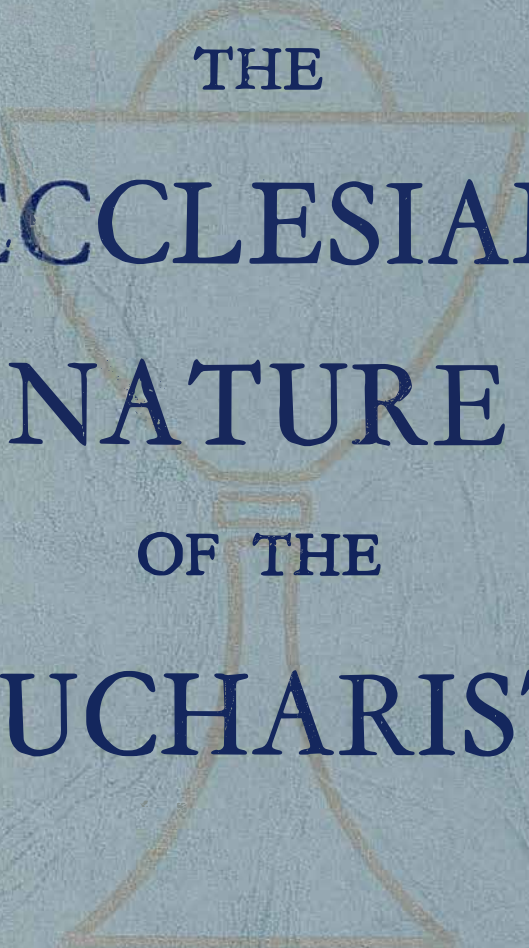


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THE
ECCLESIAL
NATURE
OF THE
EUCHARIST

A REPORT BY THE JOINT STUDY GROUP
OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND
AND THE
SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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“The Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist”

A REPORT BY THE JOINT STUDY GROUP

The present Report was examined by the National Ecumenical Commission for Scotland of the Roman Catholic Church at its meeting in Glasgow on September 22nd, 1973. The Report was approved in the following terms:

“ The National Ecumenical Commission receive with pleasure the Report on the Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist. They wish to thank the Joint Study Group for their excellent work, and warmly commend the Report as a most useful basis for study. The National Ecumenical Commission are particularly pleased to note the clear expression in the Report of so much agreement between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland on fundamental present-day belief about the Eucharist. The National Ecumenical Commission, while satisfied with the Report as a whole, would not wish to be committed however, to any particular historical judgment on Reformation doctrine on the Eucharist.”

Subsequently, the Report was discussed at a meeting of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland and it was accepted in the same terms as by the National Ecumenical Commission.

The Report was likewise presented to the Provincial Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church at its meeting on October 9th-10th, 1973. The Synod expressed appreciation of the Report and suggested its widespread study.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT STUDY GROUP

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Mr. James Breen.
*Rev. Henry Docherty.
Rev. John H. Fitzsimmons.
Mr. Frank G. MacMillan.

EASTERN GROUP: Rev. James Quinn, S.J. (Convener).
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CONSULTANT-OBSERVER:

Rev. Richard F. Baxter (Scottish Churches' House).

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Foreword

The Joint Study Group of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church was formed in 1968. The details of its formation and composition are given in the Foreword to its common statement on "The Nature of Baptism and its Place in the Life of the Church," which was published in 1969 with the authority of the Scottish Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Provincial Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

The procedure whereby groups of Roman Catholics and Scottish Episcopalians, both clerical and lay, met in Edinburgh and Glasgow for detailed and frank discussions, and then met in plenary session to draw together the results of their deliberations, seemed a happy and fruitful arrangement. The immediately sponsoring bodies of the Joint Study Group are the National Ecumenical Commission of the Roman Catholic Church and the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and in presenting their common statement in 1969, the members of the Joint Study Group asked these authorities to continue their remit, suggesting as the next subject for discussion "The Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist." This was agreed, and the present report represents the extent to which the Joint Study Group has been able to pursue its chosen but difficult goal.

The composition of the Group has understandably not remained unchanged, and several members for one reason or another were unable to continue. More grievous was the departure of the Chairman, Provost Haggart, whose appointment as Principal of the Scottish Episcopal Theological College in Edinburgh compelled him to relinquish a position he had filled admirably. On the credit side, we were glad to welcome newcomers to our Group, and in particular to welcome an observer from the Scottish Churches' Council at plenary sessions.

Necessary changes notwithstanding, the bond of friendship and understanding which was so notable a feature of our discussions on Baptism, grew in warmth and openness: it is true to say that we

have not been able fully to complete our remit by including consideration of "The Ministry" or "Intercommunion," but none of us now has the same fear of grasping the nettle of our historic divisions on these two subjects as we should have felt had we not learnt to know each other so well.

Both Chairman and Secretary are only too conscious of the debt of gratitude they owe to several members for many a long stint at home preparing documents for discussion. We must also thank our colleagues for a forbearance in discussion without which our tasks would not have been possible.

Above all, we have been humbly aware that in spite of the limitations and imperfections of our report, our prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit were not entirely unanswered.

ROBERT A. SHANKS
(Chairman).

JAMES QUINN, S.J.
(Secretary).

Introduction

On first acquaintance, "The Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist" as a topic for ecumenical discussion has a recondite air far from the problems of individual Christians who are disturbed by their divisions and yet unmoved by the spectacle of theologians at play. This report will try to make plain that the unique inter-relationship between Eucharist and Church is as *central* to our common faith as it is to our divisions. From earliest times, the Eucharist has been held to be the supreme gift of God, and has been celebrated in obedience to the express command of Our Lord. While there have been historical differences both within and between our two communions, the *centrality* of the Eucharist has never been in question. Not the least of our difficulties has been that of nomenclature, and we have chosen the term "Eucharist" in preference to "The Mass," "The Lord's Supper," or "Holy Communion" for reasons of euphony, brevity, and neutrality.

The heart of our problem could not be reached without some preliminary discussions: some subjects might seem peripheral, but had to be dealt with to clear the way for unambiguous consideration of our views on the Eucharist and the Church. From time to time, ecumenical groups have been accused of agreement by ambiguity—a polite glossing over differences of interpretation of phrase or concept. "For all colours will agree in the dark," wrote Francis Bacon in his essay, "Of Unity in Religion," and it was precisely in order to avoid this error that the Joint Study Group decided to spend some time on antecedent considerations, such as differing eucharistic practices, and the theology of Presence and Sacrifice, before going on to consider the nature of the Eucharist and the light it throws on the nature of the Church.

The plan of this report was to begin with Eucharistic Practice and Eucharistic Theology, and to follow this with the main section on the Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist. We had intended to complete the report with two final sections on the Ministry and Intercommunion, in that order.

We have not departed from this plan, although it soon became clear that we should not be able to complete it in time for our first

report—itself delayed beyond our expectations. To those who are familiar with the difficulties of such discussions this will come as no surprise. It is worth stressing that some of the delays occasioned by protracted discussions were because of an unexpected measure of agreement between us, allowing a deeper exploration of our beliefs.

A discussion of the nature of the Eucharist inevitably involves consideration of what is meant by “The Real Presence”; for many Protestants there is difficulty over the meaning of the word “sacrifice” as applied to the Eucharist; and there is the ever-present difficulty of the nature of the act of Communion and the basis for the authority of the presiding minister of the Eucharist. It is a tribute to the individual members of the Joint Study Group that our often protracted discussions seldom ranged beyond the use of words and always returned to the Narrative of Institution—the words of Our Lord himself—as the centre of our eucharistic theology.

Preliminaries were clearly needed for a meaningful consideration of our remit, and it should be emphasised that the work involved was considerable. Individual pairs from both groups produced papers on items for discussion, only to find them torn to pieces in argument, and so requiring that another draft be prepared and offered for similar treatment. It is our earnest hope that the mutual respect and understanding that we reached in our deliberations will be reflected in this report.

The succeeding chapters are largely self-explanatory, and it remains perhaps to explain the *title* of our report. It might be thought that to explain the choice of the word “ecclesial” as a title for a report over which so much time and consideration has been spent would be only too easy. In one sense, it may be so: “ecclesial” is an obsolete form of the current adjective “ecclesiastical,” according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary (although the New Chambers Dictionary allows “ecclesial” as the adjective from “ecclesia”). The word “ecclesiastical,” however, has more overtones than are desirable if it is to be used to imply the essential nature of the Church; but in distinguishing between these two words and using “ecclesial” to refer to the essential nature of the Church while reserving “ecclesiastical” to include aspects of Church organisation, we are in danger of implying a dichotomy that is not intended. The matter is dealt with in some detail in chapter III.

Two sections of this report remain to be studied, namely “The Ministry” and “Intercommunion.” These are subjects that we have not yet been able to discuss in depth, yet we are in no way reluctant to do so. We know very well that the nearer we move to the practical implications of our agreement on the centrality of our faith,

the closer we come to the problems of entrenched positions and attitudes of mind rooted in history rather than reason. Yet we remain convinced that this report, which indicates how little of truly *ecclesial* importance separates the Scottish Episcopalian from the Roman Catholic in the three aspects of eucharistic theology so far considered, can only lead us to hope for a similar agreement on the other two, and so lead us nearer to that unity which is Our Lord's will for his Church.

I. EUCHARISTIC PRACTICE

The basic fact to emerge from our discussions was the *centrality* of the Eucharist in the worship of both Churches.

In Roman Catholic practice, this is reflected in the tradition of daily celebration, while the Scottish Episcopal Church has a tradition of celebrating "frequently, but always on a Sunday and on the greater festivals." The Eucharist takes the same essential form in both Churches: there is the same two-fold pattern of "Liturgy of the Word" and "Liturgy of the Eucharist," the latter being expressed by means of a four-fold action—Offertory, Consecration, Breaking of the Bread, and Communion.

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, Communion is received "under both kinds," while the Roman Catholic practice is for it to be received by the laity under one kind only, although the practice of receiving under both kinds is gradually being renewed. In both Churches, Communion is usually received kneeling; but whereas Episcopalians receive the consecrated Bread in their hands, Roman Catholics normally receive it in the mouth.

In all Roman Catholic churches and many Episcopalian ones, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved: in both traditions, where the consecrated elements remaining after Communion are not to be reserved, they are reverently consumed by the ministers. With regard to ceremonial, the use of lights (candles), vestments, and genuflections is "universal" in the Roman Catholic Church, and "widespread" among Episcopalians.

In the matter of admission to the Eucharist, the present discipline of the two Churches differs, in that the Scottish Episcopal Church recognises wider areas of admission for "Christians duly baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity and qualified to receive Holy Communion in their own Churches," who "may be welcomed at the Lord's Table in the Anglican Communion" in order to meet "a special pastoral need," and in certain authorised ecumenical situations.¹ The Roman Catholic Church does not admit to Communion anyone except those in full communion with Rome, though there are some exceptions to this with regard to Eastern Christians and other Christians in special circumstances.²

There are thus many liturgical elements held in common by our two Churches, and in many respects our practice is identical. Since a common "Lex Orandi" would be a factor making for a common "Lex Credendi," we feel it is important to recognise how much is already done in similar ways, as well as to press forward wherever possible with the development of other common elements. Although it is clearly necessary for each tradition to develop in harmony with its own past and heritage, nevertheless agreement to use a common Lectionary and to observe a revised Christian Year, together with the incorporation of internationally agreed texts for the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and other elements of the Liturgy, and the creation of a common store of hymns and church music—all of these are factors which would promote further unity between our two Churches.

II ASPECTS OF EUCHARISTIC FAITH

SACRIFICE

Down the centuries both our traditions have developed a theology about the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist; and in both cases the roots of this theology are to be found in the biblical tradition of the Old and New Testaments, together with the interpretation of its data embodied in the traditional teaching of the Church.

On examining together the New Testament narratives of the institution of the Eucharist, we have seen how the evangelists have taken over the themes and motifs of the Old Testament's own theology of sacrifice.¹ Their central idea is that of the Eucharist as the "Christian Passover": just as the Passover of Israel is anticipated and signified in the meal shared in Egypt (cf. *Ex.* 12, 1-36), so the Passover of Christ and Christians is anticipated and signified in the Last Supper. The context of the narratives of institution (at least in the tradition of the Synoptic Gospels) is the Passover meal shared by Jesus and his followers. While the image of Christ as the Paschal Lamb is none too clear, the words of the institution interpret his death as an atonement sacrifice—his Body and Blood are "for many" and "for you".

The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is further heightened by its definition as the sealing of the New Covenant between God and man.² Here again the immediate reference is to the covenant sacrifices of the Old Testament. As in the Old Testament sacrifices the ritual words and actions interpret the offering of the victim, so the words and actions of Jesus in the Upper Room interpret his offering of himself on the Cross as the Victim reconciling God and man.

The Last Supper provides us with a key to the understanding of Calvary, and the Last Supper and Calvary together provide us with a key to the understanding of the Eucharist. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews takes up these ideas and expresses them succinctly: the sacrifice of Christ was offered "once and for all", and this offering of Christ achieves perfect forgiveness for all men; through the sacrifice of Christ, the Christian can approach God with faith and hope that he is delivered from sin (cf. *Heb.* 9-10).³

In the light of this interpretation offered by the New Testament writers, the Eucharist was early understood in terms of **Christ's offering of himself as a sacrifice for the reconciliation of God**

and man. As the perfect sacrificial offering, he fulfils in himself the aspirations and intentions of the Old Testament in its worship. There are, however, other aspects of the New Testament understanding of the Eucharist which are significant for us, in that they have been integrated into the theology of both our traditions.

The words of institution contain the injunction to celebrate the Eucharist as a "memorial" of Christ, and to this St. Paul adds the further notion of the Eucharist as a "proclamation" of the death of Jesus (*I Cor.* 11, 26), so allowing the Church to see in the Eucharist the source and fullest expression of its mission.

If the idea of communion with God through the offering of sacrifice is essential to the Old Testament theology of sacrifice, it is also an essential aspect of the New Testament theology of the Eucharist. The eucharistic sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ makes all Christians one—the many are one body, for they all partake of the one bread (*I Cor.* 10, 17). Further, the Eucharist is celebrated until the Lord "comes" (*I Cor.* 11, 26), and so stands as a sign and guarantee of the final fulfilment of the salvation in which the Christian is already caught up through his sharing in the Lord's Body and Blood. Thus what God's people of the Old Testament hoped for and looked forward to in the celebration of the Passover meal, the Church now possesses in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Messianic Banquet, which expresses the full and final union of all men with God and with one another, is already anticipated in the eucharistic meal.⁴

Inspired by this interpretation of the Eucharist offered by the New Testament writers, both Churches have understood the Eucharist as **the presence here and now in the Christian community of Christ's once-and-for-all offering of himself as a sacrifice for the reconciliation of God and man.** The communion with God in a sacred meal or banquet which belongs to the New Testament appreciation of the Eucharist has been the source and context of our understanding of the real presence of Christ. Our idea of the Church as the "Body of Christ" is derived from the New Testament idea of the Eucharist as the sharing of one bread which makes us who are many, all one with God and with one another. Our hope and our expectation for the future are nourished by the Eucharist, which **points to the fulfilment of our salvation.** The eucharistic sacrifice indeed has been understood by both Churches as a pattern for the life of the Christian community: "Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (*Eph.* 5, 1-2).

In examining the interpretation of biblical data embodied in the traditional teaching of both our Churches, we have seen how the Eucharist has been understood as a "re-presentation" of the one sacrifice of Christ, through the re-enactment of the words and actions of the Upper Room, which make the reconciling work of Christ **present and effective for us**, and through us for all men. Through the eucharistic mystery celebrated by the Church in the Spirit, the sacrifice of the Cross, achieved "once and for all," is brought to mind in the "memorial" of Christ, and thus made sacramentally present, so that its saving power may be communicated to us.⁵

From the very beginning, the Church has gathered to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, reading all that the Scriptures have to say about the "things referring to himself" (*Lk.* 24, 27) and celebrating the Eucharist in which "the victory and triumph of his death are again made present."⁶ **It is clear that there can only be one sacrifice: the eucharistic sacrifice is the same sacrifice as that of Christ on the Cross, and this one sacrifice is now offered by the ascended and glorified Lord in his Church.** The Eucharist is the celebration not only of the death, but also of the resurrection and ascension of Christ: it is the sacrament of the whole Paschal Mystery. The Eucharist is not simply the commemoration of Calvary as of a past event, nor is it simply an offering of praise and thanksgiving for Calvary and its reconciling and atoning effects. On the contrary, the Eucharist is the continuing presence in our time and situation of Christ's sacrifice. This presence, which signifies and brings about the reconciliation of men with God and with one another, is his gift to those who, through the Spirit, are incorporated with him in his Body the Church. It is this identification of the faithful in the Spirit with the risen humanity of Jesus Christ that guards the "once and for all"-ness of Christ's sacrifice and yet makes that sacrifice the sacrifice of the Church itself.

In this connexion we have looked at the Anglican Articles, esp. Art. XXXI. What is repudiated in this Article is something that never had been part of the authentic teaching of the Roman Church. The "sacrifices of Masses" referred to there is part of a conception which would understand the eucharistic sacrifice as *adding* something to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. This idea is rightly denied and the traditional faith of the Church remains what it always has been: there is but one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary of which the Eucharist is the "memorial" or "re-presentation."⁷

THE REAL PRESENCE

In speaking of the eucharistic sacrifice, we have referred to the idea of the sacred banquet, that communion with God which we share in the Eucharist, as the source and context for our understanding of the real presence of Christ. From St. Paul onwards, the Church has always maintained that a *change* takes place in the eucharistic elements after the consecration.⁸

After the consecration, the Bread of the Eucharist is a different kind of bread: the bread of human life has been changed into the Bread of everlasting life. This change, though it does not affect the physical or chemical properties of bread, is nevertheless a real change—not one imposed by our purpose, minds, or faith. It is more than a change in the use to which we put bread; it is more than a change in its meaning for us. It is a change by which the bread of human life has become the Bread of everlasting life, has become the “Body of the Lord” (I Cor. 11, 29).

We do not think of the eucharistic sacrifice and the real presence as separate, nor do we believe that they should be thought of in this way. Christ is present, i.e. the change takes place in order that we may offer him and his oblation on behalf of ourselves and the world, and receiving the full benefits of his death and resurrection in his gift of Holy Communion may be reintegrated in him so as to participate more effectively in his mission and service to the world.

It is important also to recall that Christ is the Giver as well as the gift bestowed, and that he is present and active in more than one way in the Eucharist—in his People gathered together, in the minister who presides, in his Word read and proclaimed, in the world's needs brought forward in the Intercessions (*Mt.* 25, 40).⁹

The priesthood which is exercised in the eucharistic offering is the priesthood of Christ himself. He is at once Priest and Victim. In the Church's offering of his sacrifice, the officiating priest and the whole community share in his Priesthood. Hence, those who say that the ministry of an episcopally ordained priest is necessary for the eucharistic offering do not deny that the whole People of God offers the sacrifice together.¹⁰ The presence of Christ's sacrifice in the eucharistic offering is the work of the Holy Spirit acting in the community, as the liturgical traditions of both our Churches constantly attest. In the Christian community's exercise of his priesthood, which it shares, the Eucharist is offered by Christ in and through the Church.

III. THE ECCLESIAL NATURE OF THE EUCHARIST

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the Eucharist expressed in Chapter II calls our attention once more to a fundamental but somewhat neglected feature of our common Eucharistic heritage: viz. *the unique relationship of mutual dependence between the Eucharist and the Church*. It is not without significance that from the earliest times, as acknowledged in the New Testament and faithfully maintained in both traditions, the Eucharist has been cherished as the supreme gift of God to his Church and that the celebration of the Eucharist has always held a place of pre-eminence in the growing life and work of the Church. For it is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the faithful experience and express most fully that unity which must always be the first characteristic of the Church of Christ. The eucharistic sacrifice "is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life . . . Strengthened anew at the Holy Table of the Body of Christ, (the faithful) manifest in a practical way that unity of God's people which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most awesome sacrament."¹

THE EUCHARIST—SACRAMENT OF THE CHURCH: A BIBLICAL APPROACH

It was his appreciation of this intimate connection between the Eucharist and the Church which allowed Paul to speak of both the Eucharist (*I Cor.* 10, 16) and the Church (*Ephes.* 1, 23) as the "Body" of Christ, meaning by body "person."

"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread" (*I Cor.* 10, 17).

". . . and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (*Ephesians* 1, 22).

Already, Paul finds in the celebration of the Eucharist the sign and source not only of the union of the faithful with Christ, but of their unity with one another—"a single body." As such, Paul prompts us to an understanding of the Church as *first and foremost a Eucharistic Community*—what is achieved by and witnessed to in the fellowship of the Eucharist is the normative guide for the Church. The Eucharist reveals the nature of the Church, and in

each celebration of particular communities the Church continues to discover afresh the dynamic source of its own membership, growth and renewal, the origin of its structure and the ultimate meaning and purpose of all its activity. Without the Church there can be no Eucharist, but without the Eucharist there would be no Church—each stands as a sign and source of the other.

When the New Testament authors came to set down in writing the tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus, they were acutely aware that they were not handling facts of the past which belonged exclusively to the past. It is for this reason that we can see an underlying conviction in all that they wrote: the conviction that the Jesus of whom they write is still alive, exalted at the right hand of the Father, and present and active in his Church. This explains why Luke refers to the details of the Gospel story as events which “have been accomplished” and which have been fulfilled “among us,” thereby identifying himself and his readers with the witness of the past (*Lk.* 1, 1). In the same way, John speaks of the Word’s becoming flesh and dwelling “among us,” in such a way that “we have beheld his glory” (*Jn.* 1, 14). The same conviction animated Matthew when he wrote of the birth of Jesus as the coming of Emmanuel, “which means God with us” (*Mt.* 1, 23), and when he concluded his version of the Gospel with the promise of Jesus: “I am with you always to the close of the age” (*Mt.* 28, 20).

When we use the language of contemporary theology and speak of Jesus Christ as “the sacrament of the Father,” we are simply expressing something that responds to the New Testament portrayal of the person and mission of Jesus. (Here it is enough to remark that “sacrament” is taken in its most general sense—an effective sign: a sign, first of all, which can be seen and understood as such, and one which actually effects what it signifies, makes it real and present.) In this case, what is meant, therefore, is that in Christ the Father is present and active. The Gospel picture of the ministry (and more specifically of the miracles) of Jesus underlines this active presence of the Father in him. They all involve an encounter between men and Jesus: this encounter is effective, for the “blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (*Mt.* 11, 5). The Gospels, then, show us how the presence of Christ is the presence of the redeeming love of God in the midst of men (cf. *Mt.*’s quotation of *Hos.* 6, 6 in 9, 13), in such a way that they can see it and respond to it. The whole technique of the handing on of the tradition which we find in the New Testament is based on the conviction that **what Jesus**

once did, he does still. This is the heart of sacramental theology, and it is the key concept with regard to the existence and nature of the Church. Just as the leper, the blind, and the lame receive a fuller life through their encounter with Jesus, so the Christian shares a new kind of life through his encounter in faith with the Risen Christ. Christ is "the sacrament of the encounter with God,"² the infinite love of God coming into contact with men in a tangible and personal form. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself . . . and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (*II Cor.* 5, 19). Here, we begin to touch upon the very essence of the Church—it is to be the meeting between Christ and men through the ages.

So, when we use the language of contemporary theology and say that "the Church is the sacrament of Christ,"³ we are simply expressing the basic New Testament vision of the Church and its function. What Christ has done, that is the Church's task—"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (*Mt.* 10, 40). It is the abiding presence of Christ himself which enables the Church to carry out its mission—"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (*Mt.* 18, 20). The community of those who have gathered in his name is to be the bridge between Christ and the world in all places and in all times. Just as Christ, raised on the Cross, draws all men to himself (*Jn.* 12, 32), the Church must be an ensign for the nations (*Is.* 11, 12), carrying out and continuing the mission which Christ himself was sent to fulfil. It was Christ himself who commissioned the Church to go "and make disciples of all nations" (*Mt.* 28, 19); the witness of the Church to the abiding presence of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit—"the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (*Mt.* 10, 20). It is for the Holy Spirit to lead the Church to a deeper awareness of itself and its mission, to lead it "into all the truth" (*Jn.* 16, 13).

Against this background, it is easier to see how the New Testament writers regarded the Church as being most fully itself, as expressing most completely the abiding and active presence of Christ, when it came to the celebration of the Eucharist. In the Synoptic tradition, there is the highly symbolic presentation of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude (cf. *Mk.* 6, 32-44, par. *Mt.* 14, 13-21; *Lk.* 9, 11-17), where the disciples are involved in the miracle in such a way that they become partners of Jesus in feeding the people; further, the narratives of the institution of the Eucharist itself (cf. *Mk.* 14, 22-25, par. *Mt.* 26, 26-29; *Lk.* 22, 17-20), are short and to the point because they simply make explicit something which lies at the heart of the whole Gospel tradition—the abiding presence

of Christ. There is a logic which imposes itself here: if Christ is the sacrament of the Father, and if the Church is the sacrament of Christ, then the sharing of the eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the Church. The formula with the wine is all the more significant: "This is my blood of the covenant" (*Mt.* 26, 28); the covenant between God and man is what brings the people of God into existence, and it is the covenant in the blood of Christ which brings the Church into existence. **In the sharing of the Eucharist is the full affirmation of the Church's identity.** But not only is it an affirmation of identity, it is also an affirmation of what the Church *does*—to unite men to Christ and to unite them with one another: that is the mission of the Church. That is why the Fourth Gospel speaks of the Eucharist in terms of the giving of eternal life: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (*Jn.* 6, 56). It also explains why the Fourth Gospel interprets the Last Supper in terms of a parting gift and instruction to the Church.—"by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (*Jn.* 13, 35). It is for this reason that St. Paul was able to move from the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist to the identification of the Church itself as "the Body of Christ." It is for this reason also that he sees in the Eucharist the remembrance of the death of the Lord and in the partaking of the Eucharist, the proclamation to the world of the Lord's death (cf. *I Cor.* 11, 23-26).

Just as John concentrates on the relationship between Christ and the individual Christian in his eucharistic doctrine, so the other New Testament writers emphasise this aspect, each in his own way. The identity between Christ and the Christian is basic to the meaning of Matthew's Mission Discourse (cf. *Mt.* 9, 35—11, 1). The mission of the Christian, however, which makes of him a "sacrament" of Christ, is consequent upon the call he has received to follow Christ. Men are "called" in the Gospels, and they are "baptised" in the letters of Saint Paul. It is those who have been "called"/"baptised" who are sent to preach under the guidance of the Spirit; so the New Testament perspective helps us to see the integral elements of Christian Initiation. The culmination of this initiation into Christ comes with the sharing in the Eucharist. It is Christ himself who called men to witness to his death and resurrection, to preach his Gospel, to forgive sins, to suffer with him, to share his authority, to be his companions, i.e. to live their lives in his company through to an eternal destiny. This is the ultimate sense of the Eucharist in the Church: it is the continuation (or "re-presentation") of the self-giving of Christ, and the guarantee of his lasting presence in the community of those who bear his name.

The man who has been initiated into Christ becomes part of his work and his life becomes fused with the life and action of Christ. This is the new covenant between God and man, and it is sealed in the Eucharist.

THE EUCHARIST—MODEL OF THE CHURCH

In the Eucharist, the Church is always aware that here is the continuing action of God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, by whose life the Church lives. The Church sees itself in the Eucharist as the mystery of the Trinity, revealed and actualised in our world and our history with the purpose of bringing all men into personal communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Incorporated into Christ so as to form his living Body, the faithful live in the fellowship of the Spirit as true sons of the Father.

Hence in the Eucharist the Church is built up by the Spirit into the fullness of Christ, and, through the saving work of Christ there made present, has access to the Father. *The Church knows itself as the object of the Father's loving initiative, mediated by the Son, in the power of the Spirit.*

In the Eucharist the presence of Christ is known through the signs of his self-giving love: his broken Body and outpoured Blood are shown forth in the consecrated elements. *The Church knows itself to be, like Christ, the suffering and redeeming Servant of God and of all men.*

In the Eucharist the Church is caught up into God's heavenly glory, and receives the promise and foretaste of the life of the age to come. *The Church knows itself to be a pilgrim people, travelling in hope towards that goal of which it already has the foretaste.*

In the Eucharist the Church blesses God for all creation by offering that creation to its Lord under the symbols of bread and wine, and the Church is herself nourished with the life of God through these same symbols, now made Christ's Body and Blood. *The Church knows itself to stand as the priestly people within creation and through the whole universe of matter God works out his purposes of love.*

In the Eucharist the Church is summoned to a sacred meal, which is a foretaste of the perfect fellowship with God which is to come. The Church knows itself to be a fellowship of men and women, having a vocation to build itself up as the universal family of mankind and thus committed to overcoming everything that breaks or hinders the fellowship of men with each other and with God.

THE EUCHARIST AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

Since the Church is the sign of Christ's saving action in the world and the means of that saving action, it lives at two levels. Its inner life and its structure are revealed in the Eucharist. It is here that we can see the need for holding two aspects of the Church in a dynamic tension. The Church is the visible society founded on the apostles, and at the same time the mystery of salvation always present. The Church is at once the community of the redeemed and the redeeming community. Acts 2, 42, holds the balance—"These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers." In the community gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist we see a visible society; this gathered community not only recalls and ratifies again the new covenant between God and man, but is also here and now caught up in the very acts of Christ by which it is gathered together and established as the People of God. *The Eucharist is the mystery of salvation constituting the Church in its inmost being—the People of God gathered together in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

Wherever and whenever the tension between these two aspects of the reality of the Church is not maintained, the nature of the Church as a visible society is distorted and the presence of the saving activity of God in the Church is obscured. In other words, there is a constant danger that the "ecclesial" aspect of the Church can be taken for the "ecclesiastical" and vice versa. In distinguishing these two aspects, we are provided with a means of describing the mystery of the Church in its fullness. For, in the actual life of the Church, there is an unchanging element, a "givenness," forever to be found where the People of God are gathered together in the new and eternal covenant sealed with the Blood of Christ: **this is its "ecclesial" nature, willed by God and given by Christ.** It is God's will that men will be made holy and saved, "not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by (his) making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness . . . Established by Christ as a fellowship of Life, charity and truth, it is also used by him as an instrument for the redemption of all."² Side by side with this, however, it must be recognised that the Church exists in history and subject to the changes, the stresses and the strains of history, in the same way that the men and women who make up the People of God are subject to them. Because of this, in the course of history, the Church takes on many different shapes, many different structures. **This is what is meant by its "ecclesiastical" nature:** it is the product of

the guidance of the Holy Spirit coupled with the goodwill and activity of the members of the Church in any historical situation to make the Church a clearer expression of what God wills that it should be in every age, to make it a more effective "instrument for the redemption of all." The ecclesiastical may be Spirit-inspired for times and circumstances or it may be consequent on human genius or frailty, and it is in this area that the Church is "semper reformanda." Consequently, there is always a priority of the "ecclesial" over the "ecclesiastical": the shape and structure of the Church must be judged by its effectiveness in allowing the Church to be as fully as possible "the Sacrament of Christ," his visible embodiment in the power of the Spirit.

However, since the Eucharist is "the sacrament of the Church" and "the model of the Church," it likewise has implications for an estimate of the *structure* of the Church. The "ecclesial" shape of the Church is proclaimed in the Eucharist: at the Eucharist, the Church is most fully itself, and it is there that the characteristic roles and attitudes of the People of God find expression. The witness of the Church to the saving event of God in Christ cannot be separated from its unity in faith, hope and love. "I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (*Jn.* 17, 23). The unity of the Church in the Body and Blood of Christ is both source and sign of its unity in faith, hope and love. When we pose the question of what is essential for the Eucharist, then we become conscious of what we are really asking—the question of what is essential for the Church itself. It is the Eucharist which lays bare the "ecclesial" nature of the Church, and helps us to distinguish it from the Church's "ecclesiastical" aspect. As ever, the Last Supper serves as guide and paradigm: The People of God are all equally served by Christ and called to serve one another: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (*Jn.* 13, 14). The "example" of Christ is a rule for his Church, and since "a servant is not greater than his master, nor he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (*Jn.* 13, 16), it follows that those who have authority in the Church are called to serve the community in the spirit of Christ.

It is in the light of these considerations that we can consider the existence and exercise of authority in the Church, the nature and function of the ministry in the Church. There we can discover the same kind of distinction between what is "ecclesial" and what is "ecclesiastical"; in making this vital distinction and in drawing out its implications, the Eucharist will be our guide because it enables us to see clearly what the structure of the Church is.

THE EUCHARIST AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

All that is implied by Baptism and Confirmation is fulfilled in the Eucharist. There the Christian expresses the fullness of responsible membership of the Church. There he brings to completion what his Baptism and Confirmation looked forward to, rejoices in Christ's risen life within his Church on earth, and is drawn into his reconciling work in the world. Through his incorporation into Christ's Paschal Mystery, made present in the Eucharist, the Christian shares in the divine life (*Romans* 6, 3-11).

Often, the New Testament places the close relationship between Christ, the Christian, and the Church in a eucharistic context. With the words, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you can have no life in you," St. John draws out the eucharistic implications of the community of faith (*John* 6, 52-58).

Later, in the great discourses of Our Lord at the Last Supper with his disciples, we find this relationship described as so intimate that it is like a vine and its branches (*John* 15, 1-7).

St. Paul goes even further, illustrating membership of the Church in terms of being so closely one with Christ that we may think of the Church as his Body. Once again the relationship is seen as expressing itself in the Eucharist. The cup of blessing which we bless, the bread which we break—these are a sharing in the Body of Christ (*1 Cor.* 10, 16-17). By the action of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, our union with Christ is continually deepened and our fellowship with one another is strengthened.

But it is perhaps in the First Letter of St. Peter that we have the clearest picture of the eucharistic community in action—a priestly people called by God to holiness, a New Israel set for a light in the world (*1 Peter* 2, 4-10). **The Christian goes out from the Eucharist to serve the world, able to share in this work through the power and grace of Christ's Paschal victory, which was first mediated to him in Baptism and is ever renewed for him in the Eucharist.**

THE EUCHARIST AND MISSION

The New Israel has been a missionary body from the first: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," was the command of Christ (*Matthew* 28, 19). The primary and chief agent of mission is the Father himself, who loves the world so much that he sent the Son. The Church's calling is to continue the mission of Christ in the power of his Spirit (*John* 20, 21-23), and this is symbolised by the fact that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost gives to the disciples the courage and capacity to spread the Gospel (cf. *Acts* 2).

God's Mission—the Father's sending of the Son to redeem the world—is focused, actualised and celebrated above all in the Eucharist. There the Church is called together, reintegrated in Christ, and sent out in his Spirit to share in his mission and service to the world. It is a world made new in Christ, and in which he comes to meet us in many forms. But the Lord who meets, beckons, challenges and judges us variously through his world, meets us by appointment, so to speak, and most plainly in the Eucharist. Christians recognise Christ's saving presence not only in the Eucharist but in the world, and are therefore committed to co-operate with him and to help others to realise his saving presence for themselves.

The relationship in Christ with God, with other Christians and with the world, which is explicit in the Eucharist, must increasingly be lived out in daily life. At the Eucharist we stand before the Father as those who have received forgiveness; we must then go out and forgive others. Because we are united with one another as well as with Christ, we must go out and draw men together. Because we have been loved, we must go out and love. Thus the world should see in the living community of the Church its own true face, and the possibility of bringing to birth its own potentialities in the power of Christ.

A great aspiration of present-day Christians is "One Church renewed for mission." This phrase emphasises our conviction, based upon the words of Jesus in John 17, 21, that the Eucharist is the sign and source of unity, and that unity at the Eucharist is part of the gospel of reconciliation, to be preached to the whole world.

FINAL STATEMENT

Having come to the end of our study of the topic proposed to us, namely, "The Ecclesial Nature of the Eucharist," we can take great encouragement from the fact that our discussions have led to extensive and thorough agreement on the doctrine of our respective traditions with regard to the Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. The preliminary discussion of the eucharistic practice of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church helped us to find a common ground, in that both traditions agree on the continuing application of the principle: "Lex orandi, lex credendi." Our study of two essential aspects of eucharistic faith—the eucharistic sacrifice and the real presence—have brought us to an agreement which is not only "substantial," but which can fairly be described as "complete." This is already something for us to rejoice over; further, it is a sign of hope for future discussions.

It is, however, in our conversations centring on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church that we have felt ourselves breaking new ground and moving closer to the heart of all ecumenical endeavour. Not only have we been able to reach a similar degree of agreement in this context, but we have been able to see as a result the way in which our future discussions must go: the way is clear for us to open up the topic of the Ministry, and ultimately of Intercommunion.

We have felt it necessary to pause at this stage, so that we can estimate the gains we have made, and so that we can clarify as far as possible the precise questions which now face us. The fact that we have concurred in relating the Eucharist to the Church, and in this way clarifying our understanding of the Church itself, means that we have to go further in this direction; the recognition of elements which are "ecclesial" as distinct from "ecclesiastical" is crucial for our estimate of the Church and for our understanding of the ministry within the Church. It will be remembered that our study of the Eucharist in relation to the Church has meant that we had to discuss the Church's inner nature, its structure and its mission, as well as the connexion between the Eucharist and membership of the Church. From the fact that we recognise the connexion between the Eucharist and membership of the Church, it follows that we must consider this connexion in relation to the vexed question of intercommunion. What we have done, we believe, is to clear the ground for such further discussions. In the experience of the representatives of both communions, there has been a great deal of clarification of thought gained through our study to date, as well as a mutual growth in awareness and appreciation of the theo-

logical and liturgical traditions of both communions. Throughout our work we have been activated by a desire to hasten the time when "all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning."¹

We have gained encouragement from the "Windsor Statement"² of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, and we would hope that what we have agreed together serves to clarify some of the questions alluded to in that document, and indeed carry the discussion further.

It is our conviction that what we have studied together is of supreme importance to the life of the Church of Christ; it is our earnest hope that what we have concluded will serve as a step on the way to the restoration of unity between our two communions. With this in mind, we submit our work to the authorities of our respective Churches.

NOTES

I. EUCHARISTIC PRACTICE

- (1) Cf. "Intercommunion. A Scottish Episcopalian Approach," being a Report of the Commission on Intercommunion to the Provincial Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, together with a Postscript recording the decisions of the Provincial Synod at its meeting in Perth on 4th-5th November, 1969, published for the Provincial Synod by the Representative Church Council, 13 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh, nos. 21-22, pp. 9-10.
- (2) Cf. "Guidelines for Ecumenical Activity," issued by the National Ecumenical Commission for Scotland of the Roman Catholic Church, Glasgow, 1970, nos. 16-18, pp. 13-15; the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church on this point has been further elaborated by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in its Instruction of June 1st, 1972, and the interpretative "Note" issued on October 17th, 1973.

II. ASPECTS OF EUCHARISTIC FAITH

- (1) Above all else, the Old Testament's theology of sacrifice is concerned with a personal response of man to a God who is personal: Jahweh, the Lord, is Master, Creator, the Transcendent, but above all he is a person. Sacrifice is the external expression of an internal attitude of service and dedication. The different kinds of sacrifice which we find in the religion of the Old Testament each emphasise various aspects of the total reality—the highest expression of man's self-giving to God, and an act of communion between God and man.
- (2) Cf. "My blood of the covenant" in Mt. 26, 28, and Mk. 14, 24, and "The new covenant in my blood" in Lk. 22, 20, and I Cor. 11, 25. We have understood this idea against the background of Ex. 24, 8.
- (3) It is significant that exegetical opinion recognises in these chapters the "central section" and "essential message" of the entire Letter. The author institutes a comparison between the Old Covenant and its religious expressions and the unique, effective, and definitive sacrifice of Christ which brings the New Covenant into being; the priesthood of Christ replaces the former priesthood, and so "we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (10, 19) and can "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (10, 22).
- (4) Each of these notions has an important bearing on the total New Testament picture of the Eucharist, and consequently on the traditional theology of both Churches: the biblical idea of "memorial," the Pauline idea of "proclamation," the Eucharist as "effective" sign of unity, and the Eucharist as a share in the eschatological future.
- (5) Cf. Council of Trent: "Doctrina de Sanctissimo Missae Sacrificio," esp. ch. 1. Vatican II has expressed the same idea concisely and in the form of a synthesis: "At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: 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." (Const. on the Sacred Liturgy, ch. 2, no. 47.)

Cf. also Lambeth Conference Report, 1958, p. 2. 84; and Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), Agreed Statement on the Eucharist, para. 3.

- (6) Cf. Council of Trent, "Decretum de Sanctissima Eucharistia," ch. 5. Cf. also Encyclical Letter, "Mysterium Fidei," no. 34, and ARCIC Agreed Statement, para. 5.
- (7) Article XXXI states that "the sacrifices of Masses," *not* the sacrifice of the Mass, were "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." It asserts that "the Offering of Christ once made is the perfect Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction," which again is not in question today. It is the idea that the Mass adds something to Calvary that is rightly denied, and the notion that the more Masses are offered, the greater is the redemption. The writings of Elizabethan and later Anglican divines to the effect that in the Eucharist the one sacrifice of Christ is offered to the Father make clear that the notion of "representation" here stated is not contrary to the teaching contained in this article. Indeed Ridley, at his trial, referred to the Eucharist as an "unbloody sacrifice." Thus the agreement in this statement is not a contravention of Anglican faith.
- (8) The doctrine of eucharistic change in contemporary Roman Catholic theology is not tied to any particular philosophy. "The word 'transubstantiation' is commonly used in the Roman Catholic Church to indicate that God acting in the Eucharist effects a change in the inner reality of the elements. The term should be seen as affirming the fact of Christ's presence, and of the mysterious and radical change which takes place." (ARCIC Agreed Statement, footnote to para. 6.)

The Thirty-Nine Articles *appear* to deny transubstantiation as a doctrine. A letter from the author of the article in question, no. XXVIII, insists that it did not exclude the presence of Christ's Body from the sacrament, but only the grossness and sensibleness in the receiving thereof. He goes on: "Though he took Christ's Body in his hand, received it with his mouth, and that corporally, naturally, really, substantially, and carnally as the doctors do write, yet he did not for all that see it, smell it, nor taste it." What Bishop Guest, the writer, appears to be denying is the belief that gave rise to the legend of bleeding hosts and blood-stained corporals. It is clear that what is here controverted is an idea that no one would assert today. He affirms a presence that is not in a "corporal, carnal, or natural manner." He quotes Bishop Jewel, who claimed that the presence is "invisible, unspeakably, supernaturally, divinely, and by way to him only known." Thus no denial of what is currently held by Roman Catholics is contained here; indeed, it is asserted.

It is also relevant to note that the so-called Black Rubric added at the last moment to the Communion service of the 1552 English Prayer Book, and rewritten in modified form in the 1662 Prayer Book, has never appeared in any Scottish Prayer Book. In its 1552 form the Rubric stated that kneeling to receive communion did not imply "any real or essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood." In the 1662 Book this was changed to "any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood."

The Scottish Prayer Book of 1929 includes the following among its rubrics for Holy Communion: "According to long-existing custom in the Scottish Church, the Presbyter may reserve so much of the consecrated Gifts as may be required for the Communion of the Sick and others who could not be present at the celebration in Church."

- (9) Cf. ARCIC Agreed Statement, para. 7.
- (10) Cf. Vatican II: Const. on the Church, ch. 2, no. 10. Cf. also Lambeth Conference Report, 1968, "Renewal in Ministry," pp. 93 ff.

III. THE ECCLESIAL NATURE OF THE EUCHARIST

- (1) Cf. Vatican II: Const. on the Church, ch. 2, no. 11.
- (2) Cf. Schillebeeckx, E.: "Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God," London and Melbourne, 1963.
- (3) Cf. *Ibid.*, ch. 2: "The Church, Sacrament of the Risen Christ." Cf. also Vatican II: "By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind." (Const. on the Church, ch. 1, no. 1.)

FINAL STATEMENT

- (1) Cf. Vatican II: Decree on Ecumenism, ch. 1, no. 4.