

THE CHURCH AS EUCHARISTIC COMMUNION

Paper presented by Rev. Georges Tavard
to (American) ARC: January, 1974

The classical Christian Churches have always assigned a high priority to the eucharist among the constitutive elements of the Church. The Reformers' standard definition of the recognisability of the Church took for granted such a priority. In the words of Article XIX, "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." The implications of this remain open to question. For priority is shared with the preaching of the Word, which gained first place in later Protestantism, and with baptism as the other sacrament of the gospel. At least for Calvin, baptism has priority over the eucharist, since it introduces into the Christian life, which the eucharist only nurtures. For Calvin, too, sacramental priority entails no real analogy but only a comparison between the body of Christ and the body of the Church. "As to us, let us listen to the Apostle, who says that the Church is the body of Christ: by this expression he means that those who refuse to submit to him are unworthy of the Church's communion, for the unity of the Church depends on him alone." (1) Rom. 4:5 means: "We are called to becoming united as though in one body, since Christ has ordered such a society and conjunction of all his faithful as obtains between the limbs of the human body." (2)

These quotes from Calvin help to focus attention on a central question relating to the theme of the Church as eucharistic fellowship. That the Church is a eucharistic fellowship suggests a positive relationship of the sacramental body (or the body of Christ in its sacramental presence) to the Church as the mystical body of Christ (or the body of Christ in its corporate presence among the members of the Church). But what is the nature of this relation? Should it be conceived in a realistic way amounting to an identification (with whatever precisions are needed to avoid a pan-Christism) of the body of Christ which is the Church with the resurrected body of Christ offered for us and to us in the eucharist? Or is the traditional language, by which we speak of the body of Christ in both cases, purely metaphorical? Are we dealing with a real phenomenon of sacramental identity or with a linguistic form of poetic assimilation?

In the next pages I will present a series of testimonia, in reversed chronological order, to the effect that the Catholic tradition espouses the realistic view. To call the Church a eucharistic fellowship is tantamount to saying at least two things: it may be compared to the eucharistic body of Christ; and it subsists by virtue of the eucharistic body. The Catholic tradition has also maintained a third point: there is an identity in mysterio between the Church and the eucharist.

I

The Catechism of the Council of Trent was published by Pius V in 1566. Answering the question, quot et quantas res are represented in the sacrament by the symbols of bread and wine, the Catechism makes three points. The symbols signify "Christ as the true life of men." The "admirable mutation of the elements" (transubstantiation) points to the interior transformation of the soul: interius ad vitam renovamur, dum veram vitam eucharistiae sacramento accipimus. A third meaning is then mentioned:

Accedit at haec quod, quum unum ecclesiae corpus ex multis membris compositus sit, nulla re magis elucet ea conjunctio quam panis et vinis elementis. Panis enim ex multis granis conficitur et vinum ex multitudine racemorum existit: atque ita nos, quum multi simus, hujus divini mysterii vinculo arctissime colligari et tanquam unum corpus effici declarant. (3)

One recognises here the image already used in the Didachè to show that the many become one. To this affirmation that the eucharist unites us as one body, the following statement should be joined:

Vere enim ac necessario fons omnium gratiarum dicenda est, quum fontem ipsum charismatum et donorum omniumque sacramentorum auctorem Christum Dominum admirabili modo in se contineat; a quo tanquam a fonte ad alia sacramenta quidquid boni et perfectionis habent derivatur. (4)

Thus the eucharist, by the symbolic dimension of the confection of bread and wine out of many grains and grapes, signifies the gathering of the people of God into one. Further, by its means the faithful effectively become one body. As this means is Christ himself by the grace of his real presence, the eucharist is the source of all that is good and perfect in the Church; it is the fount of the other sacraments.

These paragraphs XVIII and XLVII of chapter IV occupy a relatively small place. Much of the rest of the chapter defends secondary aspects of the eucharist which have been challenged or ignored by the Reformers. The chapter also takes for granted some more questionable points of the scholastic analysis of sacraments, such as accidentia ... sine ulla re subjecta ... Yet the Roman Catechism established the eucharistic focus of Counter-Reformation piety. One look at the eucharistic images of baroque and rococo churches will show the close relationship seen by the Counter-Reformation between the Church and the "admirable sacrament". The Roman Catechism served as a model for most national and diocesan catechisms until Vatican Council II.

Naturally enough, the Catechism had simply followed the impetus given by the Council of Trent to eucharistic ecclesiology. If the Council

did not devote any session or decree to ecclesiology, it touched upon our topic in its treatment of the eucharist, especially in the decree of session 13 (October 11, 1551) on "the most holy sacrament of the eucharist".

In chapter 2 of this decree, the Council discerned four purposes in the institution of the eucharist:

- the memorial: ... in illius sumptione colere nos sui memoriam praecepit suamque annunciare mortem donec ipse ad iudicandum mundum veniat.
 - the spiritual food: ... Sumi autem voluit hoc sacramentum tanquam spiritalem animarum cibum ... et tanquam antidotum quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis et a peccatis mortalibus praeservemur.
 - the promise of glory: ... Pignus praeterea id esse voluit futurae nostrae gloriae et felicitatis aeternae.
- the unity of the Church: ... adeoque symbolum illius corporis cuius ipse caput existit cuique nos tanquam membra arctissima fidei, spei et charitatis connexione astrictos esse voluit, ut idipsum omnes diceremus nec essent in nobis schismata. (5)

Under the rubric, "memorial", the Council includes both the memory of the past event and its proclamation in anticipation of the return of Christ and the final Judgment. Thus the memorial is no mere remembering; it is a celebration of the past as fore-ordering and preview of the eschatological future. This eschatological accent is reinforced by the old conception of the eucharist as remedy for immortality. The Council distinguished the healing power of the eucharist for Christian life now, by which sins are remitted and mortal sins avoided, and its value for eternal life. Death is overcome both as disease of the soul (sin) and as disease of the body (physical decay). This eternal dimension is expressed as pignus, that is, as proof and guarantee: in the eucharist we already participate in the resurrected body of Christ. Finally, the unity of the Church crowns the structure of intentionality of the eucharist: the eucharist is not only an image of the body of Christ of which we are members by faith, hope and love; it is the symbolum of it. Is it stretching the sense of the word to read here something of the Greek connotation of the term, σφραγίς being a mark or sign made on something to recognise it, and σφραγίς being also the two sides of the coin which, once broken in two, will be given to the signatories of a contract? Even if one does not admit this reading, the eucharist is, for the Council of Trent, the sign of the one body of which Christ is the head and the faithful are the members: in it they are joined together as one to the point that the members are themselves called the one body of Christ.

This oneness is seen in an eschatological perspective. It corresponds to what the decree on the Sacrifice of the Mass of session XXII (September 17, 1562) calls the kingdom:

... novum instituit pascha, seipsum ab ecclesia per sacerdotes sub signis visibilibus immolandum in memoriam transitus sui ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, quando per sui sanguinis effusionem nos redemit eripuitque de potestate tenebrarum et in regnum suum transtulit. (6)

To be transferred to his kingdom is, equivalently, to become one body with him. The Church is not the kingdom. Yet the kingdom is present in the Church: the Church and its members are introduced into it by the eucharist. In chapter IV of the decree of Session XIII, this constitutes the apex of the structure of intentionality which the Council discovers in the eucharist.

II

The theology of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Church as eucharistic fellowship is succinctly outlined in III, q.73, a.6:

In hoc sacramento tria considerare possumus: scilicet id quod est sacramentum tantum, scilicet panis et vinum; et id quod est res et sacramentum, scilicet corpus Christi verum; et id quod est res tantum, scilicet effectus hujus sacramenti.

The eucharist has three levels: the visible signs of bread and wine, the body of Christ (in the light of the mediaeval discussions on real presence, the word verum denotes the historical, and now resurrected, body of Christ) and finally the effect of the sacrament for redemption. The level of res tantum is explained in a.4, where the names of the sacrament are interpreted as pointing to different aspects of its meaning. Sacrificium refers to the memorial of the passion, which was verum sacrificium. Communio and synaxis refer to ecclesial unity (ecclesiasticae unitatis, cui homines congregantur per hoc sacramentum). Viaticum and eucharistia evoke the eschatological fulfilment (inquantum scilicet hoc sacramentum est praefigurativum fruitionis Dei quae erit in patria). Aquinas adds a fourth denomination, metalepsis, which he translates as assumptio: through the sacrament Filii deitatem assumimus, we are being deified.

Thus the eucharist relates the communicant to the passion of Christ, to the oneness of the Church, to his eternal fulfilment in heaven, to the divine Sonship. By it, the faithful receive the fruits of redemption; they are incorporated into the Church; they anticipate the resurrection; they partake of the filiation of the eternal Son. Thus the level of res tantum is itself plurivalent, in relation to the ephapax of the past, to the community of the present, to the eschatological future, and to the vertical perspective of the deification which is effected in this threefold

dimension of time. The oneness of the Church serves the eschatological future and the deification of man, just as the redeeming act of Christ serves the oneness of the ecclesia. There is thus a two-way exchange between the highest effect, the deification, and the steps leading to it. In St. Thomas's conception of causality, the final end is present as the guiding principle of what it draws to itself. Likewise, the eucharist, where we celebrate the memorial of the passion of the Lord, is for the unity of the Church, which is for the eschatological transfiguration of all things, and all of these are for the assumption of man into the realm of the divine. On the one hand, the eucharist, in which the passion of Christ is present, effects the oneness of the Church, which is pregnant with the transfiguration of all things and will burst forth into the deification of man. On the other, the metalepsis, as God's ultimate graciousness, draws all men, transfiguring them to the image of the eternal Son by way of the ecclesial unity of the disciples in the eucharistic body of the Lord who died and rose again for our salvation.

The theology of Aquinas should of course be seen on the background of the mediaeval eucharistic symbolism. Since Florus of Lyon the mediaeval liturgists explained the fractio of breaking of the bread at mass as the opening of the mystery, leading precisely to its significance as the ecclesia (7). They exploited the theme of the bread made of many grains and the wine made of innumerable grapes this again pointed to the ecclesia. And they discussed the theme of the three bodies of Christ. As William of St. Thierry explains it in his De sacramento altaris (8), the historical body, the sacramental body (often called the mystical body), and the ecclesial body are not three bodies, but three modes of contemplation of the one body of Christ. There were two main lines of thought on this point. For Amalarius of Metz (c.780-850) the corpus triforme corresponds to three moments of the historical body (primum videlicet sanctum et immaculatum quod assumptum est ex Maria virgine; alterum quod ambulat in terra; tertium quod jacet in sepulchris); (9) liturgically, this corresponds to the fraction in three sections, the one for mixing with wine, the second for communion, the third for reservation, pointing respectively to the body of Christ rising, ministering on earth, lying in the tomb. As Florus of Lyon pointed out, excessive subtlety marked this type of liturgical exegesis. The thought of Paschasius Radbertus (d.860) had more lasting value. We shall study it further on.

Baldwin of Canterbury (d.1190), cistercian, archbishop of Canterbury, provides an important testimony on the relationship between the Church and the eucharist. His De sacramento altaris is a commentary on the eucharistic texts of the New Testament. Commenting on the account of the institution in Matthew, Baldwin analyses the change that takes place in the elements under two headings: Mutatio panis in corpus Christi vera est et mystica (10).

The aspect of veritas is described in the language of transubstantiation: What is the truth in question? Is it a figurative truth or a real truth? For the archbishop of Canterbury, the change of the bread into the body of Christ is much more than a metaphor. It is the actuality of the eucharistic event: Vera est, inquam, mutatio, non secundum figuram sed secundum substantiam. Non enim transfiguratur panis sed transubstantiatur. Novo et inusitato modo species manet et substantia mutatur. Transfiguration is understood on the pattern of the transfiguration of Christ: The change was not in the reality of Jesus but in his appearance. On the contrary, the change in the eucharist is in the reality of the bread and the wine. Baldwin's use of this kind of language clearly shows that the early doctrine of transubstantiation owes nothing to the metaphysics of Aristotle; it expresses the fullness of the transformation that takes place in the eucharist and is not a theory as to how this mutatio operates.

The aspect of mystery relates to another transformation: those who participate in the eucharist are changed. In a word, the eucharist is the food of immortality: Attende virtutem sacramenti. Decrevit Deus mortale hoc immortalitate vestire, et mortalem vitam in vitam aeternam transferre (11). Thus there are two events: the bread is made into the body of Christ, and our mortal life becomes an immortal life. These transmutations are related by a similarity which coexists, however, with a dissimilarity.

The similarity is that there are true transformations: Tota enim ecclesia in universa electorum multitudine unus panis est, et ipsa tota corpus Christi est. Et quicumque in corpore et de corpore ecclesiae sumus, unus panis sumus et membra Christi sumus, et per quandam mutationem quasi aliud erimus quam nunc sumus, quia nondum apparuit quod erimus (12). The point of similarity is the unity of the Church as the one bread made of all members of Christ. As experienced today, this unity is a foretaste of a greater unity to come. The company of the elect, which is one bread and the body of Christ, is destined to a still greater transformation: what we shall be has not yet appeared.

Similarity entails dissimilarity. In the eschatological transformation which is thus announced by our bread-like unity in the Church we shall be changed into another glory and not, as in the case of the transubstantiation of the bread, into another nature (in alteram gloriam sed non in alteram naturam). Such a dissimilarity does not belittle our eschatological transformation: ita nobis dissimiles erimus ut paene nihil minus existimari possimus quam quod nunc sumus. In comparison with what we shall be, what we now are counts hardly for anything.

This conception of the eucharist is radically eschatological. That it is truly the heart of Baldwin's sacramental theology appears from his treatment of the rest of the New Testament. Mark and Luke are examined briefly, as their testimony adds nothing to, but supports, that of Matthew. One remark may sum up the doctrine: the "cup of the New Covenant" illustrates the meeting point of two movements, that of the

obedience of the Son until death, and that of the eternal life of the disciples after death: Novum sane testamentum nova lex est, continens novum pactum novumque promissum. Novam enim obedientiam imponit et novam hereditatem repromittit. Haec est obedientia usque ad mortem: illa est vita aeterna post mortem (13).

Chapter 6 of the gospel of John, which is seen as strictly eucharistic, is examined in the same vein. Yet the eucharistic interpretation does not rule out the ambivalence of the manducation of Christ by the faithful: there are two eatings of Christ, which reinforce and illustrate each other. Both are immediately connected with unity. Christus duobus modis manducatur, quia duobus modis participatur. Una est participatio per fidem ... Cognoscentes per fidem carnem pro nobis acceptam, nobis in cibum datam, carnem Christi manducamus. Est ergo fides unitatis et fides unionis et fides communionis (14). Three levels of oneness: unity, union, communion, refer to the faith by which we believe the unity of the Son with the Father in the Trinity, to the union of the human nature to the divine Person in the incarnation, to communion with the life-giving flesh of Christ in the eucharist. Thus Baldwin sums up the Johannine teaching: Summa fidei nostrae haec est: cognoscere Christum in Patre, Christum in carne, Christum in altaris participatione. But faith does not exhaust our manducation of Christ, for we also eat his flesh: esu et esu et perseptione ipsius corporis intra nos recipitur.

The treatment of the main eucharistic passages of Paul is also strongly eschatological. If possible, they stress still more the ecclesial aspect of the eucharist. Paul's use of the relationship "one bread, one body", in I Cor. 10, introduces a long text on the Church as corpus Christi and on its unity, which joins into one people persons who differ both in their charisms (alii majores, alii minores, alii incipientes, alii proficientes, alii simplici, alii prebentes, alii quasi parvuli, alii quasi adulti, alii quasi senes perfectione maturi) (15) and in their situation (ex personis innumerabilibus, diversi sexus, diversae conditionis, diversi ordinis, diversaeque professionis). The cup of the blessing is, vel in coena Domini vel in mensa Domini, hoc est in altari, the very blood that has been shed pro communi salute. Remarking that this may be called either communicatio or communio, Baldwin notes that both terms refer to the commonalty of the disciples:

Communicatio enim intelligi potest quia in commune datur vel accipitur, communio vero quia in commune habetur. Alia etiam ratione potest dici communio. Hoc enim sanguis caritatem operatur in nobis per quam omnia communia fiunt, et quae propria sunt singulorum communia sunt omnium. (16)

As Paul uses typology, so does Baldwin in his explanation of Paul. This leads him to the last section of his book, where he examines some Old Testament prefigurations of the eucharist, especially the Paschal Lamb

and the Manna. Here again Baldwin of Canterbury emphasises eschatology: Christus autem, victima transitus nostri, et ipse transciens de hoc mundo ad Patrem viam nobis transeundi aperuit et modum praemonstravit (17) ... Sic et verum manna, quod est panis vitae aeternae, nunc colligitur et servatur. (18) The ecclesial dimension is not forgotten: ... una est fides et una lex justitiae quae est charitas, et una forma credendi et diligendi, quae omnibus justis et solis communis est, et pro justitia fidei una spes votae aeternae omnibus nihil-omnibus communis est. (19)

Admittedly, Baldwin's theology of the mutatio was not universal in the early Middle Ages. In his study of the period, Josef Geiselmann distinguished three conceptions (20), which he called, in a somewhat artificial antithesis, "metabolism", "dynamism" and "realism"; he related them, rightly or wrongly, to Ambrose, to Augustine and to "Rome"; and he found them illustrated chiefly by Paschasius, by Ratramnus and by Florus of Lyon. Yet, whatever the mediaeval explanation of "presence" and of "change", the ultimate purpose and the end result of the eucharist were always identified with the body of Christ which is the Church. This will be patent in the doctrine of Paschasius Radbertus.

IV

The theological developments of the 9th century saw a major work on the eucharist, the Liber de Corpore et Sanguine Domini of Paschasius Radbertus, Abbot of Corbey. This volume is famous chiefly for its identification of the historical body and the sacramental body of Christ. But Radbertus's investigation is not limited to this specific question. Among other concerns, the Abbot of Corbey studies the relations between the sacramental body and the mystical body which is the Church. The one expression, body of Christ, has three dimensions: it denotes the Church, or the corpus mysticum, that is, the eucharist, or the corpus verum that was born of the Virgin. The order of their presentation goes from the ecclesial to the historical by way of the mystical:

Tribus sane modis in Scripturis sacris corpus Christi appellatur; profecto quia generalis Christi ecclesia corpus ejus est, ubi Christus caput et omnes electi membra ejus dicuntur, ex quibus unum colligitur quotidie corpus in virum perfectum in mensuram plenitudinis Christi (21) ...

All is common among the elect, who are alter alterius membra. If someone has made himself membrum diaboli by sin, he cannot share the eucharist: ei jure non licet edere de hoc mystico corpore Christi. But those who are truly faithful live entirely by Christ.

Vescuntur autem eo condigne qui sunt in corpore illius, ut solum corpus Christi, dum est in via, ipsius carne reficiatur et discat nihil aliud esurire quam Christum, non aliunde vivere, non aliud esse, quam corpus Christi.

The sacramental body of Christ which feeds his ecclesial body can only be his historical body. By this logic, Paschasius, having defined the Church as the body of Christ living by his sacramental body, affirms that this sacramental body must be also the historical one, corpus verum and not only corpus figuratum. The realism of Paschasius's eucharistic theology rests upon a realistic ecclesiology: since the Church is the body of Christ, it is fed, in the eucharist, by the body of Christ.

The oneness of Christ and the elect is so close that it is comparable to the unity of the Father and the Son. These are one, unitate naturae. Likewise, Christ, non solum per concordiam voluntatis, sed etiam per naturam in nobis sicut et nos in illo recte manere dicitur. (22) Such a union in nature between Christ and us is possible insofar as we communicate with his own body:

Nam si Verbum caro factum est, et nos vere Verbum factum carnem in cibo dominico sumimus, quomodo in nobis Christus manere naturaliter jure non aestimatur, qui et naturam carnis nostrae inseparabilem sibi homo natus Deus assumpsit, et naturam carnis suae ad naturam aeternitatis sub sacramento hoc nobis communicandae carnis admiscuit?

A dialectical relationship joins the body of Christ which is the Church and his corpus verum: they are one in the corpus which chapter IV calls both veritas and figura, that is, in the sacramental body. (23) That this is paradoxical does not escape Paschasius. We ourselves are the body which we eat: ... jam membra Christi ejus carne vescimur, ut nihil aliud quam corpus ejus unde vivimus et sanguis inveniamur. (24) But this is the paradox of faith: in his omnibus per fidem ambulamus et non per speciem. (25)

It is in relation to the body of Christ which nurtures the faithful that Paschasius understands the royal priesthood of all believers:

Idcirco teneamus nos ad istum pontificem et sacerdotem Christum, et in illo maneamus, quia per hoc quod ille in nobis est et nos in illo, etiam et ipsi omnes sacerdotes dicimur et sumus. Fecit enim nos regnum et sacerdotes Deo, et ideo gens sancta, sacerdotium regale, populus acquisitionis ab apostolo praedicamur. Hoc igitur notum, quia nos in ipso et ille in nobis per hanc gratiam concorporatur, transfigurans nos in corpore claritatis suae, ut cum ipso et in ipso sit nobis regnum pacis. (26)

In other words, the eucharistic action does not derive from the royal priesthood; but the royal priesthood derives from the mutuality of Christ and the faithful in his eucharistic body.

This mutual inherence of Christ and the faithful is again stressed by the symbolism of the drop of water mixed with wine during the liturgy. Chapter XI examines this practice. There are several symbolisms in

this gesture. It signifies, among other things, that we who are in Christ are offered to God together with him. With forcefulness Paschasius states the relevance of this for the unity of Christ and the Church: ... si vinum sine aqua offeratur, sanguis Christi incipit esse sine nobis; si autem aqua sola, jam plebs videtur esse sine Christo. Quando autem utrumque miscetur et conjungitur, tunc recte mysterium ecclesiae spiritaliter perficitur. (27) This is repeated in the Epistula ad Frudegardum: the water mixed with wine signifies the oneness of baptism with Redemption. By it Christ and the Church are one body. Itaque nec Christus sine ecclesia pontifex in aeternum, nec ecclesia sine Christo Patri offertur. (28)

In conclusion we may say that Paschasius's eucharistic theology is also an ecclesiology and a christology. The body which is the Church is the historical body of Christ as spiritual food of the faithful in the eucharistic mystery: by tali esca et potu ... unum corpus cum illo et in illo maneamus, ubi Christus caput et nos membra censeamur. (29) It is significant that Ratramnus (d. 868), the monk of Corvey, who attacked Paschasius's identification of veritas, understood as rei manifesta demonstratio (30), and figura, described as obumbratio quaedam quibusdam velaminibus quod intendit ostendens (31), did not question the inner relationship between the Church and the eucharist. For him also the eucharistic mystery signifies both the historical body and the Church: At in isto quod per mysterium geritur figura est non solum proprii corporis Christi, verum etiam credentis in Christum populi: utriusque namque corporis, id est et Christi, quod passum est et resurrexit, et populi in Christo renati atque de mortuis vivificati, figuram gestat. (32). The eucharistic symbols are sacraments of the Church as well as of the body and blood of Christ.

V

St. Augustine occupies a special place in eucharistic theology. This is partly due to the fact that some later historians have interpreted his thought in opposite directions, along the "dynamic", spiritualising line of Ratramnus-Berengar-Calvin, or according to the realism maintained in the central Catholic tradition. Indeed one cannot deny that Augustine's vocabulary seems often ambiguous and that, taken at face-value, his formulae seem to favour at times a real presence in the standard Catholic sense of the phrase, at times a "virtual dynamism" stressing the symbolism rather than the reality. However, this is due, in my judgment, to Augustine's polemical situation rather than to any imprecision in his thought. Harnack's remark, that "the emphasis rests so strongly on the Word and faith that the sign is simply described in many places and indeed, as a rule, as a figure," (33) is representative of many recent interpreters of Augustine. Yet it understates Augustine's concern for the integrity of the outward performance of the sacramental actions. Admittedly, Augustine's situation was delicate. He was combatting the Donatists, who held such a strong view of the Church as the agent of the sacraments that a synod of bishops claimed to invalidate sacraments by

withdrawing its salvific intent from the actions performed by other bishops. Thus the Donatist Council of Bagai (April 24, 394) threatened excommunication on the supporters of Maximianus, giving them eight months (until Christmas) to submit, after which their acts would be null and void. (34) Augustine wanted to restore the unity of the Church in North Africa while preserving the once for all character of baptism, given by Christ through the Church and essentially unaffected by the faults of its ministers. He had to avoid overstressing the involvement of the Church itself in the sacramental acts. For this reason he insisted on the internal and spiritual aspects of the sacraments. Yet his understanding of sacrifice in the Church and his explanation of eucharistic sacramentality rested on a fundamental assimilation of the sacramental body with the body of Christ which is the Church. This is all the more important as it could have given fuel to the Donatist argumentation.

The sacrifice is discussed in book X of the De Civitate Dei, where Augustine posits the following definition, which is both personalistic (sacrifice tends to man's beatitude) and corporate (it tends to oneness with God in the holy society). Proinde verum sacrificium est omne opus quod agitur ut sancta societate inhaeremus Deo, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni, quo veraciter esse possimus. (35) Such a definition applies equally well to interior sacrifices of the heart offered by a Christian in quantum mundo moritur et Deo vivat, and to the offering of the entire Church to God by our High Priest: Profecto efficitur ut tota ipsa redempta civitas, hoc est congregatio societisque sanctorum, universale sacrificium offeratur Deo per sacerdotum magnum, qui etiam se obtulit in passione pro nobis, ut tanti capitis corpus essemus, secundum formam servi. (36) This universal sacrifice is that of Christ himself, who, in the form of the Servant, is the offering, the mediator, the priest and the sacrifice: Hanc enim obtulit, in hac oblatio est, quia secundum hanc mediator est, in hac sacerdos, in hac sacrificium est. And also: Per hoc et sacerdos est, ipse offerens ipse et oblatio. (37) This offering is, by the same token, that of the ecclesia, of ipsa tota redempta civitas: Cujus rei sacramentum cotidianum esse voluit ecclesiae sacrificium quae cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum discit offerere.

That the sacrifice is that of the Church with Christ, as of the body with the head, tallies with Augustine's repeated assertion that the sacrament of a reality is this reality: Sicut ergo secundum quemdam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, sacramentum sanguinis Christi sanguis Christi est, ita sacramentum fidei fides est. (38). In this context, infant baptism is justified by analogy with the eucharist. The sacrament of faith (baptism) amounts to the faith of the infant, just as the sacrament of the body of Christ (the eucharist) amounts to the body of Christ. So the offering made every-day in sacramento is also that which Christ made once for all in seipso. (39) In answer to Januarius, Augustine explains the paschal mystery in his Epistola LV: the Pasch is the transitus, the passage of the Lord

through his dying and his rising. Transitus quidam de morte ad vitam in illa passione Domini et resurrectione sacratus est. (40) As taking place now in sacrament, this necessarily involves those who celebrate it. For there is no sacrament without real participation. Sacramentum est in aliqua celebratione, cum rei gestae commemoratio ita fit, ut aliquid etiam significari intelligatur quod sancte accipiendum est. On this basis, the Christian Passover is a true sacrament; but Christmas is not one. We are not born at Christmas as we die and rise with Christ at Easter and in every eucharistic celebration. Thus the reality of the eucharistic sacrament includes the eschatological transitus of the whole Church:

Hoc igitur universa ecclesia, quae in peregrinatione mortalitatus inventa est, exspectat in fine saeculi quod in Domini nostri Jesus Christi corpore praemonstratum est, qui est ex mortuis primogenitus, quia et corpus ejus cui caput est ipse, non nisi ecclesia est. (41)

One could hardly wish for a clearer formulation of the ecclesial principle that the ecclesia is the body of Christ, especially at the eucharist. This is an identity secundum quemdam modum, it is a sacramentum, it takes place in aliqua celebratione, in a rei gestae commemoratio. Such expressions abound in Augustine's writings. For the realities that are being joined remain at different levels. But this implies no mitigation of the identity between the body and the head. Rather, it suggests the yet-to-come fullness of eschatological transformation. It evokes the nondum apparuit quod erimus of 1 J., 3:2, the journey from peregrinatio mortalitatis to finis saeculi, from regio dissimilitudinis to similitudo (42), the differences between terrena civitas and civitas Dei. The proper locus of the Augustinian sacrament is the twilight zone between these realms: the Church is the body of Christ, in sacrament.

VI

This would be the proper place for an examination of the eucharistic liturgies. Such Roman prayers as that of the Easter vigil (before the reform by Pius XII): Deus respice propitius ad totius ecclesiae tuae mirabile sacramentum -- speak directly to the question of the ecclesial dimension of the eucharist. That this is the sacrament of the whole Church is inscribed in the very shape of the liturgy as it developed in the first centuries. The symbolism of the bread as gathering of the grains is used as early as the Didachè: "As this broken bread was scattered on the mountains and gathered together into one, so let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into the kingdom ..." Precisely, the intent of the early epiclesis seems to be the liturgical equivalent of the last part of the Creed in some of its early forms: "... the Holy Spirit in the Holy Church". (43) The prayer is for the transformation of the ecclesia by the Spirit as the bread itself is transformed. The eschatological dimension of the expected transformation is concisely expressed in the Didachè: "Marana tha. Lord, come." (44)

For brevity's sake, however, I must pass over the highly important documentation that could be adduced. Likewise, I will regretfully omit consideration of pre-Augustine theology on the relations between the eucharistic body and the ecclesial body. And I will pass on to the basic question: Can the sort of ecclesiology that has been illustrated in the preceding pages be supported by the New Testament?

The evolution of Paul's use of the *σῶμα* image may be summed up as follows. In the letters to the Corinthians the eucharistic *σῶμα* of Christ is the effective principle of the koinonia of the disciples. By their reception of the broken bread the Christians take part in the *σῶμα* of Christ and, in the process, they become one *σῶμα* although they are many (I Cor. 10:16-17). I take it that "one *σῶμα*" is not a mere metaphor expressing unity (in keeping with the Greek use of the fable of the body and its limbs), but reflects Paul's growing conviction that the faithful are "in Christ" (Gal. 6:15), that they form "one *σῶμα* in Christ" (Rom. 12:3-6), that they have been baptised "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). The one *σῶμα* which the faithful constitute together with Christ is his own body.

In Colossians and Ephesians the theme of *σῶμα* is incorporated into Paul's deeper reflections on Christ himself. Christ is seen in the mystery, now revealed (Eph. 3:3), of his pre-existence and of his cosmic function of "recapitulation" of all things in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:3-11). All things have been created in him; he is the head of the *σῶμα* of the Church; and the fullness of the divinity dwells in him *σῶμα* (Col. 1:12-18). In this view of the total mystery, the Church, "which is his *σῶμα*", is "the fullness of the one who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22). The pleroma of the divinity (Col. 2:8) is attributed to Christ's body in its present heavenly glory (Col. 1:18), and the pleroma of Christ is attributed to the Church (Eph. 1:23). Thus there is continuity of fullness from the divinity to Christ and to the Church. But this eschatological dimension leads Paul to a distinction between the *σῶμα* *τῆς ἐκκλησίας* (Col. 1:22) and the *σῶμα* *τῆς ἐκκλησίας* (Phil. 3:21), that is, between the mortal body in which Christ died and the risen body in which he now lives. A similar distinction follows in the Christian: in baptism we die and resurrect, thus experiencing oneness with the successive moments of Christ's em-body-ment (Col. 2:12). The *σῶμα* of Christ with which, henceforth, we are one, is his resurrected *σῶμα* of glory. The Church is identified with it (Col. 1:24; Eph. 1:22). When Paul writes: "one *σῶμα* and one *πνεῦμα*" (Eph. 4:4), he means at the same time the Lord in his risen body and the Church as the body of the Lord. Admittedly, the captivity letters do not explicitly mention the eucharist; but it seems consistent that their development of the *σῶμα* image has been made possible by the doctrine of the Corinthian letter on the oneness of the Church with Christ in his eucharistic body.

VII

The Catholic tradition sees such close links between the eucharist and the Church that the two are considered inseparable. The two communions of the people of God - in the eucharist and in the Church - coincide. Their coincidence is grounded in the incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth; the basis for both eucharistic and ecclesial realism and for the unity of the two is the body in which Jesus died and resurrected. Thus the concept of the Church as eucharistic communion is placed at the focal point of several lines of thought, which themselves correspond to constitutive Christian experiences and to fundamental realities of the faith.

First, a line of thought goes from the incarnation of the Son to those who are so united with him by grace that they form one body with him. With a still undifferentiated conception of persona, St. Augustine even called the Church una persona with Christ (45). The mystical body ecclesiology, which was incorporated in Lumen gentium, 7, derives from this.

Second, from the Last Supper and the death and resurrection of Jesus to the eucharistic meals of the believing community there is also continuity. All Christian traditions recognise the presence of the risen Christ in the eucharist, even though they may understand it in diverse ways, which range from an evocation of Christ in faith (Zwingli) to the theology of transubstantiation.

Third, the eucharist as a common experience of the ecclesia leads to the personal assimilation of it by each participant. While each becomes one with the community, he also grows into unity with the Lord, participating in the mysteries and 'states' of Jesus as they are evoked and they come alive for him in the course of the liturgical year. (See Lumen gentium, 11).

Fourth, the personal incorporation into Christ of each of the faithful through the eucharist inspires diaconal commitment to others. Having communed with the Saviour, the faithful are impelled to bring Christ's agapè to men in their daily activities for the Kingdom. (Lumen gentium 12).

If these four emphases are viewed as intersecting at the point of the eucharistic communion, they give rise to distinctive ecclesiological accents and even to different ecclesiologies. Yet they need not be exclusive or antithetic. For they do not diverge toward different degrees of the theological zodiac. In the totality of Christian experience and thought there is continuity from the incarnation to the sacramental gift to the community to the missionary service. The four directions of thought and experience that have been cited constitute links within one continuous chain. An integral ecclesiology must include the full sequence. The Church is grounded in Christ, nurtured by the eucharistic presence, built up as a community and it sends its members on their mission in the world for the Kingdom. This sequence

flows from the logic of the incarnation. It determines the tasks of ministry. For as the faithful start on their mission, the process begins again: they present Christ to others by preaching the Word; they are refreshed at the eucharistic meal; they build up the community; they prepare for further mission through service. This generic ministerial responsibility is specified in the functions of the ministers or priests, which may be reduced to the four areas of proclamation, liturgy, education and service (46). We proclaim the grounding of the ecclesia in Christ; we worship in the eucharistic action; we educate for the edification of the ecclesia; we fulfil our tasks in the world by serving. In practice, however, Christian Churches have favoured exclusive ecclesiologies, in keeping with their more profound experience of some aspects of the Christian calling; and they have often streamlined the ministry of their officers by giving priority to one of these four functions. There is an ecumenical urgency to restore the proper balance of ministerial tasks and to recover in their integrity the underlying Christian experiences. Taken as a whole, the sequence of these four tasks is radically christological: the incarnation is the starting point and provides the substance of the entire sequence; centrally sacramental: as the heart of the sacramental system, the eucharist maintains the christic centre of the Church's experience; structurally ecclesial: the Church is built thereby as the structure of salvation for mankind; teleologically eschatological: the service of mission brings the gospel to the outer limits of the world, calling mankind to expect the return of the Christ as the ultimate judge of all human endeavours and achievements.

The fourfold sequence, incarnation-eucharist-community-mission, constitutes an integral whole rather than a punctiliar succession of disconnected happenings. Each of the four moments anticipates or recapitulates the others. Using the term "propedeutic" to denote anticipation, and "radical" for recapitulation, we should say that the incarnation is propedeutically eucharistic, ecclesial and eschatological; the ecclesia is radically incarnational and eucharistic and propedeutically eschatological; the eschaton is radically incarnational, eucharistic and ecclesial. If we replace the words "eschatological" and "eschaton" by "missionary" and "mission", we obtain a similar equation. Manifesting the temporal mission of the eternal Son, the incarnation inaugurates the mission of the disciples; celebrated "until he come", the eucharist calls to and strengthens for mission; built up by the eucharist, the ecclesia carries on the mission received from it; initiated by the incarnate Son, nurtured by the eucharist, supported by the ecclesia, the mission looks forward to the ultimate fulfilment of the promises,

Thus the fourfold sequence corresponds to the overall missio or sacramentum of the Christian faith. Christ has been called "the sacrament of our encounter with God" (Schillebeeckx), the Church has been seen as the primordial sacrament (Hugh of St. Victor); the eucharist

has been placed at the heart of sacramentality (see Sacrosanctum concilium, 10). Each of these emphases is correct but must be completed by the rest of the sequence. The entire process of salvation is sacramental: the mystery of the Christian faith is that of Christ coming to make eucharist (to give thanks) in the ecclesia for the Kingdom. This implies the double affirmation that this sacramentum is given to us as a primary, objective, gratuitous datum (gift), and that it is received, assimilated, inviscerated in us by faith. One and the same complex process is both the sacrament of faith (mysterium fidei) and the faith of the sacrament (fides sacramenti). The two senses of communion, as corporate unity in the Church, and as personal unity with Christ, coalesce. There is only one communion, which is both ecclesial and eucharistic, corporate and personal, institutional and individual, objective and subjective. To borrow and adapt the vocabulary of Hjelmslev's glossematic (47), the one sign of salvation comprises both the expression of the meaning and the meaning of the expression. The expression is the faith in Christ as formulated in the Church by the disciples; the meaning is the reality reached and conveyed by the formulation of faith. Although one may distinguish between the form of the expression (the symbols in which the faith has been formulated) and the form of the meaning (the events of incarnation, eucharist, ecclesia, mission), neither the expression nor the meaning can be found without the other, for they belong to one and the same sign. To return to the formula featured in the introduction to this paper, there is an identity in mysterio between the Church and the eucharist. But this must now be completed. The identity in the all-encompassing sacrament is between Christ given for us, the eucharist in which we receive Christ given for us, the ecclesia into which we are built by Christ given for us, and the mission for the Kingdom in which we expect and announce the return of Christ given for us. This completion of the formula in keeping with the working out of the mystery in time must also be perfected by taking the measure of its depth. At every moment there is an identity between the event of Christ given for us and our faith in this event. The event is known by the form of the faith and the faith is known by the form of the event. Where we find the form of the faith we recognise the event, since the event and the faith are two dimensions of the same sign.

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37. Ibid., X, XX (p.498).
38. Epistola XCVIII, 9 (P.L., 33, 364).
39. Ibid. (363)
40. Epistola LV, 2 (P.L., 33, 205).
41. Ibid., 3 (206).
42. Confessions, VII, X, 16.
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45. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 31, 44 (P.L., 34, 82).
46. "Can the Ministry be Re-constructed?" (J. Armonti, ed: Transcendence and Immanence, Festschrift in honour of Joseph Papin, St. Meinrad, Ind., 1972, p.85-98)
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