the dark but bright prospect of personal death and resurrection in Christ. This Eucharistic experience is that of hope in the midst of suffering. Such an understanding provides the basis for reinterpreting all human experience as moved by a fundamental hope for a future that transcends all alienation.

Thirdly, von Balthasar understands this principle of hope, which we have considered, not only in terms of the interior life of the Church and its surroundings, but rather involving the whole of creation. The Eucharistic sacrifice is cosmic in scope, for “all things are made through him, in him and for him,” and “all things hold together in him” (Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16, 17). His approach affords the necessary connection between the Eucharistic theology and the eschatological understanding of God’s interaction with creation as its centre. As he writes:

The mythical understanding of the world sees the whole world as a sacred theophany. In an eschatological sense, this is also what the world is for Christian faith. If the cosmos as a whole has been created in the image of God that appears - in the First-Born of creation, through him and for him – and if this First-Born indwells the world as its Head through the Church, then, in the last analysis, the world is a ‘body’ of God, who represents and expresses himself in this body, on the basis of the principle not of pantheistic but hypostatic union. If the first Adam is lord of the world only as simultaneously being its fruit, then in the second Adam this genuine quality of being fruit and originating from within is surpassed by the free act of his Incarnation. While the first Adam remains open and accessible to the forces of the formless chaos by reason of his being the fruit of the world, the second Adam has from the outset vanquished these forces of chaos through the freedom of his love. That

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<sup>91</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 95-96.

which is itself formless must submit to his shaping power, and rebellion itself must bend the knee with the rest of cosmos.<sup>92</sup>

In this sense, the Eucharist as eschatological presence of Christ, extends to the whole cosmos. Since the Eucharist symbolizes the whole world as the “body of God,” it offers new possibilities of hope for a new creation. This theological perspective takes up what must be one of the essential concerns of a Eucharistic ecology which interprets the significance of Christ’s event as the realization of the final reality to which the whole plan of creation has been directed.

Fourthly, while it is regrettable that von Balthasar has not written a complete treatise on the interconnection of Eucharist and eschatology, as John R. Sachs comments, no one “has argued more forcefully for the possibility and the necessity of such hope than Hans Urs von Balthasar, who notes that even the prayers of the Church’s liturgy express the universal scope of Christian hope quite explicitly.”<sup>93</sup> Von Balthasar persuades us that we may hope for the salvation of all, a hope that is universal, since Christ’s descent into hell represents his utterly dead solidarity with sinners.<sup>94</sup> As he writes:

Into this finality (of death) the dead Son descends, no longer acting in any way, but stripped by the cross of every power and initiative of his own as one purely to be used, debased to mere matter, with a fully indifferent (corpse) obedience, incapable of any active solidarity. Only thus is he right for any “sermon” to the dead. He is (out of ultimate love however) dead together with them. And exactly in that way he disturbs the absolute loneliness striven for by the sinner: the sinner, who wants to be “damned” apart from God, finds God again in his loneliness, but God in the absolute weakness of love who unfathomably in period of noontime enters into solidarity with those damning themselves.<sup>95</sup>

In such a theology, the eschatological hope gives expression to the truth that God intends to liberate and reconcile the whole of creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). For von Balthasar, there is no limit to the mystery of God’s self-giving love, a perfect love that

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<sup>92</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 679.

<sup>93</sup> See John R. Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991), 242.

<sup>94</sup> Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” 244.

<sup>95</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *The Von Balthasar Reader*, eds. Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, trans. Robert J. Daly and F. Lawrence (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 153.

includes the impenetrable realm of the dead and cast out all fear (Rom 8:38; 1 Jn 4:18). Trusting in God's faithfulness to this final purpose, Christians then view all humanity and all creation in a process of transformation toward a life of inclusive communion with God. As von Balthasar has pointed out, the retrieval of this eschatological dimension of the Eucharistic liturgy has importance for the Christian community as it renews its life of worship and seeks a greater reliance on the "God of hope" (Rom 15:13). God is the source and term of all created reality and is bringing all to the final fulfilment in Christ (Col 1:16-19), since "the triune God's love poured out over all space and time."<sup>96</sup> In the light of Christ's descent and resurrection, von Balthasar perceives that the Eucharist itself reveals the universal and all-inclusive depth of God's self-giving love for all human beings. So God's love alone is everlasting, with the hope that it sustains and gives. The heart of this universal hope is thus founded and revealed in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ.

These are the principal ways in which von Balthasar has reflected on the Eucharist as eschatological sacrament and broadened the scope of our study. His Theo-dramatic approach to the Eucharist, however, presents two problems especially.

Firstly, we notice that since his theology is dominantly revelation-centered, there is a relative neglect of the social dimension of the Eucharist. Whatever criticisms might be made about his lack of attention to the reality and importance of the world in its temporal, historical and social dimensions, clearly von Balthasar does not, however, undervalue the horizontal level as such. Yet, because of his careful guarding of God's transcendence from the limitations of time, the balance is hard to maintain. While believing that human history will have an end, he argues that we cannot really speak of worldly progress.<sup>97</sup> For Christians, the hope of final fulfilment is certain, but it lies

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<sup>96</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 126.

<sup>97</sup> See Thomas G. Dalzell, "Lack of Social Drama in Balthasar's Theological Dramatics," *Theological Studies* 60.3 (1999), 457-475. The author argues that von Balthasar values the temporal and historical dimensions of human existence, but the time and history that interest him are those of the individual subject. The point of this argument is also to show that von Balthasar in his Theo-Drama retains a less dramatic approach based on the analogy of being. So the result is that he appears to focus on the individual's relationship with God to the neglect of issues related to social justice. See also O'Donnell, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar*. "Thus he [von Balthasar] would maintain that we couldn't expect any inner-worldly fulfilment of history. In a confrontation with Marxist utopian thinkers such as Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), Balthasar argues that the idea of an inner-worldly fulfilment of history is contradictory. Such a vision of utopia must inevitably be collectivist. This type of philosophy necessarily sees fulfillment in terms of the progress of medicine, cybernetics, and sociology and so on. ... Nonetheless,

in the vertical ascent toward the infinite mystery of God. Some critics, Chauvet and C. Geffré, for example, would demand a more critical basis for adopting such an approach, otherwise history is not considered in its concrete reality but simply as the “external framework where the drama of salvation is played out.”<sup>98</sup> They would judge von Balthasar’s theological dramatics too “other-worldly,” suggesting that he subsumes the history of the world into the inner-divine process in a way that does human history less than justice.

A possible counterbalance to von Balthasar’s approach would be a Christian hope that inspires rather than paralyses human imagination and action in the direction of God’s coming future.<sup>99</sup> Inspired by the Eucharistic hope and the living memory of Jesus Christ, the Christian existence is a prophetic existence, evoking a positive response to God’s grace. Such a view, as Zachary Hayes puts it, “implies that hope is not a mere waiting for a future that purely and simply ‘happens to us.’ On the contrary, hope becomes active as co-creative power in the coming of the Kingdom.”<sup>100</sup> Thus instead of being “spectators” in this Theo-Drama, the human community is actively involved in the social, political processes. Christians look eagerly for the consummation of the saving activity of God in which they are now co-workers. From this perspective, we can understand the Eucharist as the feast at which the Christian community hopefully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the reign of God. Such a perspective also helps Christians develop an understanding of the Church’s proper role in relation to the historical world, not as a totally separate spiritual community with a hope of

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Balthasar believes that our human history will have an end. What this end will be is unpredictable but Balthasar is pessimistic as regards prospects for the future. Here his imagination is shaped by the apocalyptic literature of the Bible. He argues that a belief in evolution is by no means incompatible with an apocalyptic end to history... Where then is Christian hope centred? Is the hope of final victory certain? Or can hope, as Bloch would argue, be disappointed? Balthasar would answer that our hope is indeed certain, but that the true hope of Christians lies in the vertical ascent toward the Father. Beyond the possibility of inner-worldly catastrophe lies the hope of the incommensurable future, which consists in the resurrection of the dead and the journey of Christ toward the Father. Believers have already set out on this journey. They are already in union with Christ... This union represents the fullness of communion between Thou and I. It is no mystical dissolution of the I in the One. Nor can such a communion be conceived as static... Rather faith reaches its goal when in consummation it begins its unending journey into the infinite Mystery of God. In the Spirit the person journeys through Christ to the ever greater source of love who is the Father.” 151-152.

<sup>98</sup> See Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” *Theology Digest* 48.1 (2001), 3.

<sup>99</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, pars. 33-39, in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. A. Flannery (New York, Dublin: Costello Publishing Company, Dominican Publications, 1998), 933-938.

<sup>100</sup> Zachary Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 150.

salvation above and beyond that of the world, but rather as the ever-renewed prophetic image of the world itself.

Secondly, the notion of Eucharistic sacrifice in von Balthasar's approach needs a further development in terms of social justice and Christian discipleship, if it is to be more fruitfully related to contemporary experience. In fact, in the early Church, the language of sacrifice related not only to the Cross, but also to the life of Christians and the Eucharist. Rowan Williams, for example, explores this aspect in his article, *Eucharistic Sacrifice – The root of a Metaphor*,<sup>101</sup> and uses it to explain the sacrificial character of both the cross and the Eucharist. Here, as the sacrament of eschatological communion with Christ, the Eucharist relates the Christian community with Christ's act of self-offering and points to the meaning of Christian discipleship as a way of self-giving love. To participate in the Eucharist is to be drawn into the complete self-giving of Christ, namely, into solidarity with God and with the whole world in the struggle for the renewal of all things. Without a real commitment to the historical world, the Eucharistic grace remains inefficacious. In an attempt to elaborate the meaning and efficacy of this sacrament of hope, Kelly also observes, "Indeed, the Eucharistic sacrifice not only signifies the paschal character of the mystery of Christ ... Being drawn to Christ, means being drawn into his paschal mode of existence."<sup>102</sup> Raimundo Panikkar articulates a similar view: "The great challenge today is to convert the sacred bread into real bread, the liturgical peace into political peace, the worship of the Creator into reverence for the Creation, the Christian praying community into an authentic human fellowship. It is risky to celebrate the Eucharist."<sup>103</sup> Eucharistic sacrifice, communion and justice are intimately interconnected. To celebrate the memorial of Christ's self-surrender until he comes means to seek justice for all God's creation.

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<sup>101</sup> See Rowan Williams, "Eucharistic Sacrifice – The root of a Metaphor," *Grove Liturgical Studies* 31 (1982), 28. Cited in William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989). "The gift that creates the profoundest communion also involves the profoundest cost. For Christians, the paradigm of this self-giving love is God's action in the cross of Jesus... God gives the gift of God's self in the event of the cross... To speak of the Eucharist as sacrificial, therefore, is to say that through the offering and receiving of the Eucharistic gifts Christians are drawn more deeply into the self-giving action of God that is here celebrated sacramentally." 259-260.

<sup>102</sup> Tony Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite: Explorations in Christian Hope* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1991). Thus, in this grace-event, "nourished on the food and drink of such a paschal form of existence, hope understands itself as dying into a new creation." 138-139.

<sup>103</sup> See Raimundo Panikkar, "Man as a Ritual Being," *Chicago Studies* 16 (1977), 27. Cited in Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*, 263.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Von Balthasar's eschatological approach to the Eucharist recognizes that the Paschal Mystery as celebrated in the sacrament is not only "redemptive but revelatory"<sup>104</sup> of God's mode of acting and being. Christians can glimpse that the *Eschaton* has already entered history and that the messianic community becomes a reality each time they gather together and participate in the Eucharist, as the drama of the world's salvation. As members of Christ's Body, their Eucharistic witness is nothing other than a participation in the once-and-for-all, all-embracing paschal sacrifice of Christ as a foretaste of the coming of God's Kingdom.

In his writings on the Eucharist, von Balthasar has attended to the sacrifice made by Christ in his self-surrender on the Cross, with a view of the Church's self-offering as the way of being incorporated into Christ's mystical body, into one *pneuma* with him (1 Cor 6:13-16). This body of Christ he explained using the Pauline expression, "*pneumatic body*" (1 Cor 15:44), that is, the body of "the second man coming from heaven" to whom we are united by eating and drinking his blood."<sup>105</sup> The way of entering into the movement of Christ's death and resurrection, through the Eucharist, gives us a share in the divine life. For von Balthasar, this comes about through our being incorporated into the Eucharistic sacrifice that, in the Spirit, Christ makes to the Father.<sup>106</sup> O'Donnell describes this part of Balthasar's Eucharistic theology in the following passage:

The Eucharist is the culmination of the incarnation, for here Christ's bodiliness becomes available for the Christian. It is also the fulfilment of the work of the cross because here the fruits of redemption are made available for God's people. And finally, the Eucharist represents the culmination of anthropology, for in the Eucharist men and women realize the highest dimension of freedom. They are incorporated into Christ's ascent to the Father. Exercising their participation in the sonship of Christ, their lives become an offering of thanksgiving to the Father.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Anne Hunt, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), 61.

<sup>105</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 112-113.

<sup>106</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 406-407.

<sup>107</sup> See O'Donnell, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, 121.



If the Cross is, moreover, the locus of the dramatic encounter between divine and human freedom, then in the Eucharist, as von Balthasar writes, “Incorporated into Christ’s obedience, we become obedient with him; but, incorporated into his freedom, we also become truly free.”<sup>108</sup> In this perspective, he refers to the traditional notion that grace perfects nature. Nonetheless, he allows, that “if by nature we mean that man is free to make his own decisions and actions, this freedom is perfected by the grace of a sublime participation in the absolute, divine freedom.”<sup>109</sup> Since the bread and wine in the Eucharist are part of the new creation, we can envision that the whole creation is arriving at a dwelling in God, and so achieving a greater freedom, a fulfilment of what it truly is. In other words, the bread and wine of the Eucharist, which become the Body and Blood of the Risen One, really signify the whole universe’s profound destiny to the future glory.

While he remains faithful to the tradition of the Eucharist as sacrifice, von Balthasar has arguably given a more credible, convincing and meaningful version of it than many other authors, especially by connecting it to other Christian mysteries, such as the Incarnation and the events of the Cross, the Paschal Mystery as a whole, together with the Trinity, Mariology and ecclesiology, creation and sacramental forms. We are left, however, with the impression that, like any living theology, his Eucharistic eschatology needs to be further developed. How, for example, can such renewed eschatological approaches to Eucharistic sacrifice produce a theology that is truly radical in its impact on the historical world and not just in its rhetoric? How can the prophetic aspect of the Eucharist, the sociopolitical, ethical and economic dimensions of human existence be included? What contribution can Eucharistic eschatology bring to the ecological reality of our planet? On the one hand, von Balthasar’s understanding is clearly orthodox, deeply rooted in the Scriptures and in the theological tradition of the Eucharist. At the same time, it envisages humanity on its journey towards one communion with God, who is the origin and goal of all creation.

In each of the four theologians whose work we have studied we discern a profound sense of the significance of mystery of Christ for Eucharistic eschatology. Where Wainwright and Martelet understand that Christian hope lies in the tension between

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<sup>108</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 406-407.

<sup>109</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 406-407.

the “already” of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the “not yet” of his final advent, Durrwell sees it as already realized in the Eucharistic event. However, unlike Wainwright and Martelet, but like Durrwell in this respect, von Balthasar considers the Eucharist as the culmination of the Incarnation, the fulfilment of the work of the Cross and the incorporation of Christians into Christ’s ascent to God. The whole eschatological event of salvation is thus understood to occur within the dramatic action of the Eucharist. Despite different theological perspectives and expressions, a significant convergence is also in evidence, as we shall see later.

To complete our survey, we turn now to Louis-Marie Chauvet who adopts a very different perspective. His primary concern is to express the relation between the Eucharist as memorial anticipation of future glory and ethics. The hope that Christians celebrate in the Eucharist must have its proper social-political dimension, that is, a this-worldly and not simply an other-worldly, quality.

## Chapter 7    Louis-Marie Chauvet: The Eucharist as Memorial Anticipation of the Future

### 7.1 Introduction

Postmodern philosophy has brought new questions to theology in general and to sacramental theology in particular, challenging it to reconsider its claim for ultimate meaning and to re-examine the place of a genuine Christian experience of faith. Louis-Marie Chauvet is one theologian who has engaged in dialogue with these postmodern forms of philosophical thinking. Born in Vendée, France, in 1942, Chauvet has been professor of sacramental theology at the Institut Catholique in Paris since 1973. He has also been involved in pastoral work and formation of the laity. He has published several books on the sacraments, the best known of which is *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*.<sup>1</sup>

Chauvet's purpose is to articulate a contemporary approach to Christian sacramental theology, that is, a theology which "opens up a sacramental reinterpretation, initially modest but ultimately global in its potential extension, of what it means to lead a Christian life."<sup>2</sup> His theological work engages the thought of contemporary authors, including Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, Claude Geffré, Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Lévinas, Claude Lévy Strauss, Paul Ricoeur, and Anton Vergote.<sup>3</sup> Chauvet suggests that a foundational theology of sacramentality should base itself upon the sacraments as "symbolic figures allowing us entrance into, and empowerment to live out, the (arch-) sacramentality which is the very essence of Christian existence."<sup>4</sup> His critical study presents a search for a sort of law of the symbolic order, which requires a new method of scriptural inquiry and a correlation with the social, historical situations, and is not dependent on a theology shaped by substance-based metaphysical categories.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Kenan B. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium* (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 2.

What Chauvet observes in a metaphysical approach to the sacraments is an attempt to explain reality with the categories of “sign” and “cause.” Such a scheme for representing the sacraments is, however, unintelligible to contemporary culture, since to speak of God as cause is to make an appeal to a ground that cannot be proven. Chauvet thus proposes a change of language. He explains that this change of language “is not merely cosmetic, but constitutes a fundamental revision of the terms with which we approach the problem: those of language and symbol, and no longer those of cause and instrument.”<sup>5</sup> This symbolic discussion of sacramentality then requires a radical overturn of the classical approach to sacramental theology.

Chauvet indicates that, whereas the scholastic theologians began their understanding of the sacraments from the “hypostatic union” as the point of departure and primarily in light of the mystery of the Incarnation, contemporary theology should start from the Pasch of Christ.<sup>6</sup> In his return to the biblical data, Chauvet effects a move from the incarnation to the Paschal Mystery as source for reflection on the sacraments. It is in the light of Christ’s Paschal Mystery that Chauvet attempts to retrieve the importance of the eschatological character of the sacraments, particularly that of the Eucharist. He observes that “the announcement of the Resurrection of Jesus and the gift of his promised Spirit marks the inauguration of the ‘Last things’ (Heb 1: 2): the future has already begun.”<sup>7</sup> He continues, this is why, “as the ancient *anaphoras* show, in the recalling - the anamnesis - of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, as well as of his death and Resurrection, the Christian memory is eschatological: it is memory of the future.”<sup>8</sup> An understanding of the Eucharist as memorial anticipation of future glory emerges as the foundation of eschatology.

This chapter attempts to discuss the eschatological status of Christian worship and the Eucharist, as expressed by Chauvet in “The Relation Between Sacrament and Ethics,”<sup>9</sup> as well as his other works, “Eschatology and Sacrament”<sup>10</sup> and *The*

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<sup>5</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 453.

<sup>7</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

<sup>8</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

<sup>9</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 228-265.

<sup>10</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” *Theology Digest* 48.1 (2001).

*Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body.*<sup>11</sup> A summary and critical review of his major ideas will then follow.

## 7.2 Christian memory as eschatological

Since the resurrection of Christ provides a basic orientation toward a future life, as Chauvet strongly emphasizes, eschatology is “the most characteristic difference between Christianity and Judaism.”<sup>12</sup> Whereas the Jewish cult can be characterized as a memorial, the very model of which is the Passover (Ex 13:8), ritually relived every year by every generation, Christian worship is the memory of Christ’s Passover. In their liturgical memorial, the people of Israel receive their foundational past as present, and this gift guarantees a promise for the future of a new exodus (Deut 5:2-3), where God would free the whole of humanity from every form of slavery.<sup>13</sup> Christian worship, by comparison, is an act of communal memory of the death and resurrection of Christ in the context of eschatological hope for the consummation of God’s purposes for the whole creation. With the Easter event, something new has taken place: the memory of the past is bearer of the future. It is in this perspective that Chauvet describes the eschatological dimension of the Christian worship as something radically new that implies “a return to the historic-prophetic dimension of the Jewish cult whose heir it is.”<sup>14</sup> We turn now to consider two related points:

### 7.2.1 Jesus and the Jewish worship

To begin with, Chauvet describes Jesus as part of the prevailing criticism of Temple sacrifices in the Jewish and Hellenistic environments. Chauvet draws on the Scriptures to argue that Jesus is “in no way innovative;” rather, he repeats the message of the prophets and sums up the Law in the double commandment of love for God and neighbour.

I desire steadfast love [mercy] and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6, quoted in Mt 9:13; 12:7). These people...honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from

<sup>11</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

<sup>13</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

<sup>14</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

me” (Isa 29:13, quoted in Mk 7:6-7; Mt 15:8-9). The Temple is the “house of prayer” (Isa 56:7) and not a “den of robbers” (Jer 7:11, quoted in Mt 21:13).<sup>15</sup>

For Jesus, this historic-prophetic dimension of worship is much more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices. For Israel, as Chauvet asserts, “grace is always given as a task to be performed,” and the ritual liturgy has no meaning unless it is fulfilled as a “liturgy of the neighbour.”<sup>16</sup> In this way, the ethical is brought into the heart of the religious relationship to God. Worship is agreeable to God only if the heart is in harmony with what the worship expresses.<sup>17</sup>

Conversely, as an attempt to explore Jesus’ attitude toward the Temple and the Jewish priesthood, Chauvet proceeds with an analysis and exegesis of the significant texts of the Gospels and the Acts. Jesus’ personal “authority” and the “novelty” of his message and attitudes suppose that he also found fault with the Temple worship.<sup>18</sup> For example, Chauvet makes this remark:

...according to the Hellenistic viewpoint which Luke expresses in Acts 6:13-15, the eschatological reconstruction of this temple, of which Matthew 26:61 speaks, and between these two extremes the substitution for this Temple of one “not made with hands” (Mk 14:58); as for John, who associates this saying with the prophetic deed of purifying the Temple and who places it, probably correctly, in the mouth of Jesus himself, he gives these words a clear paschal exegesis: “but he was speaking of the temple of his body” (Jn 2:19-22).<sup>19</sup>

From this perspective, Chauvet’s understanding of Jesus’ attitude leads to the conclusion that “the words of Jesus against the Temple...announce an intensification of the prophetic criticism of cultic formalism and a new status for worship as such.”<sup>20</sup> This newness of worship could not, however, manifest itself until after Easter. The reason is, as Chauvet observes, that after Easter, the first Christian communities began

<sup>15</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>16</sup> Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Chauvet claims that if the critical current of cultic formalism “was at first rooted in prophetism, it nonetheless shared in a much larger cultural movement of Hellenistic origin.” As examples, he refers to the writings of R. K. Yerkes, who reports that there are multiple witnesses to this fact from Isocrates in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. “And the Hermetic literature frequently praises spiritual sacrifice alone, that of a pure heart and of the prayer of thanksgiving (*Eucharistia*), at the expense of ritual sacrifices which are banned because God needs nothing.” 241.

<sup>18</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 246.

<sup>19</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 246.

<sup>20</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 247.

to work out a reading of the death and resurrection of Jesus “according to the Scriptures.”<sup>21</sup> As a result, they came to understand that the new temple of the presence of God is now the body of the Risen One (John) or the community of the faithful (Paul), thereby approving the new status of worship, so as to confess Jesus as the “Christ,” “Lord”, and finally “Son of God.”<sup>22</sup>

### 7.2.2 The Easter rupture, eschatology and the status of Christian worship

Chauvet employs the image of “tearing apart”<sup>23</sup> when considering the way the early Christians celebrated liturgical rituals. Rupture is one of the most striking metaphors for this newness in the New Testament: the heavens are torn apart on the occasion of the baptism of Jesus, thus permitting the Spirit to descend upon him (Mk 1:9-11; cf. Isa 63:11-64:1); the old wineskins tear and burst (Mk 2:21-22); the high priest tears his clothing (Mk 14:61-63). More powerful and pervasive still is the mention of the complete tearing of the Temple curtain, “from top to bottom”(Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45; Mt 27:51). For Chauvet, both the tearing of the heavens and the tearing of the Temple curtain theologically express a new status for worship in the sense that the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah are fulfilled. In other words, the tearing apart of things is the symbolic expression of the tearing open of the heart. Chauvet explains:

There is every reason to think that the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:24-28, on the aspersion with pure water and the gift of the Spirit to change Israel’s heart of stone into a heart of flesh and thereby render Israel capable of walking according to the Law, was quite popular during this period. And that of Jeremiah 31: 31-34, to which Ezekiel makes allusion, was probably no less popular: God would make a new covenant by writing his law on the very hearts of his people so that all might faithfully put it into practice and gain true knowledge of him.<sup>24</sup>

Such a fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit in Jeremiah and Ezekiel gives a radical orientation to the life of Christian hope and worship. In Jesus, Christ and Lord, as Chauvet notes, “the religious fabric of Judaism has been torn. Something radically new has arisen within it, what one will finally call the redemption of the world.”<sup>25</sup> If

<sup>21</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 247.

<sup>22</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 248.

<sup>23</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 248.

<sup>24</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 247-248.

<sup>25</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 249.

Jesus is the Risen Christ, and if God manifested him as the salvation offered to all humanity, then what becomes of the two great salvific institutions of the Mosaic covenant: the Law and the Temple?

To answer this question, Chauvet turns his attention to two New Testament writings: the Pauline theology of justification by faith, and the letter to the Hebrews, concerning the priesthood and sacrifices. Chauvet argues:

[The] entire Jewish system, which through its symbol, the Temple, is rendered obsolete as a means of access to God: the Holy of Holies is empty. Christians have no other Temple than the glorified body of Jesus, no other altar than his cross, no other priest and sacrifice than his very person: Christ is their only possible liturgy.<sup>26</sup>

The Christian worship thus belongs to a theological order other than the Jewish worship. There is nothing more to be added to worship because Christian thanksgiving is “Christ himself,”<sup>27</sup> the unique subject who has accomplished the Law. More precisely, “this difference depends entirely on the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ: it is He who is the revealer of the difference.”<sup>28</sup> This is precisely what Paul emphasizes in his letter to the Romans: to be a Christian is to live under “the law of the Spirit” (Rom 8:2), that is, to share in the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9).

Consequently, this new Christo-pneumatic principle completely changes the reading of the religious system and the modality of justification it mediates: “no longer the practice of the works of the Law but faith in Jesus as Christ and Lord.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, Christians are all now justified by God’s grace “through the salvation that is in Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:24).<sup>30</sup> The primary worship of the Christians is thus to welcome “in their daily lives this grace of God through theological faith and charity.”<sup>31</sup> From now on God directly unites God’s people in the Risen Christ through the gift of the Spirit. The primary locus of Christian worship is then constitutively ethical, in terms

<sup>26</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 250.

<sup>27</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. This is the essential meaning of the rupture or tearing that occurred: at the moment of Jesus’ death, “the Holy of Holies is thereafter empty; the temple of the presence of God is now the body of the Risen One (John) or the community of the faithful (Paul).” 249-251.

<sup>28</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 251.

<sup>29</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 252.

<sup>30</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 252.

<sup>31</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 253.



of everyday existence. In short, the new foundation of the Christian worship is ethical in the sense that it is the eschatological event of Easter and Pentecost.<sup>32</sup>

### 7.3 The cultic language of the early Church: Liturgy and ethics

Chauvet observes that, although the most common sacred terms of worship of the Old Testament are used in the New Testament, they designate neither the liturgical activity of Christians nor the ministers who preside over it.<sup>33</sup> So to what do these sacred terms (sacrifice, priest, offering, altar, worship, liturgy) apply? Chauvet argues that they are used to underscore two points: firstly, to stress that Christ has accomplished the purpose of Temple worship (especially the sacrifices and the priesthood of the old Covenant) and that, having fulfilled it, he abolished it; and, secondly, to indicate that Christians are already united to Christ by faith and love. This vision of sharing in the Spirit of Christ, of participating in the newness of his resurrection, then affects all Christian activities in the present.<sup>34</sup> Chauvet proceeds to document the changes in the language of worship of the New Testament, so as to draw out the eschatological characteristics of Christian worship. His general argument can be summarized as follows:

- 1) According to Paul, the offering of the body, that is, of the entire person, constitutes the “living and holy sacrifice” that is acceptable to God as “spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). But he transforms this expression in connection with the eschaton, which is inaugurated in the Pasch of Christ. Because the Risen Christ is the Lord of the whole creation, and it is, above all, in the everyday that he is encountered, the doctrine of Christian worship necessarily coincides with ethics.<sup>35</sup> This is why the collection, organized by Paul among the Christians of Greece and Asia Minor to support the suffering community in Jerusalem, is regarded as a liturgy. This

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<sup>32</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Chauvet considers a twofold movement of this eschatological cultic status. (1) The cult acts “as a *symbolic revealer* of what enables human life to be authentically Christian, that is to say, the priestly act of an entire people making their very lives the prime place of the spiritual worship.” (2) It acts “as *symbolic operator* making possible this priestly and sacrificial act that is pleasing to God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.” 253. See also Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 254. See also Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 254.

<sup>35</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 254.

collection causes an overflowing of “Eucharists” (thanksgivings) to God (Acts 11:28-30; 1 Cor 16: 1-2; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 4: 18; Eph 5:2).<sup>36</sup>

- 2) The Letter to the Hebrews also incorporated much of this notion of the spiritual sacrifice as the concrete exercise of Christian charity. The priesthood applies only to Christ as eternal, exclusive, and untransmissible (Heb 7:24). Nevertheless all who have become “partners of Christ” through baptism can participate in it (Heb 3:14). Those who are sanctified are at the same time “made priests” by Christ. So the life of the Christian community is presented as an extended priestly liturgy (1 Pet 2: 4). This priesthood manifests itself in two ways: on the one hand, in the “sacrifice of the lips” (the profession of faith), in thanksgiving (for God’s saving us in Jesus) and, on the other hand, in good deeds and mutual aid by the members of the community.<sup>37</sup>
- 3) Pauline theology emphasizes the spiritualization of priesthood and sacrifice in relation to the confession of faith and the practice of charity as further developed into a missionary perspective. His own priesthood is understood as his missionary activity. Here God accepts as a fragrant offering the apostolic action of making Christ known in all times and all places (2 Cor 2:4-16). Likewise, the proclamation of the Gospel as spiritual offering and sacrifice to God (Rom 1: 19) or as priestly activity is developed in terms of proclaiming the “wonders of God” (1 Pet 2:4-10).<sup>38</sup>
- 4) The universal priesthood of the people of God has little to do with the question of ministries within the Church, and much to do with the ministry of the Church in the world. The focus is neither on the salvation of the individual nor on Church activities, such as prayer and worship. It is rather about a community that gathers together to share the bread and wine in Christ’s memory, thus giving to the world a powerful witness to the reality of his grace in all its dimensions and arenas. The Church does not exist for its own sake, but aims at being a setting for the full realization of the Kingdom of God, which is “already” but “not yet,” present and future, realized and eschatological. In this way, the Church is charged with “a substitutive, mediating, vicarious function,” and its spiritual sacrifice is “to be the presence of God in the world and the presence of the world before God.” The

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<sup>36</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 255.

<sup>37</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 256.

<sup>38</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 256.

Church is the new temple of God, made up of “living stones” (1 Cor 6:19), where God has chosen to dwell through the Spirit in the midst of humankind.<sup>39</sup>

- 5) Throughout the entire second century the New Testament position was faithfully maintained in this regard. Clement of Rome, the Didache, and Irenaeus only incidentally refer to the priesthood of the Temple when discussing the ministers of the Church.<sup>40</sup> As Chauvet observes, “it is by the confession of faults and the forgiveness of a brother or sister that the Sunday assembly, whose aim is thanksgiving through the breaking of bread, is constituted a sacrifice.”<sup>41</sup> Ultimately then, it is this *dailiness* of life,<sup>42</sup> when lived in faith and love, which through the Spirit becomes the primary place of the “liturgy” or the “spiritual sacrifice” to the glory of God.

### 7.3.1 The status of priesthood and sacrifice

According to Chauvet, these changes in the language of early Christian worship provide us with a point of departure for an understanding of the status of priesthood and sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> It is in the event of Easter-Pentecost, with all the consequences which this event has for the Law and the Temple, that we bid “farewell to sacrifices”<sup>44</sup> and interpret Christian worship as an eschatological fulfilment in Christ. As Chauvet explains:

[The] status of “priesthood” and “sacrifice” is new with the very newness of *Jesus Christ* and of the fulfilment of the promise by the *gift of the Spirit*. From now on, the new priesthood is the priesthood of the people of God. The temple of the new covenant is formed by the body of Christians, living stones fitted together by the Holy Spirit over the cornerstone that is Christ himself. And the sacred work, the cult, the sacrifice that is pleasing to God, is the confession of faith lived in the agape of sharing in service to the poorest, of reconciliation, and of mercy.<sup>45</sup>

Understood in this way, we can discern that Christian liturgy is both spiritually and ethically profound. A ritual memory of Jesus’ death and resurrection is not, as

<sup>39</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 257.

<sup>40</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 258.

<sup>41</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 258.

<sup>42</sup> Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 260.

<sup>44</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 258.

<sup>45</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 260.

Chauvet argues, Christian “unless it is verified in an existential memory whose place is none other than the believers’ bodies.”<sup>46</sup> The Gospel of John, for instance, testifies to this liturgical praxis of eschatology by introducing the story of the washing of feet into the narrative of the Last Supper (Jn 13:1-15). Here Chauvet agrees with Xavier Leon-Dufour’s comment that the statement “I have set you an example, that you should do *as [kathos]* I have done to you” (Jn 13:15) is closely related to “Do this in memory of me.”<sup>47</sup> Chauvet argues, moreover, that “this Johannine *kathos* [as] is causal rather than merely exemplary...as if Jesus said: ‘In acting this way, I *give you* power to act in the same way,’” and thus has “the value of a *sacramentum*”<sup>48</sup> as a gratuitous gift on the part of Christ, which implies the commitment to a new way of life. In other words, to wash one another’s feet is to live existentially the memory of Christ that the Eucharist makes Christians live ritually.<sup>49</sup>

### 7.3.2 Corporality as location of the Christian liturgy

Chauvet proceeds to a consideration of corporality as the primordial location of the Christian liturgy. The Eucharist cannot be thought of apart from such an emphasis, because Christ is sacramentally engaged in the body of Christians. He explains:

...our element Sacrament acts as a symbol *for the passage from the letter toward the body*. Such a passage is written in the Scriptures. That the community “writes itself” into the Book it is reading is an indication that this Book, in its very essence, seeks to permeate the whole volume of the social body of the people. Such, by the way, is exactly the thrust of the prophecies of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 in the perspective of the new covenant: *the Book, through the action of the very Spirit of God, will become one with the body of the people*. According to Christian hermeneutics, Jesus, “scripturally dead” for the many, “crucified on the book”, has been the unique subject who, anointed by the Spirit (Mt 3:16), has fully incorporated the Book. Baptized into his

<sup>46</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 260.

<sup>47</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 261.

<sup>48</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 261. See also Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. For Chauvet, “to present a Christ would be first of all an example to imitate is to veer toward the path of moralism, a discouraging, even a fraudulent path since the example to imitate is inimitable. Christ must be announced primarily as the sacrament of God (and as a consequence he is to be imitated in a way completely different from that promoted above). As a sacrament, that is to say, as the gratuitous gift of God and, more precisely, as Savior. He is our ferryman to God’s shore. We do not have to desperately run after him to join him: he himself comes toward us, as at Emmaus, and takes us in his boat to carry us to the other shore. It is before all else, this truth that the sacraments are witnessing to us: a pure gift from God deposited in our hands (The body of Christ – Amen).” 53-54.

<sup>49</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 261.

death so as to live from “the Spirit of him who raised [him] from the dead” (Rom 8:11), his disciples have as their task to learn little by little to incorporate into themselves this Book, rewritten as gospel...Here again it is the eschaton that requires Christians to favor *living*...For the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit specify *corporality* as the eschatological place of God.<sup>50</sup>

Christian worship is thus a lived relationship with Christ, rather than a mere reflection on his event. What is most spiritual in our communication with God, which is the very nature of Christian liturgy, happens in the mediation of what is most corporeal.<sup>51</sup> As Chauvet explains: “The body is, henceforth, through the Spirit, the *living letter* where the Risen Christ eschatologically takes on flesh and manifests himself to all people.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, according to St. Paul: “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3:2-3). The body of Christians thus becomes the place of God’s revelation, since the Eucharistic celebration requires bodiliness as its central place of worship.

If the body of the gathered assembly is the sacramental manifestation of Christian worship, then again there is an essential relationship between the ritual and the ethical. This understanding gives a particular focus to the question: is Christian commitment to ethics also the prime place of a liturgy pleasing to God? For Chauvet, the ritual story at each Eucharist sends Christians out into the world to become the living memory of Christ. The Eucharist is celebrated as a confession of faith, lived as charity, which is directed towards our neighbours. As he explains:

The element “Sacrament” is thus the symbolic place of the on-going transition between Scriptures and Ethics, from the letter to the body. The liturgy is the powerful pedagogy where we learn to consent to the presence of the absence of God, who obliges us to give him a body in the world, thereby giving the sacraments their plenitude in the “liturgy of the neighbor” and giving the ritual memory of Jesus Christ its plenitude in our existential memory.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 263-264.

<sup>51</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 355.

<sup>52</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 264.

<sup>53</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 265.

Accordingly, Chauvet raises, within sacramental theology, questions of contemporary ethics and social justice. For example, when “an unjust economic system takes away from the poor the bread they have made, when it distributes it only to those who are economically well-off, it makes of the bread a symbol of ‘decreation’; thus it de-sacramentalizes it.”<sup>54</sup> Because of this injustice, the bread cannot become Eucharist. To pretend to eat the body of Christ unto life, when in fact this bread, taken from the unjust and exploitative condition, is the “bearer of death, [it] is to condemn oneself.”<sup>55</sup> Just as the most elementary things of creation - water, bread and wine - demand to be treated with respect as an offer to others for the life of all, so a theological economy of Eucharistic worship as offering and sharing is inseparable from the economy of social labour.<sup>56</sup> Such is the eschatological character of Christian memorial: it involves the body of Christians in the event of Christ, which the liturgical celebration commemorates. It is here that the ethical meaning of Christian worship can be found. Nourished by the Eucharist as the memory of Christ, the Christian community commits itself to the ethical responsibility of helping to make a foretaste of the future glory possible.

#### 7.4 The Eucharist and the “between time”

For Chauvet, every Eucharistic prayer ends with an eschatological petition that God complete in eternal life what God formerly began in the Pasch of Christ and what God communicates to Christians today in the Eucharist.<sup>57</sup> In the present “between time,” the Eucharist proclaims and signifies the full communion with God that will be effected when Christ comes in glory (1 Cor 11:26; 16:22; Rev 22:20). Eschatology is not, however, simply futurology. Chauvet is careful to claim that when the “not yet” of the Parousia is interpreted too literally in connection with the image of the “return” of Christ, Christian eschatology can give the impression of being concerned only with

<sup>54</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552.

<sup>55</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552.

<sup>56</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. The Christian community is seen as the visible embodiment of Christ’s risen power through the Holy Spirit. It is precisely, so argues Chauvet, “because the ritual memory sends us to the existential memory that the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular, constitute a *dangerous memory*.” In light of this, the ritual story at each Eucharist raises questions about the whole Christian project. That is, at the end of the Eucharist, Christians are sent out into the world and back to their own responsibilities “to take charge of history in the name of Jesus; and so they become his living memory in the world because he is himself sacramentally engaged in the body of humanity they work at building for him.” 261.

<sup>57</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 3.

“the notion of a faraway future” which has no other connection with history than to mark its end.<sup>58</sup> Chauvet explains: “the eschaton is the final manifestation of the resurrecting force of Christ from now on transfiguring humanity by the gift of the Spirit.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, “the eschaton is a moment constitutive of the Pasch of the Lord; it speaks the future of his Resurrection in the world.”<sup>60</sup> As Chauvet further explains:

[The] Risen One remains marked with the wounds of his death: in raising him from the dead, God has not restored him to what he was “before” the incarnation; it is in his very humanity, with the death that is constitutive of it, that he has been transfigured. This is why, if the gift of the Spirit, poured out over all flesh at Pentecost, inaugurates the participation of humanity and the universe (Rom 8:18-24) in the Pasch of the Lord, the resulting “sacramentality” of history and the world remains *tragic*. The world continues to experience itself as not yet redeemed; “in hope we were saved” (Rom 8:24).<sup>61</sup>

The basic point, then, is this: the resurrection reveals an intimate connection in the present time between Christian hope and commitment to the world. Such is therefore a necessary tension between the present and the future, the “already” and the “not yet,” that is, a promise of and an ethical commitment to a future.

#### 7.4.1 The “already” character of salvation

Chauvet claims that the “already” of salvation is clearly seen in the theological tradition of Christian worship. This is evident in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who stresses, for example, that a sacrament “is a sign that commemorates Christ’s passion from the past, manifests its efficaciousness in the present, and proclaims future glory.”<sup>62</sup> We also note that on the First Sunday of Advent, the prayer over the gifts asks that the Eucharist “may be for us the pledge of eternal glory.” There follows a prayer after communion, which proclaims that, through the Eucharist, God is fashioning “the love with which we will love you eternally.”<sup>63</sup> Thus the Eucharist

<sup>58</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>59</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>60</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>61</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>62</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 4.

<sup>63</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 4.

indicates the anticipation of future glory; it is the context in which the work of salvation is carried out.

The “already” eschatological character of worship may be seen in relation to the act of gathering for the Eucharistic assembly on Sunday, the day chosen as “the day of the Lord” (Acts 20:7) at the beginning of Christian liturgy. The Sunday gathering connects “the first day of the week” with the resurrection, signifying the reorientation of Jewish practice to the Christian practice of the assembly. Traditionally, Sunday is also regarded as the “eighth day,” a day both in time, but already participating in the future glory to come. According to Chauvet, the first witness to this is found in *The Epistle of Barnabas* when Sunday is described as the eighth-day, the beginning of another world. A similar insight appears in the writing of Basil:

On the day of the resurrection, we stand at prayer to remind ourselves of the grace given to us...not only because we rose with Christ and are bound to “seek those things which are above”, but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age we expect.<sup>64</sup>

The liturgical practice of standing while praying on Sunday indicates a participation in the new world, already inaugurated by Christ’s Pasch. For the early Christian community, the liturgical assembly, gathered for praise, worship and the holy meal, was itself an eschatological sign of salvation. Chauvet further notes: “Visual and aural aspects of liturgy also witness to the ‘already’ of salvation, the playing of the organ, jubilant alleluias, hymns of thanks, candles, pictures, flowers.”<sup>65</sup> It is this celebrated pattern of joy and festival, which comes from its participation in the resurrection of Christ, that bears witness to eschatological hope already made present in the community’s liturgy.

#### **7.4.2 The “not yet” eschatological restraint**

This joy of salvation, however, is not without restraint. What Paul said, namely, “we were saved, but in hope” (Rom 8:24), can be understood in terms of the eschatological moderation, since Christians still live in a world that is experienced as “not yet” saved. Such an eschatological restraint, as Chauvet remarks, underscores two significant

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<sup>64</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 4.

<sup>65</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 4.



factors. Firstly, in view of the enormity of evil and the destruction of the environment and its ecosystems, Christians may wonder if the world can be saved. Secondly, even at the level of one's own personal life, does one not always experience the need to be saved?<sup>66</sup> Does eternal salvation have to do with the fulfilment of life for the individual, or does it concern social, economic and political fulfilment? The joy of the salvation that Christians hope for is already inaugurated in Christ but is not yet complete, since it embraces personal and communal fulfilment, and an historical and cosmic process. The emphasis on the present experience of salvation is a characteristic of eschatology, however, since the Eucharistic celebration is ritual and proceeds primarily from symbols, it requires a certain restraint.

Conversely, the symbol represents the reality in two different ways. On the one hand, it *is not* the real, since it only represents reality. On the other hand, it *is real* because it symbolically makes present a reality. In Chauvet's view, a little bread and wine, for example, can represent all the fruits of the earth and the works of human hands. "Too much in a symbol would cause it to overflow into reality – and the symbol's capacity to re-present the real is precisely in putting reality at a distance."<sup>67</sup> Hence, the Eucharistic symbolism presupposes the communion of the members of the Church, expressing their communion with Christ and, at the same time, moving them toward a more perfect communion. Considering the moment of the sign of peace in the Eucharistic celebration, Chauvet understands that "the sign of peace is not the time to leave the assembly and really reconcile, but the sign remains symbolic in that it commits me to live during the week the real reconciliation it represents."<sup>68</sup> Because it is symbolic, the Eucharistic celebration requires a certain restraint, which is appropriate for eschatological time, the period of the "already" but "not yet" of salvation.

It is within this context of eschatological reserve that Chauvet proposes an approach to the presence and absence of Christ in the dynamism of the Eucharist by way of symbolic expression. In such a symbolic perspective, the Eucharistic presence is not restricted to the here and now. By establishing a relationship between the past and

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<sup>66</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 5.

<sup>67</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 5.

<sup>68</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 5.

present, the Eucharist also makes the future present. In this way, Chauvet claims that the Eucharistic presence conceals, even as it reveals, the mystery and otherness of the risen Christ. In other words, it proclaims the irreducibility of Christ to human concepts, discourses, ideologies, and experiences.<sup>69</sup> He argues:

If such is the case, we are in a full paradox...The Eucharistic body of Christ, in its materiality and exteriority, represents well, in this perspective, the most resistant dam against such idolatrous reduction...to what is said or experienced of it...Would we not face there the symbolic expression of this “always greater or rather of this “always more other”...One is then brought to think that far from coming under the status of idol, the Eucharist comes under that of the icon, being understood that this latter intends to preserve the alterity of what it yet wants to allow to be seen...We can grant to eucharistic presence a status of icon in difference from the status of idol. In this way we are theoretically on guard against all imaginary holds on the presence of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

For this reason, the Eucharistic presence can be considered as eschatological presence in the mode of openness. It is possible to affirm the presence of Christ in the Eucharist if it is thought of as a “trace” of the God who is on the move and always in excess, or in terms of the eschatological “not yet” of the hidden coming of the One who will be completely present to us only at the Parousia.<sup>71</sup>

Although the Christian community’s confession of faith in the presence of Christ, as Chauvet observes, leads to jubilation, this jubilation must be restrained. Living in between expectation and hope, the salvation that is already given is thus experienced as “yet to be accomplished.”<sup>72</sup> There is a relation between what the theological tradition has called “the holy Eucharistic reserve” and the eschatological reserve, as it is itself connected to the modesty of the symbol.<sup>73</sup> In short, it is in the context of the “between time,” the time between the “already” and “not yet” of salvation in which the Christian community lives, that the Eucharist can be seen as the fundamental sacrament of hope, the bearer of the eschatological future.

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<sup>69</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 403. See also Louis-Marie Chauvet, “The Broken Bread as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (Leuven: University Press, 2001). For Chauvet, the Eucharistic presence of Christ is the great symbol of the prohibition against idolatry, since he argues, “idolatry resides in the reduction of God to the conditions of the experience which one says to have gained of Him.” 257-258.

<sup>70</sup> Chauvet, “The Broken Bread as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence,” 257-258.

<sup>71</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 549.

<sup>72</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 6.

<sup>73</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 6.

## 7.5 The Eucharist, eschatology and history

Chauvet proposes that the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular witness to “the power of the Resurrection at work in history – or better they witness that history is in labour (Rom 8:19-24), since history is a coming to be of the body of Christ through the Spirit.”<sup>74</sup> As the giving of the bread and wine is a sign of participation in the New Creation, the Eucharist is made of the very “stuff” of history and of the world, and therefore forms the firstfruits of the fulfilment to which humanity and the cosmos are called.<sup>75</sup> This concept then allows us to locate the Eucharist in the concrete depth of history and to relate the Parousia to human history. The fulfilment of history, however, as Chauvet considers, “gets its Christian meaning only as an unfolding of the power of the Risen One who, through the Spirit, draws history forward.”<sup>76</sup> As such, the Eucharist is a symbolic expression of this resurrection-dynamism and celebrated in the context of Christ’s Paschal Mystery: his death, resurrection and coming in glory.<sup>77</sup> Since the liturgy emphasizes the hope for this full manifestation of Christ, we are able to understand the relationship of the Eucharist, eschatology and history.

### 7.5.1 The Paschal Mystery as primary context

As witness of the between-time, the Eucharist is understood not primarily in the light of the Incarnation but in light of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>78</sup> This approach stands in considerable contrast to the scholastic treatment, which elaborated the sacraments after the pattern of the hypostatic union, viewing the Eucharist as “a continuation of Christ’s holy humanity.”<sup>79</sup> Here instead of appearing as prolongation of the Incarnation, the Eucharist is seen as a symbolic celebration of the whole eschatological event of Christ since, in the anamnesis, Christians remember the death-resurrection-parousia of the Lord, not his incarnation as such.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 6.

<sup>75</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>76</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>77</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>78</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>79</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 6.

<sup>80</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

The Gospels and the liturgy likewise leave us in no doubt of this, with their insistence on the Passover setting of the Supper of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb. Christ's "dying for" is understood, as Chauvet stresses, "only as an expression of his 'living for.'" Without his death, his "living for" would lack historical depth and be but one myth among others.<sup>81</sup> In this perspective, even the Incarnation is to be considered in the context of the Paschal Mystery. The infancy narratives, for example, contain paschal references. Within the Christian tradition, others have attempted such a significant synthesis of Christian salvation. For example, St. Leo concluded, "Christmas is Christian only to the extent that it communicates the beginning of the paschal sacrament of Easter."<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in the liturgical tradition of the Fifty Days, both the Pentecost and the Parousia are an integral part of the one mystery of Easter. As Chauvet remarks:

One can, one must go further: the incarnation itself is included in the paschal mystery; but then it is understood the other way around, as in the New Testament, from the life of self-giving unto death and from the resurrection of Jesus. Similarly, but this time, looking to the future, the resurrection of Jesus includes its ultimate fulfilment in the parousia: Are we not already in the eschatological "last days" (Heb 1:1)? Is not the parousia already begun? The parousia includes the ascension, which in any case is just another way of saying, according to the spatial symbolism of "being lifted up" and "being exalted," what the term "resurrection" for its part expresses according to a (spatio-) temporal symbolism of "awakening" or "standing again" after having been lying down. The parousia also includes Pentecost, which in certain respects, as we have already observed, is nothing but the "for us" of the resurrection, that is to say, the embodiment of the Risen One in history through the Spirit, under the form of the new People of God, the Church in its historical visibility.<sup>83</sup>

The Parousia belongs to the Pasch of Christ. In terms of its eschatological consummation, however, it is regarded "not as a mere consequence of the Pasch, but rather as its interior dimension of fulfilment."<sup>84</sup> Since Christ becomes sacramentally present in the gifts of bread and wine as the Paschal Lamb, such a presence, as Chauvet understands it, "expresses the eschatological coming into history of the new world inaugurated by Easter and Pentecost."<sup>85</sup> In this way, the event of Easter "is

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<sup>81</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>82</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>83</sup> Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 159-160.

<sup>84</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>85</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

*sacramentum*, for that is where we make our *transitus* with Christ.”<sup>86</sup> In its interconnection with the resurrection, the Eucharist is understood as a pledge of the future glory, a pledge strengthened by a divine promise of fulfilment; however, it expresses the eschatological condition of history, as it exists between Easter and Parousia. This eschatological dimension is evident in the identification of the bread and wine with the body and blood of Jesus at the Last Supper, even though the historical events of his passion, death and resurrection have not yet taken place. Thus in the ritual act of the Eucharist as a whole, the history of salvation unfolds.

### 7.5.2 The Eucharist and the historical world

Chauvet claims that the Eucharistic bread and wine symbolize our being-in-the-world and our bonds with the earth. Christians cannot truly “confess Jesus as risen without simultaneously confessing him as resurrecting the world.”<sup>87</sup> Eschatology then requires “present history as the very place of the eschaton’s possibility. To devalue history is also and necessarily to devalue eschatology.”<sup>88</sup> Here Chauvet refines the notion of sacramentality by pointing out that the world and history retain their own substance in the process of spiritual encounter with God. As he explains:

Sanctification requires respect for this “profane” realm. But the world and history require being treated with respect due them, beyond their nature as God’s creation, beyond their eschatological status as the medium of the gestation of the coming Kingdom. The sacramentality of history and of the world, far from belittling their concrete materiality by making of them “transparent images of God”, first requires respect for their autonomy.<sup>89</sup>

This passage clarifies that the world and history require being treated with the respect due to them as centres of value in their own right.<sup>90</sup> This is why the bread and the wine are much more than simply bread and wine; they are the bearers of the future

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<sup>86</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 7.

<sup>87</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>88</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>89</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 8.

<sup>90</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament.” Chauvet finds in M. Gauchet’s theology of nature a significant and original Christian articulation of the human and divine relationship that is suited to his approach to the eschatological sacramentality: “Making a self-revelation in the humanity of Jesus, the God of Christians was not a totally superior being but the absolute other. Now, a god who is other is one whose truth we can relate to by recognizing what separates us from [that God] and by taking into account the autonomous substance of our terrestrial sphere. The more we devote ourselves to caring for God’s creation, the more we praise [God].” 8.

inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ. They express the hope that history as well as matter, has been transfigured into the final state. Our author goes on to say:

Eschatology in fact is to be related to the resurrecting power of Christ, who, through the Spirit, draws history toward the fulfilment of God's promise. Inasmuch as they are of matter and of history – more specifically, of matter transformed by human work – the sacraments not only restore us in creation but simultaneously direct us to eschatology.<sup>91</sup>

Thus sacramentality arises at the intersection of these two dimensions: the cosmic and the historic. It is because, as Chauvet argues, “without the earth, there is no work; but without the work, the earth is not matter. The bread is Eucharistic matter only as a link between the cosmos and history.”<sup>92</sup> There is a solid biblical background to this theological perspective, as Chauvet remarks: “it is the God of Israel, the God of the Covenant, the God of history who creates the world, according to Genesis.”<sup>93</sup> Hence, the symbolism of bread and wine open us onto the realm of the sacred as it exists in the world, and at the same time reveals the sacramentality of the world as created world.

On the one hand, the Eucharist challenges contemporary history in the name of that future to which it bears witness. On the other hand, it reminds Christians that since eschatology tends toward a fulfilment, which, as an act of God, cannot simply be located in history, it calls them to take responsibility for history, even in its social and political dimension.<sup>94</sup> The natural state of the world and of history is recognized as the possible sacramental place of a sacred history.<sup>95</sup> Yet this sacramentality “must not make us forget that the Risen Lord, who takes flesh in it through the Spirit, still bears the marks of the wounds of his death.”<sup>96</sup> In the following passage he shows how the sacraments and the Eucharist accommodate our earthly condition as we await the Parousia:

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<sup>91</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 8-9.

<sup>92</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Chauvet points out: “Such is the case in Judaism, where the Creator is already the God of Israel, that is, the God of the Covenant and of history. That holds especially in Christianity with the inauguration of the last time through Christ's Resurrection – so much so that all creation must itself be thought of as Trinitarian.” 552. See also Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 9.

<sup>93</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 553.

<sup>94</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 9.

<sup>95</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 554.

<sup>96</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 554.

Thus, sacraments speak of the eschatological *in-between* time. It is the time of an “already”, but qualified by a “not yet.” If this were not so, we would reduce the reign to a mere “otherwise”...of this world. It is the time of a “not yet,” but shot through by an “already.” If this were not so, we would reduce the reign to an “other world” without relation to this world. Sacraments are the bearers of the joy of the “already” and the distress of the “not yet.” They are the *witnesses of a God who is never finished with coming*: the amazed witnesses of a God who comes continually.<sup>97</sup>

In this way, an eschatological perspective is essential to a deeper understanding of the sacraments and the Eucharist. Christian hope in the future is not simply about “eschatology-ism,” which stresses discontinuity between the Kingdom and human history, nor is it about “teleology-ism,” an optimistic development of the present in an unending line, which confuses eschatology with the opening of a future within history.<sup>98</sup> Here a dialectical understanding is important. Just as the future renewal of all things has already appeared ahead of time in the resurrection of Christ, so also, in the Eucharist, the future is anticipated, but is not fulfilled upon its arrival. The Eucharist is thus the eschatological presence under earthly conditions of the yet to be consummated fulfilment of all history in its ultimate glory.

## 7.6 Critical reflections

Chauvet brings a distinctive voice not only to sacramental theology, but also to the whole enterprise of Christian theology. His method contrasts with the traditional approach to sacramental theology shaped by metaphysical categories, by highlighting the symbolic exchange in the postmodern framework. We now take an overall perspective on the significant areas of his development.

Firstly, Chauvet’s recovery of the eschatological dimension of the Christian worship is a considerable contribution to contemporary sacramental theology. His approach points the way to a new synthesis of contemporary sacramentality and postmodern thought. It is his achievement to correct certain deficiencies of past eschatological

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<sup>97</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 555.

<sup>98</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 3, 9. See also Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 555.

theories, insisting that eschatology must encompass the quest for fulfilment and wholeness in all dimensions of life. Consider for example his fundamental emphasis on the relation between history and the future. Chauvet argues that it is neither the flight of eschatology-ism nor the closed immanence of historicism that can solve the problem of history. He claims that it is the ultimate openness of genuine eschatology, requiring present history as the very place of the eschaton's possibility, which is the valid solution. In such a theological perspective, we find a more positive relation between present and future and a fine balance between prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology. In other words, Chauvet's insistence on the radicalization of both the immanence and transcendence yields a coherent account of the relation between the notion of a transcendent future and the conviction that Christians must, by reason of their hope, be involved in the historical process. While they cannot bring about God's reign by their own efforts, they can dedicate themselves to the betterment of the world and history.

Secondly, Chauvet takes the future seriously in a realistic fashion and shows how concretely this eschatological dimension of the Christian worship has immediate consequences for Christian living, with ethics and spirituality. Such ethics and spirituality are, however, purified of their individualistic tendency and embodied in the necessity of social commitment. In the contemporary world, thus to be meaningful, Eucharistic celebration must be constitutively ethical. For Chauvet, this is nowhere better expressed than in the symbolic act of Jesus' washing his disciples' feet. Chauvet thus understands the Eucharist not as a mere religious and sacramental act, but primarily as a symbolic practice, which simultaneously comes from and sends us back to the element "Ethics."<sup>99</sup> He considers Eucharistic worship, not as an isolated action unrelated to the rest of life, but rather as a way of living existentially and eschatologically the memory of Christ with clear social implications.

Thirdly, Chauvet's approach to the eschatological status of the Christian worship is strongly grounded in its biblical sources. In effect he connects theological discussion with biblical data. He first reflects on the historic-prophetic status of the Jewish worship in the Old Testament, and then on the eschatological status of the early

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<sup>99</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 254.



Christian worship in the New Testament and patristic literature in order to explore “a new cultic status”<sup>100</sup> based on the eschatological event of Easter.<sup>101</sup> He grounds his position in an altogether different way from that of classic onto-theology, when he notes that “the relation between God and humankind in the sacraments is best understood starting not from the hypostatic union, as the Scholastic theologians did, but from the Pasch of Christ.”<sup>102</sup> Chauvet’s rediscovery of the properly theological significance of the Christian worship, while remaining faithful to the truth expressed in the biblical and apostolic tradition marks a very significant development.

Fourthly, Chauvet further justifies this approach by drawing upon Scripture and the theological tradition of the early Christian community to argue that the Church is the body of Christ, called to become the fulfilment of Christ’s body in the world. He rejects what Henri de Lubac calls the “deadly dichotomy” between the Eucharistic body and the ecclesial body of Christ.<sup>103</sup> The sacraments are always events in the Church and essentially actions of the Church, by the Church and for the Church. Every sacrament affects the body of Christians. We can find this same connection between the Eucharist and Church in the documents of Vatican II, (especially in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 6, 7 and *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 3, 7). Chauvet works toward a more biblically focused expression of the essential bond that joins Eucharistic worship to the unity of the Church. He seeks to recover relationship between Christ and the Church in the Eucharist as it appears in the theological tradition of the “threefold body of Christ” (1 Cor 11: 27-34). The consecrated bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ, his sacramental body, and both serve as signs that point to the building and consecration of the ecclesial body. In this way, Chauvet brings out the eschatological nature of Christian union with Christ in the Eucharist. The Church is thus understood as the continuation of the presence of Christ in the world and as an embodiment of the very promise of eschatological future.

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<sup>100</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 252.

<sup>101</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 260.

<sup>102</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 453.

<sup>103</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 465. See also Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 139.

Fifthly, Chauvet recognizes that “creation is itself charged with sacramentality”<sup>104</sup> and that the profane state of the world and of history is regarded as “the possible sacramental place of a sacred history.”<sup>105</sup> This yields a greater understanding of the interconnection of the sacraments and ecological theology, in a manner which speaks to contemporary consciousness. Sacramental vision and ecological responsibility go hand in hand. The fulfilment of eschatological hope calls for reverence for the material world, the environment and for the diversity of forms of life.

These are some of the ways in which Chauvet’s eschatological perspective suggests certain imbalances in the traditional sacramental approach and enriches Christian theology from an original perspective. However, there are some aspects in his approach that need further integration and development.

First, regarding the hermeneutics of eschatological assertions, there is a consensus in contemporary Catholic thought that the Christian faith in its ultimate meaning and fullness is best expressed in the two eschatological symbols, the Kingdom of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>106</sup> Whatever we know about eschatology, we know in and through what happens to Jesus in his death and resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation upon which we build our eschatological thought. In this context, Chauvet rightly claims, “the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus and of the gift of his promised Spirit marks the inauguration of the last days.”<sup>107</sup> He then presses for an understanding of Easter and Pentecost as the starting point for his discussion on the eschatological status of the Christian worship. But he has not examined the concept of the Kingdom of God in detail either from a biblical or an eschatological standpoint. Although Chauvet grounds Christian hope in the resurrection of Christ, he does not explore the relationship between the Eucharist and the Kingdom. If the Eucharist is approached as God’s pledge for the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom in Christ, it is important to understand how Christian hope becomes more active, gives birth to creative human activity and finds ways of preparing the

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<sup>104</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 551.

<sup>105</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 554.

<sup>106</sup> See Zachary Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 146. See also Peter C. Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (New York/ Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>107</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

world for its final fulfilment. The message and attitude of Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God must form a part of eschatology.

Secondly, Chauvet's analysis of the relation between sacrament and ethics is significant and helpful. From the outset he clarifies that his eschatological approach to Christian worship focuses on a single question: "How can we avoid the temptation to oppose ethical practice and ritual practice without yielding to the reverse temptation to reduce the tension that must remain between them?"<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, a question arises: Does Christian worship start with the neighbour and not God? Is the Christian community defined by identifying with something beyond itself, something for which it is always striving? Is morality the criterion for Christian liturgy? One is left wondering about the objective nature of the reality that nourishes, empowers and transforms us, which is the whole basis of the sacrament, and is not primarily our own moral achievement.

While sacrament and ethics are properly seen as closely connected, we face a danger of exemplarism, in which Jesus is simply our example, with ethics understood as the "imitation of Christ." Christian life is at risk of being assessed only by heroic discipleship and good works. Such a view, taken to its extreme, can fall into a burdened activism or moralism, always striving but also conscious of failings. The critical factor here is the presence of the Risen Christ that makes the Eucharist possible. We express it in terms of grace, the work of the Spirit, or the empowering presence of Christ. In other words, the focus on human response in terms of ethics needs to be balanced by a focus on the initiative of God's Spirit in transforming Christians.

The significance of the Eucharist is, above all, a gift from God which Christians celebrate as an anticipation of renewed fellowship in the eschatological Kingdom. The gift of grace is commissioned to a practice of discipleship. The Eucharist liberates Christians for the praise and service of God in the world, encouraging anticipatory realizations of God's coming Kingdom of justice and peace. In brief, the Eucharist is an event of divine presence and communion due to the work of the Spirit. In this way,

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<sup>108</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 228.

it has profound significance for Christian ethics and for the mission of the Christian community in the world.

## 7.7 Conclusion

In Chauvet's reflection on the eschatological dimension of Christian worship we find a shift in both content and method in sacramental theology. There is a shift from a largely apologetic and dogmatic understanding of sacraments, dominated by the static, a-historical categories of the classical approach, toward a more historical and critical conception of theology. The sacraments are not described in the categories of metaphysics, but rather in the symbolic order. In returning to the biblical data, especially to the historic-prophetic dimension of the Jewish worship, he retrieves the essential bond that joins the historical and glorious body of Christ to his Eucharistic and ecclesial body. His study elaborates the significant combination of sacramental theology, ecclesiology, theories of ritual and symbol, and liturgical texts.

From this perspective, he proceeds to emphasize that the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus and of the gift of his promised Spirit marks the inauguration of the "Last days."<sup>109</sup> Chauvet's theological position has much in common with that of the contemporary Catholic teaching. The Second Vatican Council also has a strong eschatological perspective. For example, the *Constitution on the Church* clearly states that the eschaton will come about by the agency of Christ, his life-giving Spirit and the Church:

Christ lifted up from the earth, has drawn all men to himself (cf. Jn 12:32). Rising from the dead (cf. Rom 6:9) he sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through him set up his Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Sitting at the right hand of the Father he is continually active in the world in order to lead men to the Church and, through it, join them more closely to himself; and, by nourishing them with his own Body and Blood, make them partakers of his glorious life. The promised and hoped for restoration, therefore, has already begun in Christ. It is carried forward in the sending of the Holy Spirit and through him continues in the Church in which, through our faith, we learn the meaning of our earthly life, while we bring to

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<sup>109</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.

term, with hope of future good, the task allotted to us in the world by the Father, and so work out our salvation (cf. Phil 2:12).<sup>110</sup>

Such a position marks a starting point for Christian eschatology. The promised future has already begun in Christ and continues through the Spirit in the Church, and Christ and the Holy Spirit act in conjunction with each other in mutual service for the eschatological fulfilment. What Chauvet presents, however inchoatively is convincing, and is a valuable challenge. In proposing that sacramentality is essential to Christian identity, he shows how Christian worship is the locus where Scripture, sacrament and ethics are realized, as experience of the presence of the Risen Christ whose grace transforms the Christian community.

Chauvet's eschatological approach to Christian worship, deriving from the prophetic tradition and postmodern thought, has provided us with a considerable insight about what it means to celebrate the Eucharist as the ritual memory, not only of the past but also a promise of and an ethical commitment to a future. To celebrate the Eucharist is to become the living memory of Jesus in the world, with tangible ethical ramifications.

After examining the interconnection between the Eucharist and eschatology in the theologies of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, we find that, whatever variations in expression, there is a consensus throughout these explorations that it is by communion in the body and blood of the Risen Christ that the Christian community come to share in the hope of his resurrection and in the eschatological gift of eternal glory. It is the Eucharist, as the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, which keeps hope and promise alive. We turn now to consider more closely the similarities and differences in these five approaches.

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<sup>110</sup> Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 48, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 407-408.

## Chapter 8      **Points of Convergence and Divergence in these Five Approaches to the Eschatological Dimension of the Eucharist**

### 8.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters illustrate the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist from different theological perspectives and starting points. They provide a rich resource for the retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. What we see in these theologies can be described as a challenge to the traditional approach to the Eucharist. Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet endeavour to open the way to a fuller consideration of what it means to celebrate the Paschal Mystery in the Eucharist through an active memory that draws the complexities of the historical world into the memory of the future advent of Christ. We come now to compare and contrasts these theologies.

For Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, the Eucharist is itself essentially eschatological, incorporating both the present and future, the prophetic and apocalyptic aspects of Christian eschatology. All authors firmly state that the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of his promised Spirit mark the inauguration of the “last things.” This is because Christ is the “end” of history.<sup>1</sup> Precisely in the eschatological significance of Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, the Christian memory is eschatological: it is memory of the future, and it impacts the present through sacramental anticipation.<sup>2</sup> There is, therefore, in the Eucharist a movement towards the future coming of Christ in glory, a straining “forward to what lies ahead” (Phil 3:13). The future is, however, from God, transcending anything we predict or control. So what we celebrate in the Eucharist

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<sup>1</sup> See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1978), F.X. Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, trans. S. Attanasio (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1974), Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, trans. Rene Hague (London: Collins, 1976), H. U. von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. A. Nichols (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), H. U. von Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, trans. T. Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979), Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239. See also John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 180.

now is but a foretaste and a prefiguration of what is to come, when God brings history to its conclusion and fulfilment.

This chapter will highlight the general features of these related theologies, and then consider more closely the similarities and differences between them. We shall consider the eschatological dimensions of the Eucharist in terms of the following themes:

- The Eucharist as anticipation of the *Eschaton*
- The Eucharist as eschatological presence
- The Eucharist as memorial of the Paschal Mystery
- The Trinitarian dimension of the Eucharist
- The Eucharist and the mystery of the Church
- The Eucharist and the principles of Christian ethics

## **8.2 The Eucharist as anticipation of the *Eschaton***

The eschatological meaning of the Eucharist can be understood in terms of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the messianic hope, and of the Lord's Supper as the culmination and realization of Jesus Christ's mission in bringing the Kingdom of God into reality. The New Testament tells the story of the Eucharist in a narrative of meals, using a variety of images to highlight its eschatological dimension.<sup>3</sup> The synoptic writers in particular highlight the focus on the meal, and they speak of the bread and the cup of the covenant, a reference to the eschatological new covenant described in Exodus 24:8-11 and as evoked by Jeremiah 31:31-34. "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25; Mt 26:29; Lk 22:18).<sup>4</sup> So at the moment of approaching his death, the manner in which Christ gives himself to his disciples in establishing a new covenant community in his blood anticipates the future glory and the fulfilment of all creation. Here we shall highlight three related points.

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<sup>3</sup> See Raymond Moloney, "Eucharist," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 344-345.

<sup>4</sup> Moloney, "Eucharist," 352.

### 8.2.1 The Eucharist as the eschatological banquet

As a memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord's Supper lies at the very heart of eschatological hope for "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," for the consummation of God's purposes for the world of creation, and for the completion of our human journey in perfect communion with God. Here, despite differences in perspective and approach, we can detect a significant convergence in the differing approaches of our authors, especially among Wainwright, Durrwell and von Balthasar. They all consider the Eucharist, not so much as a memorial of Christ's saving work in the past or in the present fruits of communion, but as an anticipation of the future messianic banquet in the completed Kingdom.

- In Wainwright's theology, for instance, the Eucharist is understood as eschatological reality in terms of the messianic feast (*Antepast*), the advent of Christ (*Maranatha*) and the first fruits of the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>
- Wainwright claims that the Eucharist is the meal of the Kingdom, a meeting place for Christians to share in the one body of Christ. He is "food, table-fellow and host"<sup>6</sup> for those who already participate in, and yet await, the perfect reign of God.
- The Eucharist is, therefore, "the reality-filled promise to be eaten in hope of the final Kingdom."<sup>7</sup> Christians take part in this communion of life here and now in the Eucharist to the extent that they allow themselves to be nourished by God from God's very being.
- Like Wainwright, Durrwell understands that all Jesus's preaching on the Kingdom finds its summit and its "point of crystallization"<sup>8</sup> in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Since the Last Supper takes place within the context of Passover time, the Eucharist intimately links the mission and ministry of Jesus, as well as his death and destiny, with the eschatological advent of the Kingdom.

<sup>5</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>7</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58. For Wainwright, the Eucharistic meal expresses both the continuity and the difference that mark the relation between the present and the future forms of the Kingdom. It is Christ who feeds the Christian community at his table. Ultimate reality is, however, glimpsed by the eyes of faith.

<sup>8</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14.



- Von Balthasar, by comparison, recognizes that the Eucharist is a spontaneous gift in view of the Passion, in which Christ offers his disciples a foretaste of the wine of the Kingdom, when their hunger and thirst will finally be satisfied in the eschatological banquet.<sup>9</sup>

What Christ offers in the Eucharist is, according to Wainwright, Durrwell and von Balthasar, already the gift of eternal life, which Christ fully intends to complete at his final coming. It awaits, therefore, the fulfilment of God's creative intent for humanity and all creation.

### **8.2.2 The Eucharist as the body of the Risen Lord**

In Wainwright, Durrwell and von Balthasar, we find a particularly strong emphasis on the significance of the Eucharist as meal of the Kingdom. These authors focus on the paschal nature of the Eucharist. For their part, Martelet and Chauvet understand the Eucharist primarily in the context of the resurrection.

- Martelet recognises that, while the saving death of Jesus Christ is commemorated, it is his risen life that is communicated, primarily through the Spirit who is the bond between the Eucharist and the resurrection. Christ has entered into a "cosmic birth," that is, "a birth wholly made over to life, over which death will never again have any hold, since it will rest upon the Lord's absolute sovereignty over the universe and death."<sup>10</sup>
- The Kingdom is thus the new birth into the Cosmic Christ; and it is the Eucharist that brings Christians into effective relationship with both Christ and the Kingdom. The Eucharist, Martelet says, is the Risen One; "it is the risen person himself become our food."<sup>11</sup>
- Chauvet's position is similar to Martelet's. He explores the eschatological meaning of the Eucharist in terms of Christ's power to transform all creation

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<sup>9</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 96.

<sup>10</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 79.

<sup>11</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. Martelet argues that "if Christ is not risen, the Eucharist is in vain, and its supper is a hollow void." The bread, which nourishes and the wine, which quenches thirst, are, in the Eucharist, the flesh and blood of the risen Christ. 12.

by the gift of the Spirit: “the eschaton is a moment constitutive of the Pasch of the Lord; it speaks the future of his Resurrection in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

Christian worship is then an unfolding of the power of the Risen Lord, already at work within history. In other words, the Christ of the resurrection and the Christ of the Eucharist are one and the same. Because the Eucharist is resurrectional, it is eschatological.

### 8.2.3 The Eucharist as the eschatological advent of Christ

Our authors agree that the Eucharist points to the fullness of salvation beyond the present, with the bread and wine anticipating the fullness of Christ’s self-giving love in the heavenly banquet. In this perspective, the Eucharist is not only an anamnesis of the past but also always an announcement and celebration of the future.<sup>13</sup> Since Christ is the centre of God’s plan of salvation, and the resurrection of Christ is the centrepiece of eschatology, the Eucharist is a point of convergence between Christ who is to come again, and Christ already present redeeming the now.

- Here Wainwright suggests that the Eucharistic celebration is anchored in the present experience of salvation but looks to the community of the final Kingdom, praising God, in a new creation totally filled with divine glory.<sup>14</sup> Because of the intimate relationship between the glorification of Christ and his final coming, Christ is always “the One who comes” (Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:17, 11:3; Lk 4:14-30; Jn 11:27).
- For Durrwell, too, Jesus never ceases to proclaim his coming. When Jesus predicts his passion, the theme of the resurrection is implicitly introduced in the New Testament as an interpretation of his coming in glory (Mt 26:64; 28:18).
- Wainwright expresses a similar insight: “the Eucharistic meal expresses both the continuity and the difference that mark the relation between the present and

<sup>12</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

Chauvet stresses that the eschaton is the final manifestation of the resurrecting force of Christ from now on transfiguring humanity by the gift of the Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239. See also Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 180.

<sup>14</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 95.

the future forms of the Kingdom, between its earthly and its heavenly forms.”<sup>15</sup> The Eucharistic meal is a real taste of the heavenly banquet but not its fullness.

This focus on the Eucharist as an anticipation of the future is, moreover, evident in writings of Martelet and von Balthasar who describe the Eucharist as the marriage-feast of the Kingdom,<sup>16</sup> the consummation of all sacral and cultic meals of humanity, and as “essential communion with the cosmos and, through it, with divinity.”<sup>17</sup>

- Here Martelet and von Balthasar are more inclined than the other authors to exploit images of the heavenly city of God, the new heaven and earth, and the life in the plenitude of God.
- As Martelet expresses it, the Eucharist reminds us of our future destiny in Christ, who “takes the elements of the world which *historically* symbolize with us in time as our culture works upon them, and makes it possible for them to symbolize *eschatologically* with him through the truth of his resurrection. He gives this double world-element the power to become and *to be* for us, here and now, what the whole world will become and *will be*, in virtue of glory, at the time of the Parousia.”<sup>18</sup>
- For von Balthasar, it is the recognition of the final fulfilment of salvation as a marriage feast, as already present in the Eucharist, that keeps Christian hope alive within the earthly community of faith, for “the Bridegroom Christ has found the Bride Church (Jn 3:29).”<sup>19</sup>
- Like Martelet and von Balthasar, Chauvet is profoundly aware of the relationship between the Eucharist and the future advent of Christ, but with a different emphasis. For him, the Eucharist speaks of “the eschatological *in-between* time, that is, the time of an *already*, but qualified by a *not yet*.”<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>16</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, trans. E. Leiva-Merikakis, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 571.

<sup>18</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 175.

<sup>19</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 126-127.

<sup>20</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 555. See also Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” *Theology Digest* 48.1 (2001), 6, 9.

Eucharist and other sacraments are the “witnesses of a God who is never finished with coming.”<sup>21</sup>

- The Eucharist, therefore, belongs to the essential meaning of eschatological hope as a symbolic expression of the time between the final fulfilment of salvation and what inaugurates its fulfilment in history.

The Eucharist thus emerges as a foretaste of heaven, a glimpse of the heavenly banquet to come. It is the eschatological meal by which Christians share in the life of the resurrection. The Christian community experiences the future fulfilment of the Kingdom, “already” in an anticipatory way, as it welcomes the eschatological gift of the Spirit drawing us into communion with Christ and with one another. At the same time the Eucharist is the memory of the future, the experience of salvation to come in all its fullness at the Parousia.

### 8.3 The Eucharist as eschatological presence

Vatican II, in its Constitution on the Liturgy, spoke of the Eucharistic presence of Christ as manifold.<sup>22</sup> In different modes, Christ is really, personally present and active in the gathered community, in the presider and ministers of the assembly, in the proclamation of the Scriptures, and in the sharing of the transformed bread and wine. Further, this manifold presence is creative of the future. In this regard, there is also, however, a certain “incompleteness” of Christ’s presence, a real “absence” that makes the Church long for the advent of the reign of God. In this perspective, the theologians we are considering speak of the Eucharistic presence as dynamic and developmental in a threefold sense. Firstly, the mystery of the Eucharist reveals the presence of Christ in the bread and wine as the glorified body of Christ, who is the head of the Church

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<sup>21</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 555. The liturgical exclamation of the Church, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (1 Corinthians 16:22; Revelations 22: 21), containing a polarity of the “already” and the “not yet” of the advent of Christ is thus constitutive of the anamnesis of the Eucharist: the memory of the future “once and for all” in the light of the past and in the reality of the present.

<sup>22</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par. 7, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (New York, Dublin: Costello Publishing Company and Dominican Publications, 1998), 4-5. On the doctrine of Christ’s manifold presence, see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1373-1374 (Homebush, N.S.W.: St Pauls, 1995), 346. For an overview of the development of this doctrine and a survey of its presence in recent eucharistic theology, see Michael G. Witczak, “The Manifold Presence of Christ in the Liturgy,” *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), 680-702.

and its final fulfilment (Col 1:15-20). Secondly, the mode of Christ's presence is, in the permanent actuality of his resurrection, a personal encounter within the sacramental or symbolic reality proper to faith. Thirdly, the Eucharist is the eschatological coming into history of the new world. This is the distinctive "already" and "not yet" character of the Eucharist as eschatological presence in the mode of promise.

### 8.3.1 The eschatological aspect of Eucharistic presence

Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet each touch upon problems associated with the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. Wainwright is opposed to speaking about the Eucharistic presence and change. However, despite many differences in the other respects, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet recognize that the criticisms of the doctrine of transubstantiation do not mean a denial of a distinctive presence of Christ in the Eucharist, nor the radical change in the bread and wine, but rather they concern the weaknesses in the explanation of the traditional theology. Our authors, particularly Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, seek to express more adequately the traditional understanding of Eucharistic presence in a new and more helpful way, in terms of interpersonal encounter and of the risen Christ as the eschaton, in his terminal finality with regard to the creation and, in particular, to the bread and wine of the sacrament.

- For Durrwell, in his rejection of the traditional metaphysics of substance and accidents, the Eucharistic presence does not annihilate the reality of bread and wine but rather elevates them to their transcendent, eschatological perfection.<sup>23</sup>
- By being transformed into Christ's body and blood, the bread and wine are not less than they were previously, but fully and finally what they are meant to be, namely the "real food and real drink" (Jn 6:55).
- Martelet conceives of the Eucharistic presence in much the same way as Durrwell, though his focus is more on the resurrection. In the Eucharist the change is so radical that the bread and wine become in reality the risen

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<sup>23</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 89-113.

humanity of Christ. They no longer exist in themselves, but begin to exist as the effective signs of Christ's Body and Blood.

- Martelet makes a further point: the mystery of transubstantiation of the bread and wine is not just an isolated mystery; it is part of the transformed structure of the world that results from the resurrection.<sup>24</sup>
- For his part, Durrwell develops an understanding of the Eucharist in all its diverse aspects as the real presence of the Risen Lord who "acts in His eschatological power, in the power that He exercises as terminus and fullness of the world."<sup>25</sup>
- Rather like Durrwell and Martelet who understand the transubstantiation of the bread and wine as part of the new creation, symbolizing what the whole universe is ultimately to become, von Balthasar understands that "transubstantiation is a road to the goal."<sup>26</sup>

For Durrwell, Martelet and von Balthasar, then, the Christ of glory who is to come is already and really present with us in the Eucharist.

### 8.3.2 Eucharist presence as symbolic and personal encounter

More in tune with postmodern thinking, Chauvet proceeds to draw attention to the symbolic reality of the bread when he states, "not only can one no longer say but one must no longer say, 'This bread is no longer bread.'"<sup>27</sup>

- Here Chauvet is more concerned with the rich symbolism of bread to ensure that "this bread is the body of Christ, to emphasize all the more that the bread is indeed still 'bread.'"<sup>28</sup> The Eucharistic body of Christ is, therefore, bread *par excellence*, that is, the true bread of life broken and shared for the life of the world.

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<sup>24</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. Martelet understands the transubstantiation of the bread and wine as "encircled by a halo of divinisation...that extends to the whole universe." 173.

<sup>25</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27-28.

<sup>26</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 573.

<sup>27</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 400.

<sup>28</sup> See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 400-401. In other words, the earthly realities of bread and wine are never more bread and wine as in the mystery of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the Risen Christ offers himself and identifies himself with the bread and wine, expressing his total self-giving to God and to the world.

- Being acutely aware of the limits of metaphysical conceptuality, Chauvet acknowledges that the analysis of transubstantiation is neither an absolute nor the only path possible.<sup>29</sup>
- He approaches the mystery of the Eucharistic presence by way of symbolism that “is the exemplary expression of the resistance of God’s mystery to every attempt by the subject to appropriate it.”<sup>30</sup>
- We cannot “conceive the *esse* of Christ in the Eucharist without the relation of his *ad-esse* to the Church, to the celebrating community, to the believing subjects for whom it is destined.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the Eucharistic presence is destined in its entirety for a communion of life.
- This theological approach thus recognizes that the symbolic order is the proper and necessary mediation of the reality of Christ’s self-gift in the Eucharist as personal and relational presence, a dynamic and “being-for” presence.<sup>32</sup>

There are some clear similarities between Chauvet’s position and those of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and von Balthasar in regard to the significance of Christ’s Eucharistic presence as personal and relational. Despite their different emphases and expression, the theologies of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and von Balthasar have much in common.

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<sup>29</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 383. Chauvet is not trying to do away with metaphysics but rather to recognize its limits and limiting quality. As he expresses it, “One could only be suspicious of such language, judged insufficiently ‘realistic.’ In the perspective of the Aristotelian ‘substance’ as the expression of the *ultimate reality* of entities, one could express the integrality and radicalness of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament only by putting between parentheses, at least during the analysis of the ‘how’ of Eucharistic conversion, its relation to the Church.” 389. A similar insight can be found in Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). Marion proposes an approach to God, not with the metaphysical notion of Being, but rather with love or agape revealed in and as Christ. As he expresses it, “If, to begin with, ‘God is love,’ then God loves before being. He only is as He embodies himself – in order to love more closely that which and those who themselves have first to be.” xx-xxi.

<sup>30</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 383. In offering an alternative to the concept of ‘substance,’ which implies in our modern scientific mind something of the physical and chemical components, Chauvet presses further than Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and von Balthasar.

<sup>31</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 389.

<sup>32</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Chauvet explains, “we cannot be content here, under the pretext of ‘realism,’ to imagine the reality at issue as the simple *esse* of a subsistent entity; the relation must be conceived precisely as ‘presence,’ that is, as *being-for, being toward*. In other terms, the *esse* is *constitutively ad-esse*.”392.

- They speak of the Eucharistic presence in terms of mutuality and encounter between Christ and the Christian community. For Wainwright, for instance, the Eucharistic presence of Christ is an extension of [his] personality.<sup>33</sup>
- The bread and wine, he claims, are the extended personality of Christ in the sense that Christ take hold of them and make use of their bodiliness to offer to us his self-gift of love.<sup>34</sup>
- For Durrwell, because in the paschal event Christ is raised to the fullness of glory of the divine Son (Col 1:19), so he is truly present in the Eucharist as the *Eschaton* who is personally coming to us.<sup>35</sup> Such is the distinctive focus of Durrwell.

While Durrwell speaks of the Eucharistic Christ as the eschatological One, Martelet and von Balthasar claim that the true personal presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the event of eating and drinking, which gives bread and wine their meaning as human symbols.

- Martelet explains, “Through and in the Eucharist...it was Christ once again seating himself among them, eating and drinking with them, giving himself to them as nourishment.”<sup>36</sup>
- Similarly, von Balthasar states, “the Beloved who died for us becomes alive and present for us in the midst of our remembering...to partake with us a common meal in which he is himself both the host and the food that is served.”<sup>37</sup>
- Here, all our authors, but particularly Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and von Balthasar, interpret the risen body of Christ as Eucharistic, and therefore identify the Eucharistic presence as the real “encounter of Christ and the Church in the act of the meal.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 109.

<sup>34</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 110. For Wainwright, here by serving perfectly Christ's purpose, the bread and wine, therefore, become the firstfruits of the renewed creation.

<sup>35</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 27, 49. Durrwell's position is to retrieve the significance of Christ of the resurrection as the “beloved of the Father” (Jn 10:17) that the Church encounters in the Eucharist.

<sup>36</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 573.

<sup>38</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 573.



In this way, what Christians now experience in the Eucharist, through the gifts of bread and wine as the firstfruits of the new creation, the body of the Risen Lord, is the real presence of the Christian future.

### 8.3.3 Eucharistic presence in the mode of promise

The bread and wine of the Eucharist become part of the new cosmos, and symbolize what the whole world of God's creation is to become. This insight can be pursued further by acknowledging that the Eucharist is Christ's presence in the mode of promise of what is yet to come in a way that cannot be calculated or manipulated.<sup>39</sup> As Chauvet observes, Christ's Eucharistic presence is essentially different from modes of presence only applicable to finite and intra-worldly objects. The Eucharist "proclaims the irreducibility of God, of Christ...to our concepts, discourses, ideologies, and experiences."<sup>40</sup> The Eucharist discloses, even as it reveals, the mystery and otherness of the Risen Christ, since the dynamic of this presence is an eschatological one, generated by the Spirit as the beginning of Christ's fully manifest presence in glory.

- While eschatology is the primary context, Chauvet understands it in a manner that respects the radical absence or otherness of the Risen Christ as he is recognized symbolically in the Eucharistic sharing.
- For this very reason, the "absence" here is "the presence of the hidden plenitude of what...is and what...Jesus named the divine."<sup>41</sup> Thus, Chauvet

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<sup>39</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Christ's presence in the mode of promise "comes up at the heart of a prayer of which the movement goes from the memory of the past in thanksgiving to the memory of the future in eschatological supplication." 391.

<sup>40</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 403. See also Louis-Marie Chauvet, "The Broken Bread as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence," *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (Leuven: University Press, 2001). For Chauvet, the Eucharistic presence of Christ is the great symbol of the prohibition against idolatry, since he argues, "idolatry resides in the reduction of God to the conditions of the experience which one says to have gained of Him." Chauvet stresses that far "from coming under the status of idol, the Eucharist comes under that of the icon, being understood that this later intends to preserve the alterity of what it yet wants to allow to be seen." Yet without reducing the theology of the Eucharist to the theology of the icon, since for Chauvet, "the link between the signifier and the signified is not at all the same in both cases." For this reason, he claims that we "can grant to eucharistic presence a status of icon in difference from the status of idol. In this way we are theoretically on guard against all imaginary holds on the presence of Christ." 257-258.

<sup>41</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 62.

can speak of the presence of the absence of Christ in the Eucharist as actually identical with a mystery far beyond human ability to grasp, that is, in terms of the “not yet,” the not yet of the “hidden coming of its inexhaustible being.”<sup>42</sup>

- Durrwell notes at one point that since Christ enters into the stream of our human existence “only in the measure to which he is its terminus...His presence, however real, will never be anything but one coming.”<sup>43</sup>
- In contrast to Chauvet’s emphasis on the absence, Durrwell stresses that the Eucharist may be seen as imperfect presence,<sup>44</sup> for the Parousia still expresses a coming; it is a presence in the making.
- Martelet is explicit that since the Eucharist is unfinished until it transforms all of the cosmos and humanity, it is a symbol of the presence and absence of the Risen Christ.

In short, all the theologians discussed move beyond the traditional philosophical and theological framework. All understand that Christ is personally present with the Christian assembly in the Eucharist as the sacrament of the *Eschaton*.<sup>45</sup> His presence displays a mode of openness, so that, as Chauvet puts it, Christ’s presence “cannot be enclosed in an intra-mundane being, for the reason of the concept of presence as well as for the reason of its eschatological and pneumatic character.”<sup>46</sup> Hence the Eucharistic presence is necessarily an advent: “in its very essence, it is arrival.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, since this presence is eschatological, it is always a *coming-into-*

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<sup>42</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 62, 549, and 555. See also Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 8,9. Chauvet argues for the Eucharistic presence as eschatological within this “absence in a presence,” that is, as a gift absolutely gracious and “always in excess.” As previously discussed, the major issue for Chauvet is the search for the eschatological meaning of both the Eucharist and the Church as “traces” of the God who is on the move; and therefore we are always on a “transitive” way, journeying rather than in possession.

<sup>43</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24,47. See F. X. Durrwell, *L’eucharistie, Sacrement Pascal* (Paris: Cerf, 1981). For Durrwell, Christ’s presence, however real, will never be anything but one coming. This faith and this experience are, as Durrwell notes, “illustrated in the narrative of the pilgrims of Emmaus in which the heart of the disciples is in the joy of the presence, in which they recognize the Lord ‘in the breaking of the bread’ (Luke 24:35).” Yet the presence is “still veiled, but it bears in itself the promise of plenitude and thus arouses the desire: Maranatha! (1 Corinthians 16:22).” 52.

<sup>45</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 117-118.

<sup>46</sup> See Chauvet, “The Broken Bread as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence,” 258, 259.

<sup>47</sup> See Chauvet, “The Broken Bread as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence,” 258, 259.

presence,<sup>48</sup> and thereby points to the full manifestation of Christ's living presence with us in the final Kingdom.

#### 8.4 The Eucharist as memorial of the Paschal Mystery

A far richer and more eschatologically meaningful Eucharistic theology results when the Eucharist is approached primarily in light of the Paschal Mystery, identifying the Eucharistic Christ with the Risen Christ. So the first point, which Durrwell and Von Balthasar make in reflecting upon the mystery of the Eucharist, is that it is called *Paschale mysterium*,<sup>49</sup> the Mystery of Easter.<sup>50</sup>

- For both theologians, the whole Eucharistic celebration, in the writings of St. Paul particularly, is permeated with the Paschal Mystery (1 Cor 11:26). As von Balthasar expresses it, the Eucharist is the perpetual, eternal self-offering of Christ to God on behalf of humankind.<sup>51</sup>
- It is, in a certain way, the absolute gift of Christ's self-giving love, expressive of his identity as the divine Son and of his own freedom, for it is offered with Christ's perfect consent.

In this way, Durrwell and von Balthasar draw on the Gospel of John to consider the whole significance of the mystery of Jesus Christ as a passage towards his resurrection. They understand this passage as the "hour" for which Jesus was always preparing (John 2:4; 12:27).

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<sup>48</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Chauvet argues that the Eucharist and the sacraments speak of the eschatological in-between time. It is, as he writes, "the time of an 'already,' but qualified by a 'not yet'... Sacraments are the bearers of the joy of the 'already' and the distress of the 'not yet.' They are the *witnesses of a God who is never finished with coming*: the amazed witnesses of a God who comes continually; the patient witnesses, patient unto weariness at times, of a God who 'is' not here except by mode of passage. And of this passage, the sacraments are the trace..." 555.

<sup>49</sup> See Durrwell, *L'eucharistie, Sacrement Pascal*, 35

<sup>50</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 95. See also Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 113.

<sup>51</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 392.

- It is the “paschal hour,”<sup>52</sup> and is itself eschatological, “in that it goes *eis telos*, to the final end of love” (John 13:1; 19:14).<sup>53</sup> In the “hour” the unique work of the Cross is thus fulfilled and accepted by God at the resurrection.
- For von Balthasar, in particular, Christ will be forever “the slain Lamb, on the throne of the Father’s glory, and his Eucharist...will never be abolished.”<sup>54</sup>
- Thus the Eucharist can be celebrated only by the Church in community with Christ in his Paschal Mystery and in participation in his self-surrender. The Eucharist is, in this sense, a genuine sacrament of the eternal paschal meal, the realisation of the Kingdom of God in Christ.

While Durrwell and von Balthasar attend to the Eucharist as memorial of Christ’s Pasch, a communion in his death and resurrection, Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet stress that the Eucharist is the fruit of a death, which is integrated in the resurrection-dynamism.<sup>55</sup>

- These theologians refer to the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, the day of the Lord.<sup>56</sup> They find evidence for the significance of Sunday in the New Testament.<sup>57</sup>
- They insist that, in the Eucharist, the Christian community participates in the eternal movement of Christ towards God. Traditionally, as Chauvet further comments, Sunday is also regarded as the “eighth day,”<sup>58</sup> which brings out the eschatological character of this day in that it symbolizes an overflow or excess of what is already completed.

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<sup>52</sup> See Durrwell, *L’eucharistie, Sacrement Pascal*, 36-37. For Durrwell, the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ in his death, resurrection and coming in glory, that is, in his Paschal Mystery. According to the Gospel of John, the whole life of Jesus Christ unfolds a path toward the Resurrection. Jesus himself appeals to his “hour” in order to justify his claims, so that his disciples might understand his words and the paschal moment by reckoning from his glorification. See also Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 10-11.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, ix.

<sup>55</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 74-75.

<sup>57</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 76-78.

<sup>58</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 258-259.

For Chauvet, the Church is the new temple of God, the “body of Christ” which Christians constitute, where God has chosen to make God’s home. What the Church carries out on Sunday, the Day of the Lord in gathering for thanksgiving and the breaking of bread is indeed a sacrifice acceptable to God inasmuch as it is the fulfilment of the “pure sacrifice” announced by the prophets in the Old Testament. See also Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 4.

- In other words, for the Christian community, the joy of salvation has already begun in the Eucharist, and so new life has been already given. The certainty of the resurrection, according to Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet, is the essential religious motive of the Eucharist.
- Since salvation is a participation in the new world inaugurated by Christ's Passover, Chauvet makes a further point: Christians celebrate in remembrance of the death-resurrection-parousia of Jesus Christ as one mystery.<sup>59</sup>
- He maintains that, beyond the death and resurrection of Christ, the Paschal Mystery includes the whole eschatological significance of Christ, which stretches from the beginning of his human existence to his final coming in glory.
- In the ancient liturgical tradition of the Fifty Days, both Pentecost and the Parousia are an integral part of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as its interior dimension of fulfilment, the Parousia belongs to Christ's Pasch.

According to these five theologies, the Paschal Mystery is the context in which the Christian community remembers the death-resurrection-parousia of Christ. Christians can offer no other sacrifice to God than the crucified and glorified Christ, the true Paschal Lamb.<sup>61</sup> As the Lord's Supper, the meal shared with the Risen Christ, the Eucharist is incomplete without the promise of fulfilment. The reality of the crucified and Risen Christ is thus celebrated in the Eucharist as "the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5), and "the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor 15:20). In effect, the Eucharist is revelatory of the Paschal Mystery.

### 8.5 The Trinitarian dimension of the Eucharist

Seeking a fuller appreciation of the Eucharist as eschatological sacrament, all our authors are explicitly Trinitarian in their respective approaches. Since the Christian

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<sup>59</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>60</sup> Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7. See also Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. According to the synoptic Gospels, Chauvet claims that "by both the tearing of the heavens and the tearing of the Temple curtain a new status for cult, inaugurated by the pascal and Pentecostal fulfilment of the promise, is theologically expressed... If Jesus is the Christ of God and if in raising him from the dead and allowing him to pour out the Spirit of the promise, God manifested him as the salvation offered to all humankind." 249.

<sup>61</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*. For Balthasar, here in this perspective, "lies the whole meaning of the sacrifice of the Mass." 399.

community comes together to celebrate and to participate in the eschatological coming into history of God's eternal glory, the Eucharist is described as an event of salvation involving the Father, the Son and the Spirit.<sup>62</sup>

### 8.5.1 The Eucharist as commemoration of the Trinitarian event

The Eucharist is, especially as Durrwell and von Balthasar describe it, "a Trinitarian mystery."<sup>63</sup> It is an expression of the creativity of the three divine persons in God's self-giving. Each author, but particularly Durrwell and von Balthasar, perceive that the Eucharist is, through its connection with the Paschal Mystery, a commemoration of the Trinitarian event. The Christian community gives thanks to the Father in Christ, crucified and raised, through the power of the Spirit.

- In the Eucharist, Christ reveals his identity as the Son. His love for the Father shows the Father's love to the world. He places himself in the Father's hands in order to be glorified by the Father.
- Von Balthasar further notes that in the Eucharist it is "the Father who gives his Son's Body for the world through the unitive mediation of the Spirit; this Body is given up through divine love more than through the world's hatred."<sup>64</sup>
- In this sense, the self-giving of Christ, taken as a whole, derives from the Father who "loved the world so much that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). In giving his Son to the world, the Father is giving what is most intimately his own.
- Durrwell makes the same point when he speaks of the Eucharistic event in which Christ gives himself to the very end. In this perspective, Christ's love in the Eucharist expresses the very nature and character of the Trinitarian God's self-communication to us.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Our authors also attempt to show that the whole Paschal Mystery of Christ, celebrated in the Eucharist, is a supreme revelation of the Trinitarian God. When the Eucharist is set in the context of the Paschal Mystery, it bears witness to the complementary action of Christ and the Spirit in their respective missions from the Father.

<sup>63</sup> Durrwell, *L'eucharistie, Sacrement Pascal*, 65.

<sup>64</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: The Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison, vol. 5 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 477. See also Marc Ouellet, "Trinity and Eucharist: A Covenantal Mystery," *Communio* 27.2 (2000), 275.

<sup>65</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

Von Balthasar explores in relatively greater depth the interconnection of the Eucharist and the inner-divine life of the Father, Son, and Spirit. While Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and Chauvet present the Trinitarian structure of the Eucharist, von Balthasar places a special emphasis on the very being of Christ as the *Eucharistic*, the *thankful* Son from all eternity.

- In the inner life of God, the Son receives the divine being from the Father, so that he can be said to live “eucharistically” as the Son of God in the fellowship of Holy Spirit.
- In speaking about this essentially eucharistic character of Christ’s divine and human existence, von Balthasar concludes that “in all the synoptic Gospels the true presider at the eucharistic meal is the heavenly Father who lays before us the very best that he has to offer...the Spirit of the Father who gives, and of the Son who allows himself to be given.”<sup>66</sup>
- Here lies the originality of von Balthasar’s theological thought concerning the Eucharist as a Trinitarian event.

### 8.5.2 The role of the Spirit in the Eucharist

From their recognition of the saving death of Christ as a Passover, a passing over and a rising up to God (Jn 13:1; 6:26), Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and Chauvet each states that Christ is the Word of the Father acting in the Spirit.<sup>67</sup> Wainwright observes that the Scriptures and early Christian liturgies show that the pneumatological aspect of the Eucharist correlates with the Christological approach. The Spirit of Christ active in creation, in renewal and resurrection, is also active in the Eucharistic celebration.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See H.U. von Balthasar, *Epilog* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987), 93. Quotation taken from Ouellet, “Trinity and Eucharist: A Covenantal Mystery,” 275-276. For Balthasar, here the mystery of Incarnation comes to completion in the Eucharist, in the moment that the communion in Christ’s paschal sacrifice brings the inner unity of the divine Persons into the hearts of believers. A new appreciation of the gift of the Trinity in the eucharistic memorial is that in saying: “Take and eat, this is my body.” Jesus gives himself as the Son of the Father to the very end of love.

<sup>67</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 97. See also Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 84-94; and Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 248-252.

<sup>68</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 102.

- Wainwright does not, however, develop this correlation further. Durrwell, Martelet and Chauvet, on the other hand, recognize that this intimate relationship between Christ and the Spirit is crucial to the celebration of the Eucharist.
- For Durrwell, it is through the power of the Spirit that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ and that the whole Church becomes the sacrament of his presence to the world.<sup>69</sup> In other words, the intervention of the Spirit is indispensable for the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and for the completion of God's saving action.
- Similarly, for Martelet and Chauvet, the Spirit brings history to its eschatological fulfilment. In this regard, the Spirit is not understood as "an idea, a concept, a mere eminent power, the absolute form of knowing,"<sup>70</sup> but as "the Spirit of the Resurrection,"<sup>71</sup> or the "transcendent operator of the Resurrection."<sup>72</sup> The Spirit is therefore as much a part of eschatology as Christ is.
- Here the positions of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, despite difference in emphasis, converge in an integration of the presence and action of Christ and the Spirit at the heart of the Eucharistic event. Within the eschatological plenitude of the resurrection, the Eucharist appears as the goal of God's Trinitarian activity, in the divine self-giving and self-revelation.

The Eucharist is, after all, the eschatological event of a real communion of the triune divine life in which the Church already participates through the Spirit. God's action in

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<sup>69</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*. Durrwell sums it up when he says: "The parousia always fulfils itself in the strength of the Spirit." 28-29.

<sup>70</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 87-88.

<sup>71</sup> See Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 7.

<sup>72</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. Martelet writes: "That the *Spirit* is thus the transcendent operator of the Resurrection does not alter what we have said about the mystery of the *body* of the risen Christ; it simply confirms it...Whereas Christ, in his public life, was still *contained* within a world dominated by death, his resurrection shows that in the power of the Spirit the humanly insurmountable misfortune of mortality has been fully overcome in the person of Christ. Far from the risen Christ being henceforth contained in the world and therefore ultimately *subject* to the world, we now have to say that the world and all its depth are really contained *in Christ*, in a way which the Eucharist will enable us to define more closely. For Christ, then, the glory of the Resurrection is not a matter of position or place but rather, if I may put it so, a matter of *relationship to this world transfigured by the power of the Spirit*." 88.



the Eucharist exhibits a Trinitarian involvement as the three Divine Persons cooperate in the event of salvation.

## 8.6 The Eucharist and the mystery of the Church

For all of our authors the Eucharist is normative for the Church's identity. Church and Eucharist are interrelated. In this sacramental meal as the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, the community of the Church is fully manifested. The Eucharist and Church are so correlated that "the sacramental body of the Eucharist and the ecclesial body are both the *real* Body of Christ."<sup>73</sup> Neither the Church nor the Eucharist is incidental to the advent of God's eschatological Kingdom into the world. Both are aspects of the reality of communion with Christ in his self-giving and glorification. In celebrating the Eucharist in its eschatological reality, the Church is actualised as the pilgrim people of God, living in eschatological hope, already participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### 8.6.1 The Eucharist and the Church as the Body of Christ

For Wainwright, the Church is properly understood in relation to the body of Christ. The Eucharist is the sacrament by which the Christian community is now united in Christ. Wainwright draws on those Pauline images of the body of Christ, which condemn the selfish conduct of certain Christians in the Corinthian community, as acting against Christ in his body (1 Cor 11: 26-30). The failure to discern this body means failure to recognize in the Eucharist both the sacramental body (Christ present in the eucharistic elements) and the ecclesial body, that is, the Church, "the vehicle of the Lord's personal presence."<sup>74</sup> The community of Christians, which truly discerns the body, is nothing less than Christ's body. Similar positions emerge from the theologies of Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, although there are differences.

- Like Wainwright, Durrwell identifies in the Eucharist a community of Christians that not only expresses its own nature and purpose in the Eucharistic

<sup>73</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 81.

<sup>74</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 81.

assembly, but also shares in the personal mystery of Christ who through his death and resurrection becomes its “eschatological terminus.”<sup>75</sup>

- The fullness of salvation, already made real in the Eucharist, is nothing other than the Paschal Christ, “who renders Himself present to his Church, to whom the Church unites herself.”<sup>76</sup> This self-communication of the Risen Christ to the Church makes the Eucharist constitutive of the mystery of the Church.
- In this perspective, Martelet argues, “the Eucharist is pre-eminently the act in which the Church is united in *body* to the life of her head [Christ].”<sup>77</sup> This union is described as truly conjugal; it is a true love that constitutes the Church as the Bride to whom the person of Christ as the Bridegroom is completely given.<sup>78</sup>
- The Eucharist thus fills the Church with the self-giving love of Christ.<sup>79</sup> Nourished by the life of Christ, the members of the Church are united with Christ and with one another, and thus enjoy new life and envision the future together.
- The Eucharist, therefore, shapes every aspect of ecclesial life and ministry, for it is, as von Balthasar says, the “birthplace and centre of the Church”<sup>80</sup> in which the salvific reality of Christ is already present.

### 8.6.2 The Eucharist as the sacrificial celebration of Christ and the Church

Exploiting the metaphor of Christ’s nuptial relationship with the Church, von Balthasar makes a further point: the Church has something to offer to God, namely the only thing of value: the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>81</sup> In celebrating the Eucharistic event, the Church is inwardly drawn into Christ’s sacrifice and learns how to imitate Christ’s

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<sup>75</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 200.

<sup>78</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 201.

<sup>79</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. As Martelet explains, “The Church, in fact, becomes herself only within the conjugal union...in the impregnable oneness of the body of the Resurrection, fully incorporated into the power of the Spirit.” 200.

<sup>80</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 570.

<sup>81</sup> H.U. von Balthasar, *A Short-Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, trans. M. Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), 96.

self-surrender. In this way, the Church is most truly itself as a reality of the Body of Christ.<sup>82</sup>

- For his part, Martelet acknowledges a similar intimate relationship between Christ and the Church. He views the Risen Christ as the unique High Priest who, through the body of Christians, fulfils the Eucharistic sacrifice by “teaching them to offer themselves just as he offers himself.”<sup>83</sup>
- Similarly, Chauvet offers his explanation: “the Christ of the Eucharist is *Christus totus*; the head cannot be isolated from the body the Church.”<sup>84</sup>
- Yet, in accord with his eschatological approach to the sacraments, Chauvet argues that, since Christ’s sacrifice is understood as the apex and culmination of all sacrifice, the sacrificial character of the Eucharist has to be found in its transfigured complete form: “Christians have no other Temple than the glorified body of Jesus, no other altar than his cross, no other priest and sacrifice than his very person: *Christ is their only possible liturgy*.”<sup>85</sup>
- Here von Balthasar moves in the same direction, affirming that through his self-surrender Christ “has surpassed and abolished the whole former cult of priest and temple.”<sup>86</sup> Christ alone is the High Priest who consecrates himself so that those who participate in his sacrifice may be consecrated in the truth (Jn 17:19).<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, then, for Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit constitute the body of the Christian community, the visible celebrating *ecclesia*, as the eschatological place of God.<sup>88</sup> In this milieu the

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<sup>82</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 389, 394, 405. Referring to the celebration of the Eucharist as a dramatic action, von Balthasar explores the concept of Christ as “Head of the Church” (Eph 5:23), who alone can offer the sacrifice. As the Head and the members are united in the one sacrifice, the Church as a whole is *bridal* in the sense that the sacrifice is a gift femininely received from the Bridegroom. See Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. In this way, there is no contradiction, so argues Balthasar, for the Church’s Eucharistic sacrifice is “at once distinct from that of Christ and identical with his, since it consists in a (feminine) consenting to the sacrifice of Christ and to all the consequences that flow from there for the Church.” 98-99.

<sup>83</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. It is in this perspective that Martelet claims that the priestly ministry of the Church is now in the same sense, the “apostolic ministry of the Resurrection.” 197-199.

<sup>84</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 388.

<sup>85</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 250.

<sup>86</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 574.

<sup>87</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 404-405.

<sup>88</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 264.

Eucharistic sacrifice is radically transformed and defined by the Christ-event.<sup>89</sup> While the other two authors, Wainwright and Durrwell do not develop to any significant extent the notion of the Eucharistic sacrifice, all understand the Eucharist as the sacrificial celebration in terms of the mutual self-giving of Christ as Head and Church as body.

### 8.6.3 The Eucharist and the Church as eschatological communion

From these different points of view, the Eucharist discloses what the Church by God's grace is intended to be, namely the effective sign and the focus of eschatological communion.

- For Wainwright, however, two aspects of this communion are of particular importance. The first pertains to his eschatological vision of Christ as the first example of the glorified life of all creation.
- In this perspective the Eucharistic communion in the present is understood as the pledge of eternal life that bonds Christians ever closer to Christ and the final Kingdom. At the Lord's Table, Christians are drawn into an authentic life of communion, namely participation in the body of Christ (1 Cor 10: 16-17).
- Secondly, since all partake of the one bread and the one body, their encounter with the glorified Christ in the Eucharistic communion includes not only communion with one another, but also with the whole of humanity and the cosmos.
- Eucharistic communion is, therefore, "the *pignus* of eternal life or future glory."<sup>90</sup> It is "creative of the Church's unity" and "participation in the worship of heaven."<sup>91</sup> Thus Wainwright presents a strong vision of an inclusive, eschatological and cosmic community in which all are found to be one in Christ.
- Durrwell describes the characteristic of ecclesial communion in terms of "the paschal communion, the viaticum of Christian death throughout our life on

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<sup>89</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 253. See also Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 199.

<sup>90</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 112.

<sup>91</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 115.

earth.”<sup>92</sup> In celebrating the Eucharist, the Church communicates with Christ by joining him in his immolation, in the “donation of himself.”<sup>93</sup>

- Just as bread is meant to be eaten, and wine to be drunk, the Eucharist is a real communion for those who accept to die with Christ in utter self-surrender, and so to enter into full communion with God.
- While Durrwell focuses on the death of Christ in terms of his self-giving to God and to the world, Martelet highlights the resurrection. In the Eucharist, the Church comes to a new birth, incorporation into new life, and conformity to the body of Christ himself.<sup>94</sup>

It is precisely in their emphasis on the Church as an eschatological community that the theologies of our authors converge.

- Because of the connection of the Eucharist with the eschatological banquet, in the Eucharist, as Wainwright observes, the Church is manifested as “the firstfruits of God’s creatures.”<sup>95</sup> If Christ’s coming in the Eucharist is “a projection in the temporal sense that it is a ‘throwing forward’ of Christ’s final advent”<sup>96</sup> into the present, then the Church is already living from the power of the future.
- Similarly, Durrwell claims that it is the Parousia that creates the Church.<sup>97</sup> Like the mystery of the Eucharist, the Church is oriented toward the Kingdom of God, waiting for the fullness of Christ’s coming and for the fulfilment of its own eschatological mystery.
- While Durrwell tends to understand the Church as being created by the Parousia, both Martelet and Chauvet place a strong emphasis on the resurrection as constitutive of the mystery of the Church.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 49.

<sup>93</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>94</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*. “We have to be nourished by the transfiguring flesh of the Risen Christ if we are gradually to come into the domain of the Spirit, who slowly moulds and remoulds our humanity in accordance with the Truth and Life of his own.” 189.

<sup>95</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 94, 134.

<sup>96</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 92, 94.

<sup>97</sup> See Durrwell, *L’eucharistie, Sacrement Pascal*, 42.

<sup>98</sup> See Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 199-201. See also Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 248-250.

As has been explored, for our authors the Church, properly speaking, is always associated with the risen and glorified Christ as he gathers all creation into God's Kingdom. For Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet and Chauvet, the Church, in its relation with Christ's resurrection and Parousia, is the bearer of the power of the future already at work in the historical world. With a distinctive stress, von Balthasar articulates a spousal and celebratory aspect of the Eucharist. It anticipates the "wedding feast of the Lamb" in which the Church-Bride will be transferred from the earthly community to the heavenly city of God as described in the Book of Revelations (19:7, 9: 21: 2, 9; 22:17).<sup>99</sup> Though these five authors employ different terms, they are at one relating the Eucharist to the eschatological community of the Church.<sup>100</sup>

### 8.7 The Eucharist and the principles of a Christian ethics

For Christian hope, the Eucharist is a meal celebrated and shared in anticipation of God's promised Kingdom. The Eucharist does not merely look back to the memory of the past, but is the real presence of the Christian future: it is "the first fruits" of the sanctification of all creation.<sup>101</sup> It has, therefore, effective consequences in the praxis of hope. Eucharistic worship and Christian ethics are related as the Christian community embraces both the world and all creation in one communion.<sup>102</sup> In this sense, the morality of the Eucharist is "an ethic of recapitulation."<sup>103</sup> It is a sacramental celebration of a world redeemed by Christ, extending to all individuals, and to the whole creation.

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<sup>99</sup> See Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 126-127. See also Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*, 398-406. Also noteworthy here is one of the clearest texts linking the relationship of Christ and the Church in nuptial terms is found in Ephesians. "This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:25-32).

<sup>100</sup> The Eucharist explicitates and inspires an eschatological dimension in the Church. In the eschatological reality of the Eucharist, the Church, celebrating its communion in the body of Christ, is assimilated into Christ's self-giving. Ecclesial existence occurs within the history of salvation, as a pilgrim people subject to the eschatological reign of God. Since through the Eucharist the Church enjoys a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, it becomes an anticipatory sign of the Kingdom. In the Church Christ is known as the Risen Lord, yet at the same time, the Church points beyond itself to the God who has made the Christ "all in all" (Col 3:11).

<sup>101</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 94. For Wainwright, since the Eucharist is related to Christ who is the "first-born" of all creation, it is "the sacramental anticipation of a universe totally transfigured by the glory of God, receiving glory from Him and rendering glory to Him." 103.

<sup>102</sup> Quotation taken from Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 118.

<sup>103</sup> See Douglas Farrow, "Eucharist, Eschatology and Ethics," *The Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*, ed. David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 214.

### 8.7.1 The Eucharist as ethical imperative

A considerable convergence amongst our five authors is evident on this point.

- Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet in particular, look to the Eucharist as inspiring an effective expression of eschatological hope. It is to be concretely realized in practical, socio-political, and ethical terms. It entails a new communion of solidarity with the historical world, and deepens our responsibility for God's creation and all forms of life within it.
- The theologies of Durrwell and Balthasar are more revelation-centered and transcendently oriented than social in their orientation. They tend to subsume the history of the world into the inner-divine process in a way that is arguably inadequate as regards the socio-political implications of salvation.<sup>104</sup>
- Because of this limitation Wainwright, Martelet, and Chauvet most attract our attention at this point.

Wainwright's theology of Christian worship has both ethical presuppositions and ethical consequences:<sup>105</sup>

- The love of God includes love of neighbour, as implied in the "new commandment" (John 13:34-35) and of the "new covenant" of the institution narratives in the synoptic tradition (Mt 26:28-29; Mk 14:24-25; Lk 22:20).
- In this perspective, the Eucharistic fellowship cannot be seen as a mere cultic act, but rather primarily as an alternative way of life with clear demands upon all who take part in it. To take part in the Eucharist is to take on one's role in a new Kingdom.
- This role has to do with love, justice, peace, the harmony and welfare of all in society, equality of basic opportunities and appropriate living conditions.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> For a critical reflection on Balthasar's theology, see Chauvet, "Eschatology and Sacrament," 3. See also Steffen Losel, "Unapocalyptic Theology: History and Eschatology in Balthasar's Theo-Drama," *Modern Theology* 17 (2001), 201-225.

<sup>105</sup> See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 399.

<sup>106</sup> Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, 400-415.

- It is thus inconceivable for the Christian that “humanity should ever outgrow the value of *agape*, so integral is this to the character and activity of God and therefore to the advancement of humanity into God’s likeness.”<sup>107</sup>
- Conversely, only in the life of ethical commitment is the eschatological meaning of the Eucharist fully appreciated.

This ethical aspect of the Eucharist as an expression of eschatological hope is further evidenced in the theologies of Martelet and Chauvet. Both draw direct consequences from the Eucharistic sharing for social, moral and political life.

- For Martelet, the Eucharist is intimately linked to human relationships and with social justice.
- The Eucharist reminds us of the essential aim of humanization and shows forth the true value of culture, for it is “a food that sustains life and a drink that fosters love.”<sup>108</sup>
- More than just the ritual word and sacramental action of the Christian community, the Eucharist involves a “meeting, sharing, commensalism and union.”<sup>109</sup>
- The bread and wine offered in the Eucharist, as works of the human hands and culture, signify the Eucharistic imperative to transform the world and its cultural life.

This same emphasis is found in Chauvet’s eschatological approach to the Eucharist.

- Since, the event of Easter-Pentecost marks the inauguration of the Eschaton, the Eucharist is much more than the offering of the lips, and calls for ethical commitment and responsibility.<sup>110</sup>
- Because the Eucharist is God’s gift of new life in Christ and hope for the Kingdom, primacy is given to human relationships based on agapeic praxis in contrast to any kind of purely cultic system.

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<sup>107</sup> Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, 400.

<sup>108</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 35-36.

<sup>109</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 36.

<sup>110</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 239.



- The Eucharist is thus a “liturgy of the neighbour.”<sup>111</sup> Or, as Martelet puts it, it inaugurates a “new art of living in the world.”<sup>112</sup>

In a related way, central to the eschatological approach to the Eucharist is the cosmic dimension of Christian hope, which looks to a final transformation of the entire creation. Salvation is thus a “cosmic rebirth”: it embraces not just humanity, but all of creation (Rom 8:21). Here our authors clearly share an understanding of the eschatological hope in God’s final triumph over sin, suffering and death as an event whereby all creation is taken into the fullness of communion with the triune God.

- The Eucharist is, as Wainwright puts it, “the sacramental anticipation of a universe totally transfigured by the glory of God, receiving glory from Him and rendering glory to Him.”<sup>113</sup> In this eschatological vision, the Eucharist is related to ecological concerns in its celebration of the multidimensional character of salvation, that is, personal, corporate and cosmic.
- Since the Eucharist presupposes both the present reality and final transformation of the cosmos, it is no longer possible to view human beings as the summit of creation in an anthropocentric and consumer-oriented fashion. Human beings are rather the stewards of creation in which they participate. The human person is, as Martelet argues, “corporeally a product of the earth...of cosmic stature.”<sup>114</sup>
- On this point, Martelet's view agrees with Chauvet in speaking of the intersection of the two dimensions, the cosmic and the historic. Chauvet recognizes that “the bread is eucharistic matter only as a link between the cosmos and history.”<sup>115</sup> In this regard, the state of the world and of history is recognized as the possible sacramental place of eschatological hope.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. For Chauvet, “the ethical is not simply an extrinsic consequence of the Eucharistic process; it belongs to it as an intrinsic element.” He argues that the ethical “is also the fundamental location of the Christian liturgy: it is precisely ethics that must become authentically ‘Eucharistic.’ Grace is always bestowed on a task.” 277-278.

<sup>112</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 183.

<sup>113</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 103.

<sup>114</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42. Martelet’s theology recognizes that the bread and the wine used in the Eucharist are unmistakable signs of the human, and that “we are accountable for not despising in everyday life what we venerate so deeply in the liturgy.” 181-182.

<sup>115</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552. See also Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament.” As Chauvet argues, “Such is the case in Judaism, where

Within this eschatological and Eucharistic context, all creation is understood in terms of communion with the “God of hope” who created it (Rom 15:13).

- Both Durrwell and von Balthasar explicate the meaning of salvation as the entry of creation into God’s eternal community of love.
- In contrast to Durrwell who tends to insist that God saves by transforming and transforms by elevating creation to its accomplishment, von Balthasar explores how deeply the triune God has entered into creation in Jesus Christ’s “kenotic condition”<sup>117</sup> in order to take all creation into the divine life.
- With regard to the Eucharist then, the bread and wine, as earthly realities, are bearers of the ultimate future of humanity and the cosmos. Through the power of the Spirit they become “true food and true drink” (Jn 6:55), symbolizing the anticipation of the whole world being transformed into the Body of Christ.

Thus an eschatological vision is one of the essential components that the Eucharist can offer to ecological awareness, requiring and inspiring a dynamic act of love, communion, and solidarity with all creation.

### 8.7.2 The Eucharist as eschatological judgement

In Wainwright’s view, since the Eucharist proclaims a vision of God’s reign that is promised as the final renewal of all things in Christ, it anticipates the character of the divine judgement.<sup>118</sup> If the Christian community has already tasted the goodness of

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the Creator is already the God of Israel, that is, the God of the Covenant and of history. That holds especially in Christianity with the inauguration of the last time through Christ’s Resurrection – so much so that all creation must itself be thought of as Trinitarian.” 9.

<sup>116</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 265.

<sup>117</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 23,99. See Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 123. Here for Balthasar, it is John the Baptist who speaks of his decrease, that is, his radical renunciation in view of the increasing and fulfilling Christ, in connection with his “complete joy” that the Bridegroom Christ has found the Bride Church (John 3:29). This means that John’s bodily and mental suffering makes room for the wedding feast that is taking place. In Balthasar’s view, this act of “decrease” has a profound Eucharistic character. Thus, “the notion of kenosis is an emptying out to provide a space that can be filled, and the Eucharist is the permeation of the kenosis with God’s love being poured out in it as flesh given up and blood shed.” 126.

<sup>118</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 80.

the word of God and the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5), then divine judgement already takes place at every Eucharist.<sup>119</sup>

- The clearest instance of this dimension in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Since it presumes that the Christian community is an organic unity in which all members participate in the one life of the Body, to profane a holy rite, that is, eating and drinking without discerning the community as the Lord's body is to bring judgement on oneself (1 Cor 11:27-29). Every Eucharist is, as Wainwright understands it, "the occasion of Christ's coming, and Christ the Lord is both Saviour and Judge."<sup>120</sup>
- To eat the bread and drink from the cup in a worthy manner is a continuing call to conversion, since Christians are at every Eucharist required to renew their baptismal commitment to walk in newness of life.<sup>121</sup>

Similar views on the Eucharist as a sign of commitment to the demands of Christian discipleship are expressed in the theologies of Martelet and Chauvet.

- For Martelet, the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be fully understood without a "moment of repentance."<sup>122</sup> The community that celebrates the Eucharist is called, through a radical conversion, to challenge sin and its structures and to be alert to the social implications of all Christian activities.
- This practical awareness of human relationships, of the Christian obligation to work for the transformation of the world, is "an exact measure of our belonging to the risen Christ."<sup>123</sup>
- Similarly, Chauvet explains: "When an unjust economic system takes away from the poor the bread they have made, when it distributes it only to those who are economically well-off, it makes of the bread a symbol of decreation; thus it de-sacramentalizes it."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 80.

<sup>120</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 82-83.

<sup>121</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 83.

<sup>122</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 182.

<sup>123</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 183.

<sup>124</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552.

- In this case, the bread cannot become Eucharist, for to pretend to eat the body of Christ in the Eucharist, when in fact this bread is taken from the mouths of the poor, is to condemn oneself. The bread of life becomes “the bearer of death.”<sup>125</sup>

These points sufficiently indicate how the Eucharist is understood as a judgement on the present life of the community and the world, and how the Eucharist provokes a radical conversion to justice and solidarity. Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet, therefore, draw from their eschatological understanding of the Eucharist as a celebration of hope, an effective and ethical praxis. The praxis of Eucharistic hope is symbolized by the reception of the one bread shared among all as the Body of Christ. The eschatological criterion for authentic participation in the Eucharist is the service of the neighbour, that is, the practice of discipleship, especially in view of promotion of justice and peace.

## 8.8 Conclusion

In this correlation of the five eschatological approaches to the Eucharist it is clear that, although there are important similarities between the five authors, there are significant differences as well. We turn now to consider a number of points of convergence and divergence by referring to Bernard Lonergan’s four functions of meaning, as explained in his *Method in Theology*,<sup>126</sup> and the questions they raise.

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<sup>125</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552.

<sup>126</sup> See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Westminster Press/ Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974). 75-81. According to Lonergan’s theological method, meaning is, firstly, *cognitive* when it is primarily concerned with thinking and passing on knowledge; it may be descriptive or explanatory. Secondly, meaning is *effective* in so far as it brings about a constructive outcome; it directs our way of living or controls the human development of nature. Thirdly, meaning is *constitutive* when it plays a major part in the constitution of the one who means; it is an intrinsic component of the reality of an individual, a community or a tradition. Fourthly, meaning is *communicative* since it uses the carriers of meaning (inter-subjectivity, art, symbols, language, a person’s way of life, his or her deeds) to communicate the cognitive, effective and constitutive meanings, so that the individual meaning becomes common meaning. These functions of meaning are inclined to blend together, though one or other often predominates. In this way, Lonergan’s analysis of the four functions of meaning can be applied to our assessment of the differences and the characteristics, as shared in common by Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, Balthasar and Chauvet in terms of the eucharistic meaning that our study presents to us.

### 8.8.1 Points of convergence

Firstly, we notice that our authors make considerable use of the *cognitive* function of meaning to explicate what is significant in the Eucharist, and to describe what it is for the Christian community to know and to appreciate the Eucharist as the sacrament of the eschaton. Wainwright's study contributes to an enhanced attention to the Eucharist as the messianic banquet. He makes clear that Christ's gift of his body and blood in the Eucharist includes the promise of future salvation and fellowship with the community of believers. Durrwell exposes and seeks to examine the interconnection of the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery and makes this choice the principle of understanding the Eucharist as the real presence of the eschatological Christ. Martelet's Eucharistic theology in the context of the resurrection recognizes that in the Eucharist the glorified Christ gives himself completely and transforms the world of history into what that world will become. In von Balthasar's exploration, the significance of the Eucharist emerges as a sacrificial celebration of the *Eschaton*, which draws all humanity and all creation into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, into his self-giving, and into his movement from this world to God. Chauvet's treatment of sacramental theology recalls a basic insight that "the eschaton is the final manifestation of the resurrecting force of Christ from now on transfiguring humanity by the gift of the Spirit."<sup>127</sup> In the Eucharist, therefore, the past and present receive their significance and continuity from the future, when Christ will come in glory and God's salvific purpose for all creation is fully manifested in the new heaven and the new earth.

Secondly, Eucharistic meaning is *effective*. By exploring and celebrating the meaning of the Paschal Mystery of Christ in the Eucharist, Christians not only know something, they are also challenged to participate in God's transforming plan for the whole of humanity. Here we can speak of the Eucharistic meaning as inspiring and placing the Christian community effectively and concretely at the service of God's Kingdom. The Eucharist is an action in memory of Christ. It is effective in the sense

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<sup>127</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240. His understanding of the Eucharist as memorial anticipation of the future leads to the conclusion that there is a close connection between Christian hope and the ethical commitment to the future.

that it induces Christians to live in a particular way of life, modelled on Christ's self-giving love, and calling for their active participation in God's works of salvation.

As far as our five theologians are concerned, while the effective meaning is less apparent in the theologies of Durrwell and von Balthasar because of a lack of attention to the ethical and social dimensions, it is clearly portrayed by Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet. For instance, Wainwright states: "Whatever the forms of its incorporation in the liturgy, the exercise of charity and the will to serve must bear fruit in proportion to the grace received."<sup>128</sup> The practical awareness of others is thus an exact measure of a Christian sense of belonging to the Risen Christ. Martelet argues: "Orthopraxis, as rightness in *acting*, is the true sign of orthodoxy, as rightness in *judging*."<sup>129</sup> Viewed in this light, the Eucharist is more than a memorial rite; it is to live out what the rite declares. The Eucharist is, in fact, the love that reaches its effective expression in an attitude of selfless concern for the good of others.

This effective meaning of the Eucharist is apparent in Chauvet's theology, which maintains that the Eucharistic ritual is constitutively ethical and that one without the other is incomplete. "The ritual story at each Eucharist," Chauvet writes, "retelling why Jesus handed over his life, sends all Christians back to their own responsibility to take charge of history in his name."<sup>130</sup> This is endorsed in Chauvet's description of the Eucharistic worship as sacred work, the sacrifice that is pleasing to God. To celebrate the Eucharist is to participate in a confession of Christian faith that is lived "in the agape of sharing in service to the poorest, of reconciliation, and of mercy."<sup>131</sup> He claims that the Eucharist is replete with serious ethical dimensions.

Thirdly, this Eucharistic meaning is *constitutive*, since it deeply affects the social identity of a community of shared memories and an eschatological hope for the coming of God's Kingdom. The Eucharist discloses what human life by God's grace of salvation is intended to be, namely, our human incorporation into Christ's own life, hence into his very being. As a communal rite, the Eucharist is a constitutive factor that brings about a new life, a rebirth into new creation, which Paul expressed in his

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<sup>128</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 183.

<sup>129</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 181.

<sup>130</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 261.

<sup>131</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 260.

teaching on the Christian life, stressing the fruit of our real communion in the indwelling Trinity as we seek to use the gifts of the Spirit to build up the Body of Christ (Rom 6:10-11; 1 Cor 12:4-11).

We note that these five theologians concentrate on the constitutive function of meaning in their treatment of the eschatological status of the Eucharist; they do so in different ways. This constitutive function reveals how the Eucharist embodies and defines a model of Christian community; it is seen in the people gathered about the Lord's Table, who become witnesses to hope in God's promise, that constitutes the generative cell of a new, liberated and reconciled humanity. Wainwright insists that "the effect of partaking of the body and blood of Christ is nothing other than we are changed into what we receive."<sup>132</sup> For Martelet, too, the Eucharist constitutes the body of Christians and thus transfigures them.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Durrwell and von Balthasar hold that Christians are themselves consecrated in the Spirit and thus become "a sacrament of the paschal presence of Christ to the world,"<sup>134</sup> or "the bearer of the triune life."<sup>135</sup> Since, for Chauvet, the grace of the Eucharist is Christ, head and body, those who are sanctified by Christ become partners of Christ, participating in Christ's own consecration and self-giving.<sup>136</sup> In this way, through their participation with the self-giving love of Christ, Christians partake in the fruits of his life, death and resurrection and thus are constituted his Eucharistic body in history.

Fourthly, the meaning of the Eucharist is *communicative*. The Eucharist marks the gift of God's continued sharing of life and love that welcomes people into a new community, confirming their solidarity with Christ and with one another in a common hope. To celebrate the Eucharist is, on the one hand, to be united with Christ and to be nourished by the self-giving and community-forming love of the triune God. On the other hand, whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, the Church carries out the work of salvation, communicating to the world the gift of new life that Christ makes to the

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<sup>132</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 113. Furthermore, it is, as Wainwright argues, "only as we are in Christ and Christ lives in us that we share in the eternal life and shall be raised to share in it." 114.

<sup>133</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 181.

<sup>134</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 44.

<sup>135</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 119.

<sup>136</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 390.

Church of his resurrection.<sup>137</sup> The purpose of the Eucharist is, therefore, to convey the gift of new life of the Risen Christ to his body, the Church, so that the community of believers is able to surrender itself to the transforming reality of the Spirit and to share its experience of God with other people.

Consistent with this communicative meaning of the Eucharist, we observe that our theologians attempt to explain the Eucharist as the first-fruits of the Kingdom (Wainwright), the divine presence that creates the eschatological people of God in history (Durrwell), the gift of the resurrection to the Church that is to be communicated to the world (Martelet), God's language and self-expression (Balthasar), or the bearer of the future (Chauvet). For our theologians, the Eucharist transforms the individuals into a community, so that God's liberating and reconciling activity, in which they are co-workers, becomes a line of development within the human culture. According to Martelet, for instance, the Eucharist remains a "dead" letter unless Christians live by it and really bring out its meaning to the world.<sup>138</sup> Likewise, Chauvet's sacramental theology highlights the communicative function of meaning: "The liturgy is the powerful pedagogy where we can learn to consent to the presence of the absence of God who obliges us to give him a body in the world...and giving the ritual memory of Jesus Christ its plenitude in our existential memory."<sup>139</sup> Thus in the Eucharist, the Christian community is established through the on-going formation of common meaning and vision.

### 8.8.2 Points of divergence

Firstly, with regard to the doctrine of transubstantiation, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet appeal to the Catholic tradition, yet seek a further explication of the Eucharistic presence in eschatological terms. Wainwright, however, takes a

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<sup>137</sup> See John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999). Very soon the Lord's Prayer became the prayer of the community. "According to Cyril of Jerusalem (350), the Lord's Prayer was part of the liturgical service before holy communion and prayed only by the baptised, the full members of the Christian community. It was an expression of their identity as Christians." 274- 276. The meaning of the Lord's Prayer in the Eucharist, for example, as an eschatological prayer, not only corresponds to his intimate relationship with God the Abba, but also provokes both the identity of the Christian community as children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ and the outreach of mission: "Thy Kingdom come" (Mt 6: 9,10; Lk 11: 2). See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Lord's Prayer in the Light of Recent Research* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 12.

<sup>138</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 181.

<sup>139</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 265.



stand against any idea of transubstantiation.<sup>140</sup> In particular, he is critical of Martelet's vision of the Eucharistic destiny of humanity and the universe. For Wainwright, the appeal to Teilhard de Chardin's version of transubstantiation in Martelet's theology runs the risk of confusing eschatology with evolutionistic optimism, and of suggesting some form of pantheism, as if there were a total absorption of all things into the Divine.<sup>141</sup> He fears that this unsatisfactory model of transubstantiation is projected from the liturgy onto the universe, so that the goal seems to be some kind of pantheistic identification between Christ and "the transubstantiated universe as his body."<sup>142</sup> Wainwright argues that this doctrine puts too much emphasis on the elements and their change rather than on the advent of Christ to his people in a visitation of judgement and salvation and on the purpose of the change, that is, as an agency of transformation towards the glory in the Church.<sup>143</sup>

In other words, Wainwright rejects the doctrine of transubstantiation, for its emphasis is *ontological* rather than eschatological in scope.<sup>144</sup> If the whole Christ is present as the *substance* of the elements of bread and wine, it is then "psychologically impossible to give much place to the thought of Christ as the host and table-fellow."<sup>145</sup> By contrast, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet argue for a shift from the substance-based metaphysical categories of the traditional sacramental theology to more symbolic, personalist, relational and eschatological approaches to understand the Eucharist. In fact, they acknowledge both the manifold presence of Christ to the community of believers in the liturgy and the divine transcendence which encompasses all created things, thus to respect the "otherness" of God in relation to the historical world. Von Balthasar writes, for instance, "If the cosmos as a whole has been created in the image of God that appears - in the First-Born of creation, through him and for him...then, in the last analysis, the world is a 'body' of God, on the basis

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<sup>140</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>141</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. As Wainwright expresses it, "if one starts from the eucharistic consecration understood as transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, then...one arrives at a notion of the transfigured final creation as 'substantially' Christ, with the new heavens and the new earth as 'accidents'; but this is hard to distinguish from pantheism or from the total absorption of all things into the Divine." 105.

<sup>142</sup> Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, 407.

<sup>143</sup> Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, 407.

<sup>144</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 1.

<sup>145</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. Within this conceptual pattern, Wainwright comes to a conclusion that "the eucharistic elements both *are* and *are not* Christ Himself", for Christ feeds with his people at his own table of the Eucharist on the abundant fruits of the new creation. 108.

of the principle not of pantheistic but hypostatic union.”<sup>146</sup> According to Balthasar, Durrwell, Martelet and Chauvet, even in God’s self-communication, God remains “the absolute other”<sup>147</sup> in the sense that there is no fusion of the divine with the human and that the divine remains transcendent in its mystery.

Secondly, since for Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet the Eucharist symbolizes the newness of the Kingdom of life inaugurated by the resurrection, all who take part in the Eucharist not only commune with Christ, but participate in his Kingdom project. The Eucharist is a foretaste and an anticipation of a new and transformed world order. The Eucharistic sharing is thus inseparable from the fellowship of love and service. It is both spiritually and ethically engaging, and cannot be abstracted from the pressing problems of the historical world. It inspires and nourishes a praxis of liberation. Durrwell and von Balthasar, however, do not pay much attention to the ethical, political and social dimension of the Eucharist; *orthodoxy*, rather than *orthopraxis*, would appear to be their primary concern.

While Chauvet shares something of the theologies of Durrwell and von Balthasar, he is also critical of Balthasar’s approach. Here he cites C. Geffré, who claims that von Balthasar’s theology “results in an increasing secularisation of history and a greater spiritualization of the history of salvation.”<sup>148</sup> As a result, the history of salvation becomes “no more than the history of the Spirit of God in [human] hearts and something that is independent of the vicissitudes of history.”<sup>149</sup> It must be allowed, however, that for Durrwell and von Balthasar, the Eucharist is the sacrament of encounter of the divine and human freedom, and that, therefore, there is scope for the world and history within the eternal eventfulness of God’s inner life. Nonetheless, Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet would argue for a consideration of the Eucharist much more in terms of the messianic-political and social dimensions of salvation, in order to appreciate more fully the significance of God’s salvific history with humanity and the world.

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<sup>146</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, 679.

<sup>147</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 9.

<sup>148</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 3.

<sup>149</sup> Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” 3.

Thirdly, Wainwright attempts to draw ecumenical consequences from this eschatological understanding of the Eucharist in terms of intercommunion. Within the Catholic circle, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet affirm, though in different ways, the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist as a communion event. It is an expression of the Church as the people of God and as the body of Christ and not as a mere cultic institution. Yet Wainwright takes the matter further. He opens the possibility of intercommunion for future ecumenical discussions. His views here contrast with more traditional ecumenical discussions, which emphasise the importance of doctrinal and institutional agreement as the condition for Eucharistic fellowship. As Wainwright expresses it, "When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between truth...and love as we are commanded to practice it...between a particular pattern of internal order and the missionary witness to the Kingdom to be made...between the Church as institution and the Church as event,"<sup>150</sup> the Eucharist then impels us to choose love, and that means intercommunion.<sup>151</sup> The Eucharistic eschatology of the intercommunion thus provokes further discussion on the complex issue of Eucharistic sharing, which continues to be a vexed question.<sup>152</sup>

Fourthly, none of our authors develops to any significant extent the notion of the "pneumatic Christ," as Yves Congar has described it.<sup>153</sup> There is, however, a notable mention in the theologies of Durrwell and von Balthasar of the Eucharistic body of Christ as that of "Christ-Spirit."<sup>154</sup> In this regard, Durrwell and von Balthasar indicate possibilities of a richer correlation of pneumatology and eschatology in the Eucharist. Durrwell notes, for instance, that it is "in the Holy Spirit that God begets, raises and

<sup>150</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 144-146.

<sup>151</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 144-146.

<sup>152</sup> See David N. Power, "Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996). See also Gerard Kelly, "Intercommunion and Eucharistic Hospitality," *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Margaret Press (Sydney, Australia: St Pauls, 2001); Walter Kasper, "The Future of Ecumenism," *Theology Digest* 49.3 (2002), 203. See Wolfgang Klausnitzer, "One Church or Unity of the Churches?" *Theology Digest* 43.3 (2001); Jeffrey Vanderwilt, "Eucharistic Sharing: Revising the Question," *Theological Studies* 63.4 (2002).

<sup>153</sup> See John H. McKenna, "Eucharistic Epiclesis: Myopia or Microcosm," *Theological Studies* 36.2 (1975), 277-278; John J. O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 157. See also Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. III (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 264. As Congar makes it clear, it is the "pneumatic Christ" who acts in the Eucharist and the body of Christ, which we receive in the Eucharist, is the Easter pneumatic Christ, that is, Christ penetrated by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>154</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14. For Durrwell, in 1 Corinthians 10:3, the Eucharist is evoked under the name of spiritual food because Christ with whom the Christian community communicates is Christ-Spirit. The Eucharistic meal is the Lord's Supper and the Lord is the Christ of glory. See also H. U. von Balthasar, *Elucidations*, trans. J. Riches (London: SPCK, 1971).

glorifies Christ, makes Him the Lord-Spirit (2 Cor 3:17), the eschatological man, the Christ-who-comes.”<sup>155</sup> Similarly, for Balthasar, the body of Christ in the Eucharist is “the body of the second man coming from heaven...to whom we are united by eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood.”<sup>156</sup> Durrwell concludes that only in the eschatological and glorified Lord as the “fullness of the Spirit of God”<sup>157</sup> can the Eucharist have any meaning. It is the Spirit of the Lord at work, the “pneumatic Christ” who effects the transformation of the bread and wine, and of those who partake of the Eucharist into the body of Christ. In this respect, Durrwell and von Balthasar are more pneumatological than the other three authors.

Fifthly, the universal scope of Christian hope finds outstanding expression in the theology of von Balthasar. All our authors structure their eschatological approaches to the Eucharist around the promise of future glory when ultimately God will be all in all. Yet von Balthasar is led to reflect further on the questions of whether and how all people will be saved. Though universal salvation remains for him an object of prayer and hope, there are two areas of his theology, which we might regard as grounds for an interpretation of the traditional *Apocatastasis*<sup>158</sup> compatible with the Christian faith. Firstly, although there is the possibility of eternal damnation, neither Scripture nor tradition asserts with certainty that anyone has been or will be forever lost, and we must note that there is an eschatological hope expressed in the Eucharistic Prayers for the salvation of all. Secondly, and arguably the most striking feature of von Balthasar’s theology, is “the mystery of Holy Saturday.”<sup>159</sup> Here, he challenges the traditional understanding of Christ’s descent among the dead, to throw in relief Christ’s radical solidarity with humanity in its sinfulness.<sup>160</sup> This truth, for von

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<sup>155</sup> Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 28.

<sup>156</sup> Balthasar, *Elucidations*, 112.

<sup>157</sup> See F.X. Durrwell, “Lamb of God,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1967), 340. See also Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 26-27.

<sup>158</sup> See John R. Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991), 242. See also Peter C. Phan, “Current Theology: Contemporary Context and Issues in Eschatology,” *Theological Studies* 55 (1994), 531-532.

<sup>159</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, 148-188. For von Balthasar, the true depth of Christ’s love and solidarity with sinners is revealed in the mystery of Holy Saturday, which in a unique way brings to expression the Christian understanding of universal salvation. For von Balthasar Christian hope in eternal life has in the Eucharistic form its foundation, that is, in the living communion with God. Such a communion cannot, however, exist at all without including Christ’s Cross, his abandonment by the Father, his breathing forth the Spirit and his descent in to hell.

<sup>160</sup> See H.U. von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope 'That All Men Will Be Saved'?*, trans. D. Kipp and L. Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 25-26, 148-157. According to von Balthasar, not only may Christians hope for the salvation of all, it is their duty to do so; otherwise they do not love unreservedly

Balthasar, is already manifest in the Eucharistic gesture of Christ's free self-surrender with which he "offers his Flesh and Blood at table as given and poured out."<sup>161</sup> In other words, since the unique sacrifice of Christ "embraces every temporal and eternal suffering possible to a created human being,"<sup>162</sup> there is identity between his *kenosis* and the divine love poured out over all space and time. This identity, says von Balthasar, "is, in itself and in us, the Eucharist."<sup>163</sup> Thus the Eucharist pronounces a hope for the eschatological beatitude of all.

### 8.8.3 Questions for further consideration

The extent to which our authors have explored the eschatological aspects of the Eucharist reveals considerable convergence and divergence in their theological concerns. Whereas the approaches taken by Durrwell and von Balthasar appear more similar in their emphasis on an understanding of the Eucharist in the light of the Paschal Mystery, Martelet and Chauvet are more closely related to each other with their respective emphasis on the resurrection and Pentecost. Martelet and Chauvet present a Eucharistic vision of the eschatological and cosmic Christ that prompts the Christian community toward an ethical praxis in active solidarity with humanity and the whole creation. Wainwright's distinctive focus on the Eucharist as an anticipatory feeding with Christ on the fruits of the new creation is nonetheless firmly situated

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and are tempted to leave other people to their fate. Here von Balthasar quotes Hans-Jürgen Verweyen: "Whoever reckons with the possibility of even only one person's being lost besides himself is hardly able to love unreservedly...Just the slightest nagging thought of a final hell for others tempts us, in moments in which human togetherness becomes especially difficult, to leave the other to himself." 211. For a fresh look at the ancient and much misunderstood theme of apocatastasis, see Sachs, "Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell," 227-254. See also Owen F. Cummings, *Coming to Christ: A Study in Christian Eschatology* (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 274-275.

<sup>161</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. As von Balthasar explains: "Chronologically, the gesture of [Christ's] self-giving precedes the violent Passion event and thus shows that his free self-surrender is also the essential reason and perquisite for the fact that the subsequent horrible event can acquire its meaning of universal salvation. His free self-giving wants to go "to the end" (Jn 13:1).114. In his suffering, the whole human substance of Christ is "made fluid so that it can enter into human beings; but this takes place in such a way that at the same time he also makes fluid the boulders of sin...The "liquefying" of Jesus' earthly substance into that of the Eucharist is irreversible; furthermore, it lasts not only (like a "means") until "the end of the world", but is rather the blazing core around which...the cosmos crystallizes, or better, from which it is set ablaze." 116-118.

<sup>162</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. "No one but the only the Son of the Father, whose food it is to do the Father's will, can definitely and matchlessly know and experience what it means to be deprived of this food and to undergo absolute, hellish "thirst" (Jn 19:28). 116.

<sup>163</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*. "Kenosis is an emptying out to provide a space that can be filled, and the Eucharist is the permeation of the kenosis with God's love being poured out in it as flesh given up and blood shed." 126.

within the theological tradition of the Eucharist, and so can enrich the other theologies here presented.

Now we come to the conclusion of this chapter with a number of questions related to our topic. We have found a common core content of Eucharistic hope shared by the five approaches this thesis has considered. We have also compared and contrasted each theology under six headings. Yet there are three major themes that require further exploration.

Firstly, as the sacramental event of eschatological communion, the Eucharist proclaims that God's gift of love embraces the whole world of creation. The Eucharist exhibits and actualises the profound unity between the Trinitarian God and humanity, and the fellowship and sharing of all who partake of the body of Christ. If the fundamental characteristic of the Eucharist is communion, then the Christian is never an isolated person; he or she is one of a community. What contribution, then, does the Eucharist make to contemporary anthropology of hope embracing the whole of human existence? How, in this regard, does it inspire a new way of living humanly, in a conscious socio-cosmic responsibility with regard to the global reality of "one communion"? Within this larger perspective, how is the Eucharist an ecumenic sacrament as Wainwright has described it?

Secondly, since the Eucharist is a commemoration of the trinitarian event of the Paschal Mystery, how does this inspire a unified and coherent vision of the world, history and all reality? As the celebration of hope, in which the historical drama of Christian eschatology unfolds, how is the Eucharist a privileged place of meaning by which to hold together the *theologia* of God's inner life and the *oikonomia* of the divine self-giving in Christ and the Spirit so as to respect God's transcendence and immanence? Here there is a related question: What theological significance can the history of the world have for God?

Thirdly, in the Eucharist Christ is present as the bread of God, which is life for the whole world. In this regard, the Eucharist involves the whole universe, humanity and all forms of life. If hope is hope for the whole, dare we not hope that all will be saved? If such a hope is permissible and God's saving love is not restricted to any individual

but embraces the totality of creation, then in what way can we say that the Eucharist is also offered as an eschatological gift, a foretaste of the future glory to every creature? Although it is, in a strict sense, the Christian community that celebrates the Eucharist, in a wider view of hope, is it through Christians that all people and the cosmos can partake of this sacrament of salvation and give thanks and praise to God? If the Kingdom is the ultimate goal of God's intentionality with all humanity, then what is the Christian attitude toward a creative dialogue with other cultural and religious traditions? Given these huge questions, we hope that our explorations can throw some light on them.

In this chapter, we have compared and contrasted the five eschatological approaches to the Eucharist. Despite significant similarities, Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet differ in their approaches to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, as each of these theologians seeks to refashion Eucharistic theology to speak afresh to our contemporary situation. This mutual correlation of these theologies suggests some essential components for a systematic retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. To this we now turn.

## Chapter 9    Towards a Constructive Retrieval of the Eschatological Dimension of the Eucharist.

### 9.1 Introduction

Having considered the similarities and differences between the approaches of our five authors, there is no doubting the possibility of a received understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. As expressed in the Eucharist Prayers, the eschaton pervades the liturgical celebration as the sacramental anticipation of the future glory that is the Christian community's steadfast hope. The Eucharist is, in the words of Alexander Schmemmann, "the ascension of the Church to the place where she belongs in *statu patriae*."<sup>1</sup> This remark is indicative of the eschatological feature of the theologies we have investigated.

Seeking a fuller elaboration of the Eucharist as the sacrament of Christian hope, this chapter attempts to incorporate these new eschatological perspectives into a systematic presentation, and to indicate directions of further study that may enrich Eucharistic eschatology. I will identify four significant features of our theologies that can be taken into account in a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist: (1) the form of the Eucharistic hope as communion; (2) the Eucharist as source of a hope-filled praxis of liberation; (3) the Eucharist as eschatological gift of God in Christ; and (4) the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist as divine milieu of the Trinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation taken from Owen F. Cummings, *Coming to Christ: A Study in Christian Eschatology* (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 241. See also Alexander Schmemmann, "Liturgy and Eschatology," *Sobornost* 7 (1985), 12. For a more thorough treatment of the Eucharist as the sacrament of the Kingdom, see Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987). As Schmemmann writes, "The whole newness, the uniqueness of the Christian leitourgia was in its eschatological nature as the presence here and now of the future parousia, as the epiphany of that which is to come, as communion with the world to come...it is this experience that the 'Lord's day' was borne as a symbol, i.e., the manifestation, now, of the Kingdom." 43.



## **9.2 Towards a systematic synthesis of Eucharistic eschatology**

A mutually critical correlation between the theologies of Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, and the philosophies of hope as expressed in the writings of Marcel and Bloch, the question of the phenomenology of the gift in the works of Horner, Derrida, Marion and Power suggests some essential components for a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. When both philosophical and theological traditions are brought into consideration, we begin to appreciate the eschatological depth of Eucharistic hope and of the ways that humanity and the whole of creation anticipate a real communion with God and a universal transformation. Our concerns reflect the common human experience of hope for the possibility of future fulfilment.

The recognition that hope is both a vital part of human existence and an essential element of Christian faith can help in the reconstruction of the interconnection between Eucharist and eschatology. A number of questions thus enter into the anthropological aspects of hope: What is the Eucharist in relation to an understanding of becoming more fully human in all the struggles for life, love and truth? How does this sacrament of salvation move beyond the defences and isolation of individualism and the harm of dualism into a realization of true solidarity between the living and the dead, between the spiritual and the physical, between the individual and the community, between the human and the cosmic? Does the Eucharist contain the promise of new life for all creation in the new humanity of Christ? By drawing on the foregoing studies of the eschatological approaches to the Eucharist, the human phenomenon of hope and the notion of gift in contemporary critical experience, the following emerge as the major features within a constructive Eucharistic eschatology.

### **9.2.1 The form of Eucharistic hope as communion: “God will be all in all”**

The Eucharist is a celebration of the shared life and the destiny of humanity and creation. It enacts the mystery of the interconnection of personal, interpersonal, ecclesial, and cosmic salvation. In a fundamental way, the Eucharist is a sign and an effective source of “holy communion;” those who come to celebrate it are always more deeply inserted into community. In the Eucharist the many people become one

body of Christ (1 Cor 10:17) in such a way that Christ takes them up “into himself” as one body of the new creation. To participate in this eschatological sacrament means to be incorporated into the person of Christ and transformed in the totality of one’s ecclesial relationships. This focus on the Eucharist as an event of communion provides a significant point of entry for a renewed anthropology whereby Christian hope is brought into dialogue with contemporary quests for some key aspects of being human.

### **(i) The personal dimension of eschatological communion**

A first feature within this renewed anthropology arises from our awareness of being human as personal. A person may be defined as a human subject, an individual center of consciousness, an intentional, historical person with his or her own personal traits and life story, an individual identity, one who knows and is known, loves and is loved, and exists as a free, unique and unrepeatable entity.<sup>2</sup> As such, the human person is not simply someone who has a body, but someone who is a body.<sup>3</sup> This concept of person has a close affinity to our emphasis on the human subject as an embodied reality through and through, from the beginning to end.

This insight addresses the problem of traditional philosophy and theology which delivered a vision of the human person as a “composition” of body and soul and what became the classical form of dualism in which the soul is viewed as a transcendent, permanent, incorruptible principle, and the body is exactly the opposite. Here a renewed anthropological form of the Eucharistic hope stands in contrast to the traditional treatment of the human subject. It envisages the human person as at the same time embodied spirit and inspirited body. The body is, to use Lane’s words, “the key to the personal” and we can realize that “a better understanding of the body gives us a deeper understanding of the human spirit.”<sup>4</sup> A similar insight appears in the writing of Martelet, who claims that the body is “an entirely personal act of

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<sup>2</sup> See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 33, 47, 49.

<sup>3</sup> See Gilbert Ostdiek, “Body of Christ, Blood of Christ,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Dermot A. Lane Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 141.

<sup>4</sup> Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996), 36.

expression”<sup>5</sup> in a community of creation. Chauvet express this well when he speaks of the body as “the primordial place of every symbolic joining of the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’...the human ‘way’ of inhabiting the otherness of the world as a home, a familiar dwelling.”<sup>6</sup> The human person thus appears as embodied self-consciousness and exists corporeally in the world as a whole person in relation to God and to others.

Contemplation of the human person in this non-dualistic way draws attention to the eschatological hope for the fulfilment of personal life in resurrection. Christian hope is distinctive in its inclusive reference to the quest for fulfilment and wholeness; it concerns the individual in the community, the material as well as the spiritual.<sup>7</sup> While Christian hope in God’s final triumph over sin, evil, suffering and death is a total hope, it does not exclude the dimension of the person as self-identity, individuality and embodied self-manifestation. If the Risen Christ truly gives himself personally in the Eucharist, where Christians are nourished by the “deathless life of the Body of his Resurrection,”<sup>8</sup> then hope for personal fulfilment in the resurrection of the total and unified human being is an integral part of eschatological hope.

## **(ii) The interpersonal and ecclesial dimension: The event of persons in communion**

Although in terms of personal identity, being and living, each human person is a unique subject, a transcending, responsible, communicative and free being, there is something fundamentally communal about the human subject. Here a significant feature arises from our emphasis on the interpersonal and ecclesial dimension of personhood. Relationship is a fundamental characteristic of all beings in the world; one is present to oneself only insofar as one is present to others in terms of communion. Since human existence is an invitation to a life of inclusive communion with other persons and with all created entities, a person is not a self-enclosed entity. As already examined in our study, an isolated person is a contradiction in terms, just

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<sup>5</sup> Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, trans. Rene Hague (London: Collins, 1976), 42.

<sup>6</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 147.

<sup>7</sup> See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 147- 149.

<sup>8</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 176.

as an essentially unrelated, self-contained, self-focused subject or the “solitary ego” is incompatible with both the human and Christian experiences of hope. By its very nature, hope involves a consciousness of communion.<sup>9</sup> As Zizioulas phrases it, “one person is no person.”<sup>10</sup> Bloch also writes, “*unus Christianus nullus Christianus*.”<sup>11</sup> The human person fully alive is formed through relationships. For the Christian perspective, it would not be possible to speak of the personhood without the concept of communion.

The eschatological meaning of the Eucharist then emerges in this interpersonal dimension of personhood. There is no self apart from other selves. To exist is always to co-exist,<sup>12</sup> and to be always means to be in communion. Marcel reminds us that hope is always related to a “*thou*,” that is, to a real communion established among persons.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Chauvet’s eschatological approach to the Eucharistic presence speaks of the *esse* of Christ in the Eucharist in terms of his *ad-esse*, being present to the Church, to the celebrating community.<sup>14</sup> Thus, as a sacrament of hope, the Eucharist communicates not only the interaction between the divine and the human initiated by God, but also gives witness to the fact that the uniqueness of a human person exists within a community of mutual relationships.

This interpersonal dimension of human existence gradually develops into a community.<sup>15</sup> The human self becomes a self-in-community and exists in communion with other persons who are different from oneself in all levels of life. There is within such human experience a sense of belonging to the whole world as one interconnected community. As Teilhard de Chardin explains:

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<sup>9</sup> See Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 60. Hence if there is hope, it will arise not out of empirical evidence that can be tested but out of deep communion.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Cummings, *Coming to Christ: A Study in Christian Eschatology*, 270. See also John D. Zizioulas, “The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition,” *One in Christ* 24 (1988), 299. For a more possibly developed understanding of this concept of personhood, see Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice & Paul Knight, Stephen Plaice, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), 331.

<sup>12</sup> Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 38, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, 152.

<sup>14</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 389.

<sup>15</sup> See Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 36, 38, 64.

In fact, from the beginning of the Messianic preparation, up till the Parousia, passing through the historic manifestation of Jesus and the phases of growth of His Church, a single event has been developing in the world: the Incarnation, realized, in each individual, through the Eucharist.

All the communions of a life-time are one communion.

All communions of all men now living are one communion.

All the communions of all the men, present, past and future, are one.<sup>16</sup>

If Christian hope is finally in the triune God, who is essentially relational, as persons in communion, then it is necessarily a hope not of isolated individuals but of people in community, in which everyone gathers without the barriers of race, language or cultural traditions. In terms of Eucharist communion, hope is thus a positive attitude to various communities of people, an appreciation of unity in diversity, and an understanding of the ultimate reality as relational. Diarmuid O'Murchu appears to support a similar insight based on the findings of quantum physics:

God is first and foremost a propensity and power for relatedness, and the divine imprint is nowhere more apparent than in nature's own fundamental desire to relate – interdependently and interconnectedly. The earthly, the human, and the divine are in harmony in their fundamental natures, in their common propensity to relate and to enjoy interdependent coexistence.<sup>17</sup>

Just as the bread and wine become the real food and drink of the Kingdom, those who participate in the Eucharist are united in *body* to the life of the new humanity of Christ, as the result of the transforming action of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup> The Eucharist perfects and fulfils the body of Christians. Incorporated into a transfigured world of the resurrection, Christians come to a new birth in Christ, finding in him a new human community and appropriate ways to enter into solidarity with others. In other words, as the event of persons in communion, the Eucharist enables the participants to move beyond the isolation of individualism and egocentricity into a fuller expression of the body of Christ, the body of the Church, and the body of the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 123-126. See also Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> See Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 200, 201.

<sup>19</sup> See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, 64.

### (iii) The cosmic dimension

A third aspect of being human concerns our communion not only with other human beings but also with the whole of creation. Since Christian hope has a cosmic dimension, the future fulfilment which human beings yearn for, cannot be found apart from the transformation of the world to which they are bound in life and death.<sup>20</sup> As an event of eschatological communion, the Eucharist celebrates the unity and solidarity of humans, the earth, and the whole cosmos when the bread and wine, as earthly realities, come into their own as bearers of the ultimate future of humanity and the cosmos. In this sense, the mystery of the Eucharist extends to the whole of creation.

We thus arrive at an understanding of salvation as the entry of all creation into God's eternal community of love.<sup>21</sup> According to the findings of contemporary cosmology, we are all part of the whole and see everything in the cosmos and part of ourselves as interrelated. There is nothing outside the scope of this universe as "God's body," the source and breath of all existence. There is emerging a new way of looking at the universe called the "common creation story," which acts as a corrective to both

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<sup>20</sup> See Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> See Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, F.X. Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, trans. S. Attanasio (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1974). "Now God is lord of the world inasmuch as He is its creator. His power is absolute because it bears on the being of things. The restorative action of God confers upon Christ a cosmic role... 'He has put all things under him and made him as ruler of everything, the head of the Church' (Eph 1:22)... Christ is the Lord (Kyrios). His word is sovereign... 'by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe' (Phil 3:21)." 25. See H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, trans. E. Leiva-Merikakis, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988). Von Balthasar in particular sees the whole world as "a sacred theophany," a "body" of God in terms of "hypostatic union." 679. See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 552. These insights of our theologians have a strong affinity to the contemporary cosmologies that eliminate the distance separating human beings from the sub-rational, material cosmos and rediscover the interconnectedness between humanity and nature, between the self and the earth, between creation and history.

modern anthropology and the classic organic model.<sup>22</sup> This cosmic story emphasizes the one common origin of all forms of life in the whole cosmos.<sup>23</sup>

In light of this renewed anthropology as well as the eschatological approach to the Eucharist, Christian hope emerges as a concept that encompasses the entire creation, involving a transformation of the whole universe. Furthermore, in this Eucharistic model of the world as the Body of Christ, every creature is “God’s self-expression, a word of God, a sign of the Trinitarian God, a mode of divine presence.”<sup>24</sup> It is no longer possible to view the material cosmos as merely a resource to be exploited to serve humanity’s needs. Each creature is a symbol, a sacrament of God’s presence, and a work of art of the Trinitarian God.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, God’s salvation, according to Durrwell “comes upon the whole of creation without annihilation, without spoliation, without alteration: it enriches.”<sup>26</sup> Here we arrive at the point of profound respect for the created world, since the material cosmos has been entrusted to humanity which is responsible for its

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<sup>22</sup> See Peter C. Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (New York/ Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997), 12-13. The term “common creation story” refers to the one creation story that all humanity and all other life forms in the whole cosmos, and everything that is have in common. See also Peter C. Phan, “Woman and the Last Things: A Feminist Eschatology,” *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Anne O’Hare Graff (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 219; Peter C. Phan, “Eschatology and Ecology: The Environment in the End-Time,” *Dialogue & Alliance* 19.2 (1995), 105-106.

<sup>23</sup> See Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 198-202. See Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St Pauls Publication, 1991). “The human person is now understood to be matter in a mode of consciousness and freedom.” 38. See Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988). It is “that being in whom this grand diversity of the universe celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness.” 198. See Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980). The human person is “the local embodiment of a cosmos grown to self-awareness.” 286. See Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (London: J.M. Dent, 1986). Since we are created human beings with our ability to think and reflect, our capacity for communication and love, “in human beings part of the world has become conscious of itself.” 91. See John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1986). As human beings, we are part of the whole, intimately connected with the rest of matter. This cosmic dimension refers to the way that “we are all made of the ashes of dead stars.” 56. The profound unity between humans and the cosmos can be summed up in the words of Teilhard who was a pioneer in this observation: “The human person is the sum total of fifteen billion years of unbroken evolution now thinking about itself.” Cited in Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 37.

<sup>24</sup> See Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St Pauls, 1995), 130.

<sup>25</sup> See Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*. In this theological vision, all creation is understood in terms of the trinitarian God who created it. As Edwards explains, “Every creature is the divine self-expression, a symbol and sacrament of God’s trinitarian presence. Each creature is a work of art of the trinitarian God. Every species, each ecosystem, the Earth’s biosphere and the universe itself are the self-expression of divine fecundity and delight.” 116-117.

<sup>26</sup> See Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 32.

protection, preservation and cultivation. With regard to eschatological hope, then, the end of the world will not be a destruction of the universe, but a transformation and fulfilment so that it will become “the new heaven and the new earth” (Rev 21:1). Through the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection God has entered into solidarity with the cosmos and, through the grace of the Eucharist, begun the process of divinisation of the material universe itself. A renewed Eucharistic hope as cosmic communion thus emerges. Christians come to the Eucharist, bringing the bread and wine as symbols of the whole universe to be transformed by the Spirit into the body and blood of the Cosmic Christ.

### **9.2.2 The Eucharist as source of a hope-filled praxis of liberation**

Christian hope is primarily justified in its praxis, its committed responsible action for the salvation of the world, for its liberation from social oppression and cultural alienation. The action for justice and the praxis of liberation in present history become an imperative intrinsic to the celebration of the Eucharist. As a celebration of hope, unity, peace and reconciliation, the Eucharist thus reminds Christians of the part they must play in helping resolve exploitative and unjust situations. As Gustavo Gutierrez emphasizes, “Without a real commitment against exploitation and alienation and for a society of solidarity and justice, the Eucharistic celebration is an empty action, lacking any genuine endorsement by those who participate in it.”<sup>27</sup> Here the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist brings effective meaning and power not only to the personal and interpersonal realms, but also to the body politic, the social systems which we create and in turn shape us. A vision of hope in terms of the concrete performance of love of neighbour highlights the intrinsic and dynamic connection between the celebration of the Eucharist and the praxis of liberation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 150.

<sup>28</sup> For a further development of the interconnection of the Eucharist with social justice, see Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979). Our theologians, particularly Wainwright, Martelet and Chauvet, provide significant insights of how this can be done in terms of an active engagement with the issues of the historical world and our times. See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 399-415; Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 35-36, 183-184; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 277-278.



### **(i) The political, social and liberating implications of the Eucharist: Hunger for justice**

The most dramatic illustration of the divine demand for justice and for the liberation of the oppressed is the story of Exodus. This great story of the liberation from slavery and the journey across the wilderness to the land of promise and the covenant established by God on Sinai prefigures the liberation of all humanity in the context of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. It is not, however, an isolated example of God's concern for the poor. The prophets often speak of God's judgement on those who consider that the performance of religious ritual, rather than the struggle for justice for all, is the principal demand God makes upon people (Is 1:11-17; 58:4-8; Mic 3:1-3; 6:7-11).

God's saving activity on behalf of the poor and the oppressed is continued and intensified in the New Testament. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus in his public ministry is portrayed as having a special compassion for the marginalized and the oppressed. For him, eschatological hope is the basis for social justice and ethics. He welcomed society's outcasts and sinners into table-fellowship with him as an anticipation of the Kingdom, announcing the year of God's liberation (Lk 4:18-19). This prophetic and eschatological tradition also appears in the life and worship of the earliest Christian community (Acts 2:44-47; 3:13-15; 4:32). According to the biblical witness, Christian faith is active in deeds of justice and love, and they are the test of true forms of worship.

The fundamental characteristic of the Eucharist as praxis of liberation can be understood in terms of communion, which has a threefold sense.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, it concerns the liberation from social situations of oppression and alienation. The Eucharist

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<sup>29</sup> The profound unity among the different meanings of communion or *koinonia* in the New Testament both expresses and summarizes these ideas. Here I borrow from Gutierrez, who cited in Yves Congar, with acknowledgement, the threefold implication of the term *koinonia*. See Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 150. Firstly, *koinonia* signifies the common ownership of the goods necessary for earthly existence. It is a concrete gesture of human charity. Secondly, *koinonia* designates the union of the faithful with Christ through the Eucharist. It is a means of sharing in the body of Christ. Thirdly, *koinonia* means the union of the Christians with the triune God. For a more thorough and best summary of the meanings of the New Testament *koinonia*, see William Barclay, *A New Testament Word Book* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 71-72. Here I find this summary in Horton Davies, *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy: Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist* (West Broadway, Eugene OR 97401: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 123-124.

embodies and defines a mode of human community as the body of Christ, for it celebrates Christ's victory over all that oppresses and divides; it is the victory of a new order into which Christians are gathered together, united with Christ in his death and now raised to live the resurrected life (Rom 6:4-5). The Eucharist indicates this new order as eschatological hope, consisting in a total openness to the reign of God, the reign of justice and peace. To this Eucharistic hope then, Christian response must be a life of mercy, justice and love for others. All kinds of injustice, racism, separation, division and lack of freedom are thus radically challenged when Christians come to share the Eucharist, the privileged place for knowing God's presence.

Secondly, the Eucharist as liberation calls for a personal and ecclesial transformation by which Christians live with inner freedom in the face of every kind of bondage. The Eucharist sets them free from the fear of suffering and death, from loneliness, self-centeredness and pride, in order to form a community in which all can share life with each other, having all things in common and placing themselves at the service of the poor and the needy (1 Jn 1:3, 6; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 9:13; Rom 15:26-27). In celebrating the Eucharist, the Christian community is called to witness to what the resurrection of Christ promises for the future of the world.

Thirdly, the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christian liberation from sin in all its dimensions. Sin, whenever it exists, is a destructive influence in the reality of all relationships, a breaking of communion with God and with other human beings, and thus is the exact opposite of what God is, namely, persons in communion. Through sharing in Christ's body and blood, Christians are progressively wrenched from the forces of evil. The Eucharist reveals to them the presence of sin in the selfishness, in the apathy or complicity in social injustice, while drawing them towards a new life. As Gutierrez explains:

In the Eucharist we celebrate the cross and the resurrection of Christ, his Passover from death to life, and our passing from sin to grace. In the Gospel the Last Supper is presented against the background of the Jewish Passover, which celebrated the liberation from Egypt and the Sinai Covenant. The Christian Passover takes on and reveals the full meaning of the Jewish Passover. Liberation from sin is at the very root of political liberation. The former reveals what is really involved in the latter.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 149.

In this way, God's saving and healing action in Christ is what the Eucharist recalls and celebrates against all the forces of destructiveness (1 Cor 11:17-24; Jas 2:14). As Kelly notes, the Eucharistic celebration is "a moment of conversion - to go beyond the alienations, boundaries, polarities and classes of the given society in order to become a genuinely open community of love and hope for all."<sup>31</sup> Each celebration of the Eucharist is the outcome of the divine all-forgiving love and reconciliation; it is both a moment of truth and a movement of life and growth.

The Christian community that gathers for the Eucharist cannot share the communion of divine life without reflecting upon what that means for Christian agape in a world without sufficient nourishment, a world in which injustice, poverty, and oppression are ever present realities. To celebrate the memorial of the death of Christ "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26) means to adopt a practice of Eucharistic hospitality, a readiness to give one's very life. Participation in the Body of Christ, as Martelet asserts, "presupposes acceptance of the daily effort for justice in love."<sup>32</sup> This eschatological vision of the Eucharist is deeply rooted in its "memory of Jesus," in what he proclaimed and lived in terms of the Kingdom. Yet, this Eucharistic witness is not simply a looking back toward the life of Jesus. It also looks forward and shares visions of what is to come, visions of the peace of God's Kingdom by which the creation will be transformed and fulfilled.

## **(ii) The Eucharist and the human hunger for meaning and purpose**

The disclosure of the nature of human existence in terms of "hunger" as Bloch has described it also provokes further questions. This notion provides a significant Eucharistic application in terms of a hunger for the Bread of Life, for full participation in the divine hospitality. How then can the Eucharist as the bread of life be understood? Does not the Eucharist in this perspective recall our responsibility to deal with the dominant hungers of the world, such as the hunger for freedom and dignity, the hunger for peace and love, for meaning and purpose?

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<sup>31</sup> Tony Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2001), 70-71.

<sup>32</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 187.

Since the Eucharist links the living bread of the Eucharist (Jn 6: 31-57) with the manna given by God to the hungry people in the wilderness (Ex 16: 4-35), the bread broken and shared enables the Christian community to glimpse the shape of a new world that is coming to be. Here the Eucharist becomes a sign of the generous justice by which God invites the hungry to the eschatological banquet.<sup>33</sup> Bloch reminds us that hunger is a general experience and common to all human beings.<sup>34</sup> It refers, on one level, to the physical sustenance and, on another level, to the human sense of incompleteness, which makes people reach out for new life in terms of communion and continuing betterment. Hunger calls into being what is “not yet” and is a realm of possibility.<sup>35</sup> On whatever level such hunger is defined, it reveals, in a deeper sense, the essential interconnectedness and interdependence of all humanity and all creation.

If hunger brings into focus both our human dependence on the bounty of nature and our interrelationship with one another, the Eucharist concerns material and spiritual needs without making one more important than the other. Because its primary symbols are drawn from the activities of human life: the bread of human labour and struggle, the wine of human fellowship and commitment, the Eucharist is not a sacramental world separated from that of social reality. Christian tradition confirms that, in the Eucharistic celebration, Christ makes himself known to us not only on the table as the bread of God, but also “in the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:32, 35). This is an act of sharing daily food with the hungry, showing hospitality to the strangers, and thereby giving them hope. In the Eucharistic sharing, we find a positive correspondence between human welfare on earth and final salvation in heaven, between the historical future and the eschatological Kingdom.<sup>36</sup> Martelet maintains, for example, that the Eucharist “cannot escape from the world problems that the provision of food forces upon humankind.”<sup>37</sup> It is in this perspective that we can understand the Eucharist as hope’s food and drink for the world.

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<sup>33</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 427.

<sup>34</sup> See Monika K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (Franklin, Wisconsin: Sheed & Ward, 1999), 2. For Hellwig, hunger has many meanings. As she writes, “The basic physical hunger for food has very close analogies in the needs that people have for other kinds of sustenance, far less easily recognized and identified.” The critical challenges of our time are, so argues Hellwig, “the hunger for freedom and dignity, often manifesting itself in the struggle for national independence...and the hunger for peace, expressing a desire to live and enjoy God’s hospitality in reciprocity with other people.” 14.

<sup>35</sup> See Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*, 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 427.

<sup>37</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 37. Yet as individuals we find it difficult to keep alive hopeful visions of a future facing the problems of the world hunger and socio-political

Food and drink, however, are not just a means for survival or staying alive. In the New Testament, for instance, every table fellowship with Jesus is, in a wider sense, an event of peace, liberation, trust and hospitality, a sign of reconciliation and an anticipation of the eschatological banquet in the consummation of the Kingdom (Lk 14:15; 15:2; Mk 2:15-17; Mt 26:29).<sup>38</sup> There is an obvious, though not literal sense in which Jesus can claim to be the bread of life (Jn 6:35, 48, 51), which God provides for the world's nourishment, feeding the hunger of humanity for meaning and purpose in life. The Eucharist thus becomes a constant challenge for the Christian community in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life, pointing to a sharing and reconciled community, and the fullness of life.

### **9.2.3 The Eucharist as eschatological gift of God in Christ**

Based on our earlier discussion on the significance of the Eucharist as eschatological gift, it appears that the future is nothing less than God's own gracious self-bestowal. To this, our response must be understood as participation, in Christ, of what God will do to transform the whole of creation. In what sense then, can we say that, in the Eucharist, Christians anticipate the future and are given a foretaste of things to come? Since the Eucharist is already communion with Christ, and yet a communion which will reach its plenitude with the coming of the reign of God, how does this expectation give new energy for the cultivation of this life with all the practical aspects of hope? We note that the Eucharist is always God's self-gift that freely initiates this communion of life and love. Here the notion of the pure gift, as correlated with contemporary critical experience, is also fundamental to the ways we understand the Eucharist as a celebration of thanksgiving.

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injustice. It is only when Christians come together in a community to celebrate the memorial of Christ in prospect of the reign of God that they can begin to envision a way out and a world of new possibility.  
<sup>38</sup> By sitting with the poor and the outcasts, Jesus presents a kind of lived vision of the future fulfilment. This is also conveyed in various stories of the marvellous feeding (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14). What unfolds in these stories is the culmination of Jesus' activities of gathering the crowds, the hungry and tired people that flock about him, teaching, response to needs and community-formation. In establishing such a new community, he gives them the necessary food that sustains their life journey. This option highlights communication and communion in relationships with God and with one another.

### (i) The Eucharist as gift of freedom

The gift of freedom is connected with the Eucharist as the Eucharist is with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The Eucharist is the sacramental celebration of a new Passover in which Christ communicates to humanity the gift of himself, so that the whole world may move towards “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21; 1 Jn 3:1-3).<sup>39</sup> In all its salvific reality, the Eucharist is Christ’s free gift of self, which reveals the authentic meaning of a love freely given: “Having loved his own in the world, he loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). It manifests, in this sense, the basic vision of the mystery of grace, “a divine gift distinguished by its gratuity.”<sup>40</sup> Sharing in the Eucharist, Christians open their minds and heart to the gift of freedom in Christ. Eating and drinking what Christ’s Body and Blood, they become “partakers of his glorious life.”<sup>41</sup> As the fourth Eucharistic acclamation expresses it, “Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the Saviour of the world.” The Eucharist is thus a celebration of a new Passover from darkness to light, from sin to freedom. What the Christian community receives is “sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Rom 6:22).

In this gracious reality, Christians are free to accept the Eucharist which is offered to them. It is not something they earn or merit on their own. Yet, the acceptance of the Eucharistic grace enhances their freedom, makes them free to give in terms of their unconditional relationships with God and others. There is no such thing as debt or an obligation to satisfy some exchange in economic terms.<sup>42</sup> Rather, as Christians

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<sup>39</sup> See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Here Zizioulas remarks, in connection with the relation between the Eucharist and the locus of truth that “a Eucharistic concept of truth shows how truth becomes freedom (Jn 8:32).” To liberate all humanity, Christ has preferred to make himself one of us eucharistically, becoming ‘the living bread that came down from heaven,’ and ‘for the life of the world’ (Jn 6:51). In this way, the truth of the Eucharist is one that “liberates man from his lust to dominate nature, making him aware that Christ-truth exists for the life of the whole cosmos, and that the deification which Christ brings, the communion with the divine life (2 Pet 1:4), extends to “all creation” and not just to humanity.” 120.

<sup>40</sup> See “The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life,” trans. Robert R. Barr, *Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000* (New York: The Crossroad, 1999), 20.

<sup>41</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 48, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 408.

<sup>42</sup> See Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). If all of God’s relationships to us are freely-given, gifted and gracious, there would be no obligation attached, and then the good news is, as Horner emphasizes, “that we owe God nothing, that God’s (is) a gift that is really free, and that in this gift, giving, which is strictly impossible, stirs in us as desire.” 247.

celebrate the Paschal Mystery in the Eucharist, they grow in the new life of freedom which Christ has won for the world. This freedom is the capacity to create and to develop the conditions for orienting human life toward the future in which God's work of salvation can be fully realised. In other words, the Eucharist is a participation in the source of divine freedom and an anticipation of God's promise for the future. It is both divine gift and activity in the sense that it is even now joined with our own bringing forth into history the fulfilment of God's Kingdom.

Bloch considers at some point that freedom is the ultimate fulfilment of hope. If freedom is, as he expresses it, the one thing necessary,<sup>43</sup> then the Eucharist is the most surprising gift of the divine freedom, connecting it with the gifts of freedom in the mystery of Christ. These gifts can be expressed as freedom from loneliness and isolation for relationships and communion, freedom from hunger for sharing in the meal of the Kingdom, freedom from sin for salvation and reconciliation, and freedom to hope for the fulfilment of future glory.<sup>44</sup>

## **(ii) The Eucharist as celebration of thanksgiving**

As has been explored, whatever the circumstance, the Eucharist is the sacrament of thanksgiving in which Christians gather together to celebrate and share God's saving gift in Christ.<sup>45</sup> According to contemporary critical thought, however, the bestowal and reception of a gift is, in essence, sheer generosity. Since there is no expectation of a return in any form, then how are Christians to understand the Eucharist as a thanksgiving celebration? What can they possibly do to celebrate the graciousness of such divine benevolence?

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<sup>43</sup> See Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 158. For Bloch, it is, however, from human beings that the world can expect its realization and vice versa, the realization of the world process is parallel with the self-realization of human beings.

<sup>44</sup> In his Eucharistic hymn, *Verbum Supernum*, Thomas Aquinas gives a summary of four freedoms, central to Christian life: "By being born he gave us companionship. At Supper he gave us food. On the Cross he was our ransom. Reigning in glory he gives us reward [eternal life]." Cited in John Moloney, "The Eucharist: Proclamation and Gift of Freedom," in *Eucharist and Freedom*, 46<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress, Wroclaw, Poland, (May, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> See Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*. For Kelly, sometimes the praise of God "is simply ecstatic, a spontaneous act of Christian *joie de vivre*." 75.

Christians come to give thanks, not because of the feeling of being indebted, but because they live in a world of grace and blessing; they become the anticipatory fulfilment of Christ's self-giving love in history. It is the Eucharist that transforms the community of Christians into the new humanity of Christ, so that they, in turn, become bread for the world, to be broken, given away and consumed. The Eucharist is a celebration of thanksgiving precisely in the sense that the grace of the Eucharist is free gift of God, of which no one can take possession, since it is never simply in the present passing moment, but is eschatologically oriented, always moving into the future.

An important consideration here is that the Eucharist is an open gift, not a gift closed in upon itself, but overflowing, making place for creation and history. As the fourth weekday preface in the Eucharist expresses: "You have no need of our praise, yet our desire to thank you is itself your gift. Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to your greatness, but makes us grow in your grace."<sup>46</sup> In the face of such Eucharistic giftedness, unlike the human situation of giving, God's giving demands no obligations, but offers divine life, freely and graciously, and out of the sheer desire to give.<sup>47</sup> The only fitting response that can give meaning to the acts of praise and thanksgiving of the Christian community is the willingness to enter into the fellowship of love between the divine persons, and to participate in the sharing of life with others. As Kelly explains:

Whatever the circumstance, God and only God stands at the beginning and at the end of all we are – and thanking the divine goodness is a permanent dimension of the faith, hope, and love we profess. It is not as though God needs our praise and thanksgiving, however, for it is ourselves who need to become thankful and praising people if we are to live in our true freedom and spiritual creativity.<sup>48</sup>

This is a genuine and spontaneous appreciation of the gift of the Eucharist. Christian praise is, as Kelly puts it, "our way into the inner life of God."<sup>49</sup> This means that,

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<sup>46</sup> Eucharistic Preface, Weekdays IV.

<sup>47</sup> See Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*. Kelly also expresses this point in his book and remarks: "In the fragmentation and threat we experience in our world, the eucharistic imagination takes us out of ourselves so that we can find our real origin, center, and destiny in God...praise and thanksgiving –gift of grace– are signs of a transformed heart." 75.

<sup>48</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 76.



through thanksgiving and praise, those who participate in the Eucharist are drawn into God's lifestyle. The Eucharistic gift continues, in this sense, to increase, being at any one moment beyond measure, the continual dawning of the future. It is, therefore, not gift fully possessible in the present moment, not in any way given back to God, nor adding something to God's being, but rather witness to the mystery of Christ's self-giving love, always open to surprise.

### **(iii) The Eucharist as sharing in God's gift of salvation in history**

An important outcome of this eschatological vision of the Eucharist is the responsible sharing of Christians in God's gift of salvation in history, preparing the way for the coming reign of God. If the gift is only received in the giving, without expectation of return, then, in a similar fashion, the Christian community is called to embody the very promise of the future Kingdom of God. The Eucharist, as Wainwright observes, "has an inescapable missionary significance in so far as it is the sign of the great feast which God will offer...to express for ever the universal triumph of His saving will and purpose."<sup>50</sup> Thus there is a real flow to the eucharistic gift opening up its possibility, and drawing Christians into communion in witness and mission.

In the Eucharist, the self-giving love of God shows forth in the self-giving love of Christ, and then, as Power envisions:

This self-giving love of Christ shows forth further when through the Spirit it is embodied in the Church, which in turn gives that life, pours out that love from within itself, so that others may share in it. Bestowed upon, Christians are in turn bestowers.<sup>51</sup>

Christians therefore cannot in honesty speak of Christ's self-giving love in the Eucharist, if this gift does not carry over into the manner of Christian living, in all of its manifestations of self-emptying, so that they become active participants in the

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<sup>50</sup> Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 128.

<sup>51</sup> David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999). For Power, it is through the eucharistic gift that we are invited "into a life where the excess and abundance of divine gift is a revelation of the excess and abundance of love, imaged primarily in the self-emptying of Christ and the pouring of the Spirit." 281.

transformation of the world.<sup>52</sup> In other words, the Eucharist is Christian entrance into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. When Christians proclaim Christ's free self-offering, they celebrate their own life of freedom, entering into "the pure unselfishness of the communal life of the Trinity itself," and thus participating "in the selfless love of the divine."<sup>53</sup> The Eucharistic and the eschatological are thus essentially interconnected in the self-giving of Christ. In a certain sense, one can say that the primary significance of the Eucharist is the bread that must be broken and shared in anticipation of the future.

The simple action of carrying the gifts and the prayers of offering recall the entire economic, political and social realities of our world and all forms of life, bringing to our consciousness all these gifts, all the kinds of giving that nourish our existence, the holiness and wholeness of creation.<sup>54</sup> While the Christian community continues to "proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1Cor 11:26), the Eucharist embraces the realities of human experience including the lack of freedom and various experiences of alienation and ecological issues. The Eucharist, then, is celebrated in the hope of reaching ultimate freedom from the concrete reality of suffering and death. True hope is learned in communion with the God who is with us, for us, and involved with us in our struggle to bring forth a just and loving world. Understood in this way, the Eucharist has profound significance for the mission of the Church in the world today.

Whatever the ultimate future of humanity and the cosmos may hold, God's saving action will be fully consistent with what God has done in the history of salvation

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<sup>52</sup> See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. It is precisely in this eschatological character of the Eucharist that Zizioulas remarks: "The Eucharist is not only an assembly in one place, that is, a historical realization and manifestation of the eschatological existence of man; it is at the same time also *movement*, a progress towards this realization. Assembly and movement are the two fundamental characteristics of the Eucharist...it belongs to the eschatological transcendence of history and not simply to history. The ecclesial hypostasis reveals man as a person, which, however, has its roots in the future and is perpetually inspired, or rather maintained and nourished, by the future. *The truth and the ontology of the person belong to the future, are images of the future*...It becomes a movement of free love with a universal character." 61-63.

<sup>53</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*. To appreciate this point, says Kelly, "we must keep in mind the relationship of Christ to the whole universe, as mentioned above. For in Christ 'all things hold together', just as he 'sums up' all creation (Eph 1:10). He is the 'firstborn' of all creation and its final homecoming. He draws into himself creation in all its forms. In this extended sense, all creation is on its way to being 'transubstantiated' –transformed in Christ to achieve its final reality." 85-88.

decisively confirmed in Christ. For this reason, the historical world really matters, because it mediates to all humanity in a sacramental way the goodness and salvation of God. Chauvet stresses that to “devalue history is...to devalue eschatology.”<sup>55</sup> For Martelet, too, eschatology “does not wipe out history; it passes judgment on history and serves to crown it.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, the secular history is by no means extrinsic to the history of salvation; it holds within itself the anticipation of a possible future. A celebration of the Eucharist as eschatological sacrament thus attunes the Christian community to the value of its social transformation and cultural creations and the different ways the Spirit has been at work in the world. In the Eucharistic celebration, the “fruits of the earth and the works of human hands” are not only a reminder of all of God’s bounteous creation freely received, but they symbolize human longing for the future renewal of all things.

#### **9.2.4 The liturgical celebration of the Eucharist as divine milieu of the Trinity**

Our study of the interconnection of the Eucharist with eschatology also leads to an understanding that the Eucharist is the divine milieu, the holy space of the life-giving mystery of the Trinity. When Christians come to celebrate the Eucharist, they actually participate, as an eschatological community, in communion with God’s very life. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Eucharistic Prayer itself. The Eucharistic Prayer expresses in a concentrated way, both in word and in action, the reality of Christian hope. The great doxology: “Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever” points in this eschatological and trinitarian direction. Thus the whole Eucharistic worship becomes a locus for the reception and transmission of the vision of a future,<sup>57</sup> wherein everything is coming from and moving towards the Trinity, as the origin and goal of all creation.

In the Eucharist, the believers are invited into relationship with each of the persons of the Trinity. This invitation to communion in and with the divine life is realized in the

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<sup>55</sup> See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 240.

<sup>56</sup> Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 165.

<sup>57</sup> Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, 9.

liturgical prayer that is addressed *to* God the Father, *through* the mediation of Christ the Son and performed *in* the Spirit.

Firstly, as addressed to God the Father, who is “the fountain of all holiness,”<sup>58</sup> the “source of life and goodness,”<sup>59</sup> the Eucharist is the culmination of the Church’s prayer of thanksgiving for “the fullness of grace”<sup>60</sup> that has been given in Christ, as well as prayer of praise for all the divine actions in history that show “wisdom and love.”<sup>61</sup> In this celebration of thanks and praise, God the Father appears as the God of creation and consummation. What God has begun in creation, God will bring to fulfilment in the eschaton, for God’s purpose in what God does is to fill all “creatures with every blessing.”<sup>62</sup> In this sense, the Eucharist expresses the doxological vocation of all created beings, that is, the participation in the song of the whole universe, the “Holy, holy, holy.” All of creation celebrates and sings the glory of God through human beings. As Mazza remarks, “The Sanctus thus expresses the union of the liturgy of heaven with the earthly liturgy being celebrated by our community. We on earth take the angels and saints as models for our liturgical praise and glorification of God; as a result, the anaphora takes on an eschatological dimension.”<sup>63</sup> It is in the Eucharistic celebration that the eschatological future meets and shapes the Christian experience of becoming one with the whole cosmos, so as to be its voice in a continual hymn of praise to God.

Secondly, the Christian community celebrates the Eucharist as a memorial of Christ in the context of “calling to mind” the whole Paschal Mystery of his life, death, resurrection and coming in glory. In the Eucharistic celebration Christ appears as the High Priest,<sup>64</sup> carrying out the only possible liturgy,<sup>65</sup> through whom the Church performs the same priestly action. In responding to Jesus’ command: “Do this in memory of me,” the community of believers actually prays and honours God: “Father,

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<sup>58</sup> Eucharistic Prayer II

<sup>59</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III and IV

<sup>60</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV

<sup>61</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV

<sup>62</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV

<sup>63</sup> Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986), 163.

<sup>64</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: A Theological Theory 4: The Action*. 398. See also Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, 197-198; and Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 250.

<sup>65</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, 250.

calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and ready to greet him when he comes again, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.”<sup>66</sup> As Christians celebrate the Eucharist the significance of Christ’s event comes into focus. Here they experience in advance his eschatological coming: “They experience by celebrating it in sacramental form, for in the liturgy, ‘celebrate’ means ‘make present.’”<sup>67</sup> As a celebration of the memorial of Christ, the Eucharist thus requires the Christian community as the medium for a primary experience of Christ’s invitation to the Kingdom. It demands them to live the dawning future, that is, God’s reign in the present moment.

Thirdly, all this is brought about through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life. To say that the Eucharist witnesses to the power of Christ at work in history is to say that the Spirit is at work, since the risen and glorified Lord is the Spirit-filled Lord.<sup>68</sup> Here there is a very real sense in which we acknowledge the Christological and Pneumatological aspects of the Eucharist. As in the history of salvation, so in the Eucharistic event, the missions of Christ and the Spirit are complementary; the sending of one person implies the sending of the other. In this way, the purpose of the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the creativity of the Spirit, is to accomplish the function of Christ’s self-giving in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the gifts of bread and wine are to be sanctified and transformed into their ultimate reality: “We ask you to make them holy that they may become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>69</sup> The Spirit is also invoked so that the Eucharistic communion in the body of Christ takes its effects in the believers: “Grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ.”<sup>70</sup> In this regard, as John H. McKenna describes:

This is the goal of the Eucharist. And it is precisely this interiorization and divinisation that is the task of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. He is there not simply to “Spiritize” the bread and wine by making the glorified body and blood of Christ present in them. Even more, He is there to “Spiritize” those

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<sup>66</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III.

<sup>67</sup> See Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*. “Our experience of the final coming finds expression in the very celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice.” 133-134.

<sup>68</sup> See Durrwell, *The Eucharist: Presence of Christ*, 14. See also H. U. von Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, trans. T. Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979), 112. See also Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Eschatology and Sacrament,” *Theology Digest* 48.1 (2001), 6-7.

<sup>69</sup> Eucharistic Prayers II, III, IV.

<sup>70</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III.

who partake of the bread and wine by making the glorified Lord present in them.<sup>71</sup>

Such is the goal of the Eucharist as an event of communion. The purpose of the Eucharist is both the divinisation of the Christian community, the communion of the believers with the triune God, and the communion with one another. As consecrated and transformed by the activity of the Spirit into the Body of Christ, the Christian community bears witness to the glory of God and is, in the words of Kelly, “renewed in its authentically Trinitarian life.”<sup>72</sup> Through the self-giving love of Christ and in the creativity of the Spirit, the Father is made known to the community of believers and they are divinised, as they are drawn into this Trinitarian event of salvation.<sup>73</sup> The Eucharist thus emerges as the manifestation of the mystery of communion of the triune God.<sup>74</sup> In other words, it is centered on the glory of the triune God that is revealed above all in the death and resurrection of Christ and that contains the promise of new life for the whole creation. Thus, as the life-giving milieu of the Trinity, the Eucharist can only proclaim the hope of glory.

### 9.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we attempted to bring together some key elements in the continuing exploration of the Eucharist and its interconnection with eschatology. It thus appears that, as the memorial of Christ’s Passover, and as the “breaking of bread” (Acts 2: 42,46) in the early Christian community, the Eucharist is celebrated in the context of the Risen Lord’s presence in the midst of his disciples (Lk 24:28-35,36-43; Jn

<sup>71</sup> John H. McKenna, “Eucharistic Epiclesis: Myopia or Microcosm,” *Theological Studies* 36.2 (1975). “This ‘Spiritizing’ of those partaking involves two aspects. First, the Holy Spirit makes the body and blood of Christ, in a sense, capable of achieving its saving effects in the faithful. Secondly, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the faithful to open them to the action of the sacramental body and blood of the Lord. If either the presence of Christ offering himself or the acceptance of the assembled faithful is lacking, a full sacramental encounter does not take place. Now it is the Holy Spirit who makes possible not only the offer and the attitude of acceptance but also the joining of the two here and now in the celebration of the Eucharist.” 278.

<sup>72</sup> Tony Kelly, *The Trinity of Love: A Theology of Christian God* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 8.

<sup>73</sup> See Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Charles U. Quinn (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968). Bouyer sums up the missions of Christ and the Spirit in the Eucharist: “The consecrator of all these Eucharists is always Christ alone, the Word made flesh, insofar as he is ever the dispenser of the Spirit because he handed himself over to death and then rose from the dead by the power of the Spirit. But in the indivisible totality of the Eucharist, this Word, evoked by the Church, and her own prayer calling for the fulfilment of the Word through the power of the Spirit, come together for the mysterious fulfilment of the divine promises.” 467.

<sup>74</sup> Balthasar, *New Elucidations*, 140.

21:9-13). For Christians, it is a distinctive sign of their faith that sees the interconnection between the Kingdom and the resurrection. Ultimately, as a participation in the risen life, together with the transformation of the material elements of bread and wine into the Body of Christ, the Eucharist speaks of the dreams and hopes released by Christ for the future destiny of humanity and the whole of creation. A new sense of being in the world and of being in communion is proposed that changes the horizon of hope, and certainly derives consequences for liturgical, spiritual and ethical practices for the Christian community. The Eucharistic celebration is thus the privileged meeting-place of the Trinitarian God and the Christian community in the present moment as an event of salvation history. This event is as yet an object of hope, and the working out of salvation in this present time is but a beginning or a sign and anticipation of what is to come. As the body of Christ, the Christian community offers “the fruits of the earth, the work of human hands,” pulling together words, signs and ritual actions to radiate what is most true, good and beautiful of God’s holiness and love. Every prayer, every act of sharing, eating and drinking together in the Eucharist is eschatological, pointing towards its completion in the fullness of time.

## **Chapter 10 Summary and Conclusion: The Eucharist As Pledge of Future Glory**

In this thesis we have explored the eschatological nature of the Eucharist and its implications for Christian liturgy, spirituality and ethical practice, with the aim of constructing a systematic synthesis of Eucharistic eschatology. More specifically, our focus was on a contemporary understanding of the future-oriented character of the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory. As a commemoration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the Eucharist permits and indeed obliges the Christian community to live the present “between time” in eschatological hope. To share in the Eucharist at all is an anticipation of the coming of Christ in glory and the heavenly banquet. To eat and drink at the Eucharistic table is to be united with Christ and to be nourished by the self-giving and transforming love of the triune God. The Eucharist is therefore a foretaste of the fullness of grace to come.

### **10.1 Overview of our exploration and findings**

The method employed in this study was analytico-synthetical, descriptive and, where appropriate, interpretative and critical. In the first part of the thesis, we demonstrated the timeliness of the topic, given that no single work on the interconnection of the Eucharist and eschatology has been written on the topic since Geoffrey Wainwright’s book, published in 1978. In successive chapters we confirmed that, despite many significant works of Eucharistic theology in the last four decades, there has been no systematic synthesis of the Eucharist and eschatology. We proceeded to develop an approach that was holistic and systematic by seeking interdisciplinary connections between contemporary philosophies of hope, represented by such figures as Marcel and Bloch, and of the phenomenology of gift, represented by postmodern philosophers, such as Horner, Derrida, and Marion on the one hand, and contemporary theologies of the Eucharist represented by Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar, and Chauvet on the other hand. Here we attempted to bring into dialogue the two groups of thinkers, so that the implications of their thoughts would inform our exploration of the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist.



An exposition of philosophical positions taken by Marcel, Bloch, Horner, Derrida and Marion laid the foundations for an exploration of the eschatological meaning and practice of Eucharistic hope. Marcel's way of *homo viator*, of the human being "on the journey," attuned us to the virtue of hope and the "not-yet-existing-being" of the human existence. The only attitude that corresponds to our actual existential situation is hope. While Marcel's hope is an existential orientation toward the realization of one's own being and ultimately toward "the Eternal Thou," for Bloch it is not God but the human community, in our entire endeavour and cultural activity as moved by a concrete hope for a future, which will transcend all alienation. Bloch contributes an understanding of the ontological priority of the future in relation to the condition of the human being, whose creative existence unfolds in hope toward an ever-open future.

From the Christian perspective, however, we argued that the absolute future is received as God's incalculable gift, and depends on God's gracious initiative. We therefore turned to consider the phenomenon of the gift, its conditions of possibility and impossibility, as explored in the works of Horner, Derrida and Marion. The true gift is not consumed in the present passing moment, but is eschatologically oriented. As an eschatological "event," the gift continues to increase, being at any moment beyond measure. What is freely given is then the seed of participation and mutuality. Both the giver and recipient collaborate for the enhancement of the same gift. This understanding offered a helpful perspective on the Eucharist as the eschatological gift of God in Christ. Moreover to acknowledge the gift of future glory is also to be commissioned to a task. Christians cannot bring about the Kingdom by their own efforts, but they can be empowered by their hope in God to work for a greater justice, freedom, and peace, and for the renewal of all things. In this sense, the Eucharist is open to a real future, and that future is finally the fruit of human history in response to the possibilities offered by God.

Our exploration of philosophies of hope and gift then served as a background to our enquiry into the eschatological character of the Eucharist, informing the various dimensions of our study and influencing in no small measure those elements which were highlighted in the study of our respective theologians, Wainwright, Durrwell, Martelet, von Balthasar and Chauvet, albeit admittedly more implicitly than

explicitly. Clearly another thesis remains to be written dealing with the Eucharist as eschatological gift, engaging more explicitly the philosophical insights garnered here in our investigation, especially Bloch's concept of hope and Marion's notion of gift. My hope has been to contribute something of common interest to the on-going discussion with regard to the eschatological meaning of the Eucharist in the Christian life, perhaps even to widen its scope.

In the second part of the thesis, we attempted to systematically explore the thought of the five chosen theologians. This approach allowed us to distil the central features that characterise the relationship between the Eucharist and eschatology. We can now summarise our exploration as follows:

1. Wainwright's eschatological approach described the Eucharist as the foretaste of the messianic banquet. The Eucharist gives hope a taste of what is to come. Christians are people of the future, since they have tasted the real presence of the glorious future that God has "already" given to all creation through Christ and in the Spirit (Heb 6:5). There is still, however, the sense that all is "not yet" fulfilled. The Eucharist is thus celebrated in the steadfast hope of the Parousia (1 Cor 11:26). As the Kingdom will be a time in which new wine will be drunk (Mk 14:25; Mt 16:29; Lk 22:15-18), so also it will be a time in which the whole of creation will be redeemed and transformed. When Christ appears, those who participate in his Paschal Mystery will appear with him in glory (Col 3:3-4), and "all the promises of God find their 'Yes' in him" (2 Cor 1:20). It became clear in this chapter that Wainwright has brought together a theology of the Eucharist and a theology of the Kingdom, a conjunction already intimated in early Christian writings but articulated in a rich and detailed way in his theological work.
2. Durrwell's eschatology study of the Eucharist draws its inspiration from the Scriptures, and claims for the Eucharist the real presence of the sacrifice as well as the real presence of the Risen Christ. As the real presence of the eternally glorified Christ, the Eucharist is placed beyond earthly realities and beyond the philosophies which interpret it. For Durrwell, since eschatology is "already" accomplished in Christ's death, in which he is glorified according to

the fullness of God, the Eucharist is called the sacrament of the Parousia. In other words, the Christ of the Parousia is the Paschal Christ, eternal in the death by which he glorified and given to Christians in the Eucharist. Durrwell understands the Eucharist in terms of the eschatological plenitude of the Paschal Mystery. The death-resurrection-glorification of Christ is the culmination and fulfilment of salvation history, so that the Eucharist, as sacrifice-presence-communion, as real food and drink of the Kingdom, is both the principle for interpreting Christian hope of glory and the paradigm for the future fulfilment of the whole creation.

3. Martelet attends to the interconnection of the Eucharist and the power of Christ's resurrection. In the Eucharist the pledge of future glory is revealed and communicated to the whole cosmos. Of particular importance, therefore, is Martelet's understanding of human beings as existing in a situation of interrelation and interdependence with all cosmic reality. Understood in this perspective, the Eucharist has a profound ethical sense of human responsibility for humanity's freely chosen ways of relating to the cosmos. Martelet's eschatological view of the Eucharist as symbol of the resurrection prompts a deeper sense of meaning and a richer sense of our place in the unfolding and incomplete universe. In the Eucharist, the transforming power of Christ's resurrection for all humanity and history of all time is made known, for in Christ, as we mentioned above, "all things holds together," just as he is the cause and the model of the resurrection of humanity, the "first-born" and the inner finality of the whole creation (Eph 1:9-10).
  
4. Von Balthasar's theology recognizes that the Eucharistic anamnesis is both a remembrance of the saving events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection and also a looking to the fulfilment of the Kingdom. In this chapter, we examined the Eucharist as sacrificial celebration of the *Eschaton*, and particularly the dramatic dimensions of the Eucharist: the Christ-Church eschatological event. What clearly emerges from this investigation is the profoundly relational character of the mystery of the Eucharist. The various aspects of the Eucharist (the Last Supper, the sacrifice of the Cross, the heavenly banquet, and Christ himself) must, according to von Balthasar, be seen together as a revelation of

God's transforming self-gift to all creation. The Eucharist is the joy of the resurrection and the anticipation of the heavenly wedding feast. It is, above all, a celebration of hope in the ultimate power of divine love to transform all things.

5. Chauvet lays a theological groundwork for the understanding of Christian life through a postmodern approach to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. His Eucharistic eschatology deals with the most basic question of how God interacts with human beings and hence with the historical world. Since Christ has come in this world and has still to come again, history is "already" fulfilled but "not yet" consummated. So the Christian memory of the past is bearer of the future. The eschatological advent of Christ is actively present in history as mysterious and efficacious power leading it toward its final fulfilment. Chauvet grounds a theology of the Eucharist within a theology of the world. The primary context of Christian worship is thus constitutively ethical. The Eucharist is celebrated as a confession of faith, tasted as hope, and lived as charity, which is directed toward one's neighbours. From this perspective, one cannot separate the sphere of so-called secular history from the sphere of the operation of God's liberating grace. The Eucharist is a continual reminder to Christian hope that, despite the tragedies of history, the ultimate future will be a fulfilment of what is already present: "...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us..." (Rom 5:3). The Eucharist is an affirmation of hope that is based on God's loving and creative action in history, through human freedom, tending toward the fulfilment of God's own design in history.

The third part of the thesis offered a constructive retrieval of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. Chapter 8 clearly shows where our five theologians converge and diverge from each other. Despite all their differences and distinctiveness, considerable convergence emerged. Chapter 9 then outlined a holistic and coherent synthesis of the Eucharist and eschatology. We noted that this refashioned Eucharistic eschatology is not a theology that was narrowly focused on the Reformation and counter-Reformation agenda. Nor is it a theology that is

narrowly focused on the Christian community at liturgical celebration. Rather, this whole project attempts to be faithful to the theological tradition of the Eucharist, and yet creative, appropriate, and meaningful with regard to its expression in the present situation. Throughout, we have searched for a way to give a balanced and comprehensive approach to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. What stands out most clearly is a deep sense of the many connections that are at play in our effort to explore the dynamics of Christian hope. In our study, we addressed the interconnection between the personal, the communal and the cosmic, between the political, the social and the ethical, and between the past, present and future. If hope, as we have mentioned above, is hope for the whole, the Eucharist is necessarily a symbolic portrayal of the interconnection and interdependence of personal, corporate and cosmic salvation. Our study also highlighted the ecclesial and Trinitarian dimensions of the Eucharist, and showed that these too are fundamentally eschatological. These various aspects were developed in order to construct a theology of the Eucharist that abounds with hope. Clearly a vitally renewed vision of the Eucharist as a foretaste of eternal life emerges when the sacrament is approached in this way.

## **10.2 The Eucharist as pledge of future glory**

We come to the conclusion of our exploration of newly emerging directions in Eucharistic eschatology. The text I have chosen to illuminate the whole thesis is well known in the Christian tradition, that is, the Antiphon written by Thomas Aquinas for the Liturgy of Evening Prayer on the feast of Corpus Christi:

O Sacred banquet in which Christ is received  
 The memory of his passion is recalled  
 The mind is filled with grace,  
 And a pledge of the future glory is given to us.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*, 208. On this point, see also Tony Kelly's remarks in his book, *Kelly, The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*. "In proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26), the Eucharist is the sacrament of hope. In the antiphon for the feast of Corpus Christi, Saint Thomas Aquinas catches this hopeful, forward-looking movement as it is nourished on the memory of Christ's Passion and the present experience of grace." 81.

This hymn focuses on the wonder of the Eucharistic banquet. It evokes the eschatological dimension of Eucharistic faith in which is given not only grace, but the very author of grace, as humanity's salvation and eternal destiny.<sup>2</sup> It is in the Eucharist as a celebration of the Paschal Mystery that the community of believers can find the three dimensions of time – past, present, and future – brought together. As they remember Christ's past saving deeds in the rituals, and participate in these events, as now celebrated in the Eucharist, Christians actually enter into the God's work of salvation, receiving a foretaste of the eternal life as pledge of future glory.

In all of this, the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory can be affirmed on the following grounds:

1. The Eucharist is celebrated in the context of eschatological hope: it is related to the hopes of the people in the Old Testament for the messianic banquet; to the Lord's Supper and the Kingdom at the end of Jesus' life of preaching and lived table fellowship; and to the breaking of the bread of the Risen Christ in the early Church as they waited and prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:30).
2. The Eucharist is the matrix of the Christian "hope-vision" and "hope-expectation" of reality. It breaks open and discloses a new world in particular times and places, that is, the song of creation, incarnation, resurrection and consummation, yet transcendent in glory beyond all created things.
3. As Christian hope celebrates the glory of God that is revealed above all in the resurrection of the crucified Christ, the Eucharist contains the promise of new life for all creation, the grand vision of the final recapitulation in Christ. Thus in the Eucharist Christians remember and anticipate Christ who is the source, the goal and the form of what the whole world is becoming.
4. As a commemoration of the Trinitarian event of the Paschal Mystery, the Eucharist creates a community of love in which all are united without loss of

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<sup>2</sup> See "The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life," in *Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000*, trans. by Robert R. Barr, (New York: The Crossroad, 1999), 13.

enriching differences. Through the self-giving of Christ and by the power of the Spirit, Christians are invited to participate in the eternal life and glory of the triune God. A communion that is brought about between heaven and earth, between the living and the dead, between spiritual and the physical, between personal and communal fulfilment, between the human and the cosmic, is symbolized in the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ.

5. The Eucharist, as a privileged moment of divine presence, is accompanied by a new praxis of liberation. In sharing the life of the Eucharist, that is, the very life of the triune God, the Christian community is called to “give reason for the hope” that it has (1 Pet 3:15), and to live out the values of the Kingdom as to prepare the world for its final glory.
6. In proclaiming the death of Christ “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26), the Eucharist challenges the historical social and cultural distortions of the present, reminding Christians that injustice and death do not have the final word and that history remains open to the future. As a celebration of God’s pledge for the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom in Christ, the Eucharist thus embraces the “already” and the “not yet” of Christian existence.
7. All this is to say that the Eucharist expresses the innate orientation of the life of Christian hope, which is immanent and transcendent, prophetic and apocalyptic. It is the holy space where the Christian community proclaims and celebrates the eschatological grounds for its ultimate hope, marking its way to the fulfilment of God’s promises. So the Christian community is revealed to be essentially a Eucharistic community, one that celebrates the Paschal Mystery by eating and drinking the bread and wine, and thereby becoming sacramentally the body of Christ in the world, the effective context of glorification of God and sanctification of humanity.
8. Since the Eucharist is a supremely free act of God’s love, it is always gratuitous and never compulsory; it overturns definitively any understanding of who is the worthy recipient of God’s gift. A reflection on the Eucharist as

pure gift suggests that, out of the excess of Christ's self-offering love, the Eucharist enables the Christian community to expand its hope to include everyone and everything, so that the entire creation may be totally transformed into the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the new Temple of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

9. In the Eucharistic celebration the *lex credendi*, the law of belief, is notably integrated into the *lex orandi*, the law of prayer.<sup>4</sup> Out of this integration of the two, the *lex sperandi*, the law of hope, emerges with new possibilities for a more comprehensive and eschatologically attuned reflection on the Eucharist.
  
10. The orientation of the Christian community toward its future glory is nowhere more explicitly revealed than in the Eucharist, which is the divine milieu, the birthplace of hope, anticipating the eating and drinking at the eschatological banquet in the fullness of God's Kingdom. Hence, the Eucharist is the locus of the revelation of God inasmuch as all creatures participate in the everlasting life of God. Christian hope tells us that the *Eschaton* is realized now as well as in the future.

We have been focusing on the Eucharist as the sacrament of the *Eschaton*. It is in this sacrament – in and with and through the one Body of Christ – that the Christian community can find the source of its hope. To be involved in the Eucharist is to participate in an eschatological hope which is revealed in the freedom of Christ through his fidelity in life and death. As the anticipation of the eschatological banquet of the Kingdom and the bearer of Christian hope, the Eucharist not only remembers the death of Christ but also proclaims that he is risen and that he will come again in glory with salvation for the world. In this sense, the Eucharist is the celebration of the future, providing the foundation for Christian hope-filled activity and a liberating

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<sup>3</sup> See Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 17, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, (New York: Costello Publishing; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 369.

<sup>4</sup> See Kilmartin, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium." As Kilmartin claims that the scholastics have emphasized the *lex credendi* over the *lex orandi*. In the case of the Eucharist, however, as he writes, "this new approach necessarily requires that attention be paid to the law of prayer as the preferred matrix into which the law of belief must be integrated. The first theological millennium awarded to the *lex orandi* a certain normative value with respect to the *lex credendi*. In the second millennium the *lex credendi* took pride of place. The reintegration of the *lex credendi* into the *lex orandi*, already begun at the end of this millennium, signals the contour of eucharistic theology that will characterize the third theological millennium." 457.



vision that has transformative possibilities for the life of human society. As such, Christian hope encompasses history and the cosmic process; it is absolutely a divine gift, yet liberates humanity for partnership with God. The Eucharist summons Christians to work for the future glory in the present with joyful anticipation, confident that in Christ humanity and the whole of creation are given a foretaste of the life to come.

As the source and goal of the whole Christian life, the Eucharist relates the whole universe to Christ, who is the “first-born” of all creation and its final homecoming.<sup>5</sup> It connects the Christians with one another, and draws them into the eschatological communion of the community with God who gives eternal life to them in Christ and the Spirit. A new vision of creation emerges. In gathering at the Eucharistic table, Christians become part of creation caught up in a universe of Trinitarian love and life:

Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit, so that from east to west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of your name.<sup>6</sup>

The prayer of the Christian community thus affirms that God is working out our eternal salvation, even now, through the Eucharist. It is by communion in the body and blood of the Risen Christ that the believers come to share in the hope of his resurrection and in the gift of eternal life, for it is this eschatological hope that most significantly transforms human life and gives meaning to our journey through history.

As the body of Christ, the Christian community is revealed as an eschatological people, for it is essentially a Eucharistic community – one which celebrates Christ’s Paschal Mystery by eating and drinking the bread and wine become real food and drink of the Kingdom, thereby living in the hope of Christ’s promises. Since the Eucharist is God’s eschatological gift, its giving opens the gateway of hope and enables Christians to envision a new world, as expressed in the Second Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation: “In that new world where the fullness of your peace will be

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<sup>5</sup> See Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination*, 86. In his resurrection as the transformation of his bodily existence into a new life of communion in God, not only human beings but also the whole material universe participate in the glorious freedom of God’s children (Rom 8:20-21).

<sup>6</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III

revealed, gather people of every race, language, and way of life to share in the one eternal banquet.”<sup>7</sup> The coming together of the believing community in proclamation, prayer, symbol, and covenant commitment thus occurs within the communion of the love of the God, who has established the Christian community in the Kingdom of the beloved Son (Col 1:12-13).

Here is the sure foundation for Christian hope, the eschatological embodiment of Christ’s gift of self in our midst for the life of the world. Communion in God’s unfailing love celebrated in the Eucharist is the foretaste and promise of our ultimate communion with God. Our trials and sufferings are taken up into the mystery we celebrate and all that is true, good, and beautiful which we have created will be our definitive participation in it. Filled with hope in Christ’s resurrection, the Christian community journeys on towards that new world where “God will be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). The Eucharist, in which Christians celebrate the memorial of Christ’s Passover, thus leads the whole of creation forward to the pledge of future glory.

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<sup>7</sup> The Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation II.

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