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CHAPTER 4

Communion in the Body of Christ

The Acts of the Apostles follows the story of Peter's great Pentecost sermon with a short passage which summarizes the life of the primitive Church of Jerusalem: "Those who accepted his message were baptized. . . . They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles (*didachē tōn apostolōn*) and to the communal life (*koinōnia*), to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:41-42). While admittedly an idealized sketch, Luke's summary suggests that the essential elements of Church include baptism, apostolic teaching (or tradition), communal life, Eucharist, and prayer.

Paul's basic metaphor for the Christian community is the Body of Christ. Introduced in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:15-17; 12:11-28), the metaphor also appears in Romans (12:4-5), Colossians, and Ephesians. Paul tells the Corinthians that by their participation (*koinōnia*) or communion in the body and blood of Christ they, too, become one body.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Cor 10:16-17).

These few verses are heavy with ecclesiological meaning. In the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, Christians have a communion in the body and blood of Christ and are constituted as the Body of Christ.¹ For both Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiology the Eucharist is crucial; "where the

¹ This was Augustine's view; see Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*: Vol. I: *Historical Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2004) 226.

Eucharist is, there is the Church.”² Also evident here is the notion of *koinōnia* or communion, so important in the life of the Church.

To better understand Paul’s ecclesiological vision of life in Christ through communion in his Body, the Church, we will consider the rich concept of *koinōnia* or communion. Then we will look at baptism and Eucharist, which unite Christians in the Spirit as one body in Christ and equip them with a diversity of gifts and ministries. Finally, we will consider an ecclesiology of communion.

The Concept of Communion

For pre-Vatican II Catholicism, Christian unity meant the return of those who had separated from Rome to their original home in the “one true Church.” The Church was too often conceived as a single, unified institution, with too little attention paid to the ecclesial status of the local or particular churches. The notion of *koinōnia* has been present from the outset of the work of the Faith and Order Commission, thus long before the organization of the World Council of Churches in 1948.³ Since the council, it has moved to the center of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. The report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome stated that the Roman Catholic Church has fully assumed its ecumenical responsibility on the basis of the ecclesiology of communion.⁴ To understand the Church as *koinōnia* is to understand the essential nature of its life.

The Greek *koinōnia* means a sharing or participation in something else. Appearing 19 times in the New Testament, it is generally translated as “communion” (Lt. *communio*) or “fellowship.” Roman Catholics, sensitive to its spiritual and sacramental implications, often translate it as communion; Evangelicals prefer fellowship.⁵

The New Testament employs *koinōnia* in a number of senses. First of all the term has the soteriological sense of “the communion of the redeemed with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.”⁶ It describes the sharing or

² Susan Wood, “Communion Ecclesiology: Source of Hope, Source of Controversy,” *Pro Ecclesia* 2 (1993) 425.

³ See J. M. R. Tillard, “Koinonia: V. Dan La Vie Chrétienne Aujourd’hui” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974) 1759; I’m grateful to Catherine Clifford for bringing this to my attention.

⁴ Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Rome 1985; published as “A Message to the People of God and the Final Report” (Washington: USCCB, 1986) 20–21.

⁵ See Catholic Church, World Evangelical Alliance, “Church, Evangelization and ‘Koinonia,’” (no. 1); *Origins* 33/19 (2003) 311.

⁶ Herman J. Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I & II*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 119.

participation in the life of Christ that comes from God as a gift: “God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship (*koinōnia*) with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). This communion in Christ takes place through sharing (*koinōnia*) in the gospel (Phil 1:5), in faith (Phlm 6), in the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10; 2 Cor 1:7), and in his Spirit (2 Cor 13:13). There is a profoundly Trinitarian dimension to *koinōnia*. At the end of 2 Corinthians Paul greets the community with a threefold benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13:13; cf. Phil 2:1). The author of 2 Peter, using particularly strong language, says that through God’s promises “you may come to share (*koinōnoi*) in the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4).

Therefore *koinōnia* means more than simply fellowship; it is a participation in the divine life which itself is a communion of Father, Son, and Spirit. The eastern fathers of the Church speak of this as a process of divinization (*theosis*). Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism describes the Church as “the sacred mystery of the unity . . . in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the holy Spirit” (UR 2).

Second, there is a sacramental dimension to *koinōnia*. Communion is both symbolized and effected by the rituals of baptism and Eucharist. For Paul especially, the members of the community, united by their communion in the body and blood of Christ, themselves become his Body (1 Cor 10:16–17). Avery Dulles notes that the original meaning of the term *communio sanctorum* in the Apostles Creed seems to have meant, not the “communion of saints” but rather “participation in holy things,” the sacraments.⁷

Finally, *koinōnia* has an ecclesial sense, rooted in the Eucharist.⁸ To be “in Christ” for Paul is profoundly ecclesial. Life in Christ cannot be conceived individualistically. Communion with God in Christ means that Christians are also in fellowship or communion with each other. Acts 2:42 uses *koinōnia* to describe the “communal life” of the primitive community of Jerusalem as we have seen. John uses it to describe the community’s shared life with God and with each other:

what we have seen and heard
we proclaim now to you,
so that you too may have fellowship with
us;

⁷ Avery Dulles, “The Church as Communion,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996) 126.

⁸ See I. Riedel-Spangenberg, “Die Communio als Strukturprinzip der Kirche und ihre Rezeption im CIC/1983,” *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 97 (1988) 230–32.

for our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son, Jesus Christ
(1 John 1:3; cf. 6,7)

There is then both a vertical and a horizontal dimension to communion.⁹ For *koinōnia* is rooted in a shared life in the Spirit.

Baptism

Christian baptism derives from the practice of John the Baptist who washed those who came to him at the Jordan with water as a sign of repentance. Jesus himself had been baptized by John, and his own public ministry began in association with John. It is very likely that Jesus and some of his first disciples had been for a time part of John's movement, and there is evidence that Jesus himself baptized in the early days of his ministry (John 3:22).¹⁰

The New Testament offers various theologies of baptism. The Synoptic gospels stress that while John baptized with water for repentance, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8 & plls.). The risen Jesus commands his disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). A more developed theology of baptism appears in the Acts of the Apostles. Baptism is a response in faith to Christian preaching and a rite of initiation into the Christian community (Acts 2:41); it confers on the believer the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; cf. 8:16-18; 9:17; 11:16), sometimes accompanied by the gifts of tongues and prophecy (10:44-47; 19:2). As baptism presumes faith, adult baptism should be the norm, though infant baptism makes sense if the child is truly being received into a community of faith, a Christian family or "domestic church" (LG 11).

According to the fourth gospel, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5); thus baptism is new life, necessary for salvation. Evangelicals have seen in the words of Jesus, "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (John 3:3) as requiring one to be "born again." The author of 1 Peter compares baptism to the Ark that saved Noah and his family through water

⁹ See Susan K. Wood, "The Church as Communion," in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield, O.S.B.*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000) 160.

¹⁰ See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. II: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 118-22; also N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 168-69.

(1 Pet 3:20-21). Common to these theologies of baptism is the idea that the one baptized is incorporated into salvation in Christ and thus into his community, and that baptism mediates or testifies to the Spirit.

These same themes appear also in Paul, who has the most developed theology of baptism. Baptism incorporates one symbolically and mystically into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, his life, death, and resurrection, so that freed from sin, he or she might live a new life and look forward to union with Christ in the resurrection (Rom 6:3-23). The one baptized has been washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11; cf. Titus 3:5).

Most importantly for Paul, baptism, mediating the one Spirit, incorporates those baptized into the one Body of Christ: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free" (1 Cor 12:13). This unifying effect, breaking down barriers and divisions, is basic to Paul's whole ecclesiological understanding of baptism and Eucharist. In 1 Corinthians, baptism initiates one into the Body of Christ. In Galatians, it makes one a descendant of Abraham, and thus a member of the people of God, bringing together Paul's two root metaphors for Church. In both cases, it reconciles and unites people previously divided, and so rules out any divisions based on race, sex, or social status in the Church:

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:27-29).

This theme of the unity of people in Christ and thus in the Church runs as leitmotif throughout the Pauline letters (cf. Rom 10:12; Eph 2:14-16).

The section on baptism in the World Council of Churches' consensus statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*¹¹ seeks to mediate between two traditions, those who practice infant baptism and those who insist on believers' baptism. While noting that the possibility of infant baptism from the apostolic age cannot be excluded, it reminds those who practice it today that the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament is baptism upon a personal profession of faith (no. 11) and that therefore, baptism should not be practiced indiscriminately, as it seems to be in many European and North American churches today (Commentary, 21).¹²

¹¹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

¹² The 1983 Code of Canon Law notes that if the hope that a child will be brought up in the Catholic faith "is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason" (Can 868, 2).

Eucharist

Paul's metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ is rooted in the unifying effects of baptism and in his experience of what he calls the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:20). From the time of the *Didache* (c. 100) and Ignatius of Antioch (110), the Lord's Supper has been known as the Eucharist, from the prayer of thanksgiving (Gk. *eucharistia*) offered by the presider.¹³ Other names include the Mass or liturgy (Catholics), the Divine Liturgy, or sometimes the Synaxis (which means union—Orthodox Christians), the Lord's Supper or simply the Supper (Protestants) or Holy Communion (Anglicans).

The tradition of the meal in Jesus' ministry is rich in symbolism. An Old Testament archetype is the image of the great eschatological banquet provided by the Lord in the age of salvation (Isa 25:6-8), an image found also at Qumran. Jesus adopted this metaphor as a sign of the kingdom (Matt 8:11; 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24; 22:16,30) and his tradition of table-fellowship offered a share in the kingdom to all. No one was excluded. Jesus shared meals with his disciples, with the multitude (Mark 6:34-44 and plls.), with leading members of the Jewish community (Luke 7:36-50), and especially with the ritually impure and the marginalized, the "tax collectors and sinners" for which he was so frequently criticized (Mark 2:16; Matt 11:18-19). In the Jewish tradition of his day, the distinctions between the clean and the unclean as well as between sinners and the righteous determined one's table companions,¹⁴ for a meal was always a sign of fellowship and communion. Jesus' inclusive practice was a sign that all were welcome in God's reign, reversing the usual pattern of conversion and then repentance by offering them the communion that brought about repentance.¹⁵

The Last Supper

At his final meal with his disciples the night before he died, Jesus gave new meaning to his table-fellowship tradition. His words over the bread and the cup are heavily colored by the liturgical tradition of the early Christian communities, identifying the bread and wine of the table with his body to be broken and blood poured out. However, one saying in the midst of the narrative did not become a part of the later liturgical tradition

¹³ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, nos. 66–67.

¹⁴ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979) 159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

and therefore is most probably authentic.¹⁶ Jesus says, "Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25; cf. Luke 22:16-18). In other words, conscious of his coming death, Jesus was promising his disciples a renewed fellowship with them beyond it. After his death, the disciples continued to gather for meals in his memory, and came to recognize him present among them in a new way; they recognized him in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35; cf. Acts 2:42; 10:41; John 21:9-13).

Though there are different theologies of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament, just as there are for baptism, few scholars today hold Lietzmann's thesis that originally there were two different meals, one in Paul's communities focused on the death of Jesus, and another joyful eschatological meal celebrated in the original Jerusalem community.¹⁷ Even less successful has been Bruce Chilton's attempt to argue for six stages of eucharistic development.¹⁸

The four accounts of the institution in Paul and the Synoptic gospels really represent two traditions, one reflected in Mark 14:22-25 and Matthew 26:26-29, the other in 1 Cor 11:23-26 and Luke 22:15-20. While each has unique features, they are remarkably similar in regard to language and meaning. Common elements include the notions of memorial, sacrifice, covenant, communion in the body and blood of Christ, and eschatological hope. The Lord's Supper or Eucharist is a memorial of Christ's sacrificial death, symbolized by his body broken and blood poured out (Matthew 26:28 adds "for the forgiveness of sins"); the institution narrative refers to a covenant established in his blood ("new covenant" in 1 Cor 11:25 and Luke 22:21); the bread and wine are to be consumed as his body and blood; and the meal looks forward to an eschatological fulfillment, new fellowship in the kingdom (when Christ comes again in 1 Cor 11:26).

While John's Gospel has no narrative of the institution, the entire chapter 6 is broadly eucharistic, beginning with the story of the multiplication

¹⁶ See Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 117; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979) 308.

¹⁷ Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl*, 3rd edition (Berlin: 1955) 249–55; ET *Mass and Lord's Supper*, trans. Dorothea H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953).

¹⁸ Jesus' original fellowship meal redefining Jewish purity, later offered as a surrogate for Temple sacrifice; a domestic bread breaking in the Petrine circle celebrating Jesus as the new Moses; a once-a-year Seder associated with James; a Hellenistic meal or symposium associated with Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sins, found in Paul and the Synoptics; and the Eucharist as miraculous food, in Paul and John; see Bruce Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994).

of the loaves (6:1-15) and finishing with the great discourse on the bread of life (6:22-71). Verses 51-58 are explicitly eucharistic:

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . Amen, amen I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.

(John 6:51; 53-56)

The elements of memorial, sacrifice, communion, and eschatological hope are present here also, and the idea of a new covenant is implied in the comparison of the bread of life to the manna of the desert: "Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die" (John 6:49-50).

Christ's Eucharistic Presence

When Catholics talk about the eucharistic presence of Jesus, they tend not infrequently to begin with the eleventh century language of "transubstantiation," a second order philosophical language forged in the heat of controversy with Berengar (d. 1088), head of the school of St. Martin at Tours. Berengar seems to have adopted an exaggerated symbolism in regard to the eucharistic gifts, denying any change in the bread and wine. But starting here to talk about eucharistic presence is to short-circuit a long process of theological development. The New Testament does not use the language of miraculous change; it talks about communion and recognition through ritual. We need to review this development.

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have recognized that they truly encounter the risen Jesus in the Eucharist; they believe that he is truly present in the bread broken and the wine poured out. But there have long been differences between and among Christians as to how this presence should be explained. To gain some insight into Christ's eucharistic presence, we begin as did the early Christians, not with the later doctrine of the Church, but with their experience of recognizing Christ in the meal. Thus, a theological approach to Eucharist should not start "from above," with the doctrine of the real presence, but "from below," with the liturgical gathering of the community where the risen Jesus is recognized in breaking the bread and sharing the cup.

In addition to the institution narratives in the Synoptic gospels, four sets of New Testament texts, two from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Luke's story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and John's Bread of Life discourse reflect the eucharistic experience of the early Christian communities.

1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:17-34

Paul argues that by sharing the cup that has been blessed and the bread that has been broken we have a participation or communion (*koinōnia*) in the body and blood of Christ and thus are united with each other as the Body of Christ. The emphasis is on communion through the meal. The Lord's Supper brings about communion with Christ and with one another, so that the community itself becomes the Body of Christ.

A chapter later, instructing the Corinthian community on their practice of the Lord's Supper, Paul brings out the Supper's memorial (*anamnesis*), sacrificial dimension. He says, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). In proclaiming Christ's death, the community looks forward to the fullness of salvation. Those who fail to recognize the Body of Christ—present both in the gifts and in the community gathered—bring a judgment on themselves; they "will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27).

Luke 24:13-35

In Luke's Emmaus story, the two disciples encounter but do not recognize Jesus on the road; it is only after he opens the Scriptures for them (Luke 24:27) and they invite him to join them at table, where, using the familiar institution narrative, he "took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them," at that "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Luke 24:30-31). Note that the language here is of recognition through the meal.

John 6:51-58

In the eucharistic conclusion of the Bread of Life discourse, the language of the Johannine tradition is quite realistic: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (John 6:53). Here we have traditional "real presence" language; the bread and wine of the Eucharist are the flesh and blood of Jesus. The question of the Jews, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?" underlines the

point (John 6:52). But the real point here is not miraculous change but the believers' share in Christ's salvation through their participation in the eucharistic meal.

What is important to notice is that in each case, these texts focus not on the language of change, so strong in the later Catholic tradition, but on the ritual, liturgical action of the community. In their sharing in the meal carried on in memory of Jesus, they proclaim his death and resurrection and recognize him in the breaking of the bread (*anamnesis*). The risen Jesus is present in a new way and intimate manner. They have communion with him and one another in his body and blood (*koinōnia*).

Theological Development

From the second century theologians like Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, and Justin used realistic language in referring to the body and blood of Christ.¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch wrote that the Docetists “hold aloof [from worship], because they do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ” (Smyr. 6.7). Irenaeus attempted to explain the transformation of the bread and wine by referring to the union of earthly and heavenly realities in the sacrament, not unlike the incarnation.²⁰ Justin makes the comparison to the incarnation explicit: “Just as Jesus Christ our Savior was made flesh through the word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so too through the word of prayer that comes from him the food over which the thanksgiving has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.”²¹ In the post-Nicene Church, the mystery of the transformation of the bread and wine was often compared to Christ's transformation in the Spirit through his resurrection; David Power notes that “The more robust language of eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ has to be placed alongside this appeal to the power of the Spirit or of God's word.”²²

The term “transubstantiation” was used against Berengar's overly symbolic approach to affirm that while the appearances of the bread and wine (the “species”) remain the same, the substance of both really changed. The confession of faith imposed on Berengar by the Council of Rome (1079)

¹⁹ For the patristic texts, see *The Eucharist*, Daniel J. Sheerin (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986).

²⁰ David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 119; in the following section I am indebted to Power's work.

²¹ Apologia I, 66.2; cited by Power, *Eucharistic Mystery*, 119.

²² Power, *Eucharistic Mystery*, 160.

strikes us today as overly literal: in David Power's words it “is crudely physicist, for who today would care to state that communicants chew on the body of Christ?”²³ Later, Martin Luther was to use similar literal or “physicalist” language.

The language of transubstantiation was adopted to safeguard the Church's faith in the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Unfortunately, it led to an increasing focus on “the elements,” the bread and wine, and on the notion of substantial change, rather than on the sacrament itself.²⁴ This emphasis is very much present in Aquinas, though as Power notes, all questions on the sacrament are placed within the context of the eucharistic action.²⁵ In other words, Aquinas does not separate presence from rite.

The Reformers

While Luther and Calvin had difficulty with the Catholic notions of Eucharist as sacrifice and the mediating role of the priest, they did not intend to deny the tradition of the real presence. Their problem was with the term transubstantiation, thus with theological language. Luther taught that Christ was present “in, with, and under” the elements of bread and wine, which has often been interpreted as “consubstantiation.” But more accurately, he saw sacraments in relationship to the Lordship of Jesus, giving him power over all things, and thus allowing him to be present wherever the sacraments are celebrated (“ubiquity”). Ola Tjørhom reports that “Luther excommunicated two priests . . . for defending and practicing what the vast majority of today's Lutheran pastors do every time they celebrate the Eucharist: putting consecrated bread back in the box together with unconsecrated bread as if nothing had happened to it. To Luther, such an attitude and practice put the Real Presence in jeopardy.”²⁶

John Calvin's concern was to avoid overly physical language. For him, Christ is in heaven; we are made spiritually present to him in the Supper by way of the Spirit. Arguing from Augustine, Calvin writes that Christ is present through “that marvelous communion of his body and blood—provided we understand that it takes place by the power of the Holy Spirit,

²³ *Ibid.*, 244; cf. DS 690.

²⁴ See Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998) 145.

²⁵ Power, *Eucharistic Mystery*, 217.

²⁶ Ola Tjørhom, *Visible Church—Visible Unity: Ecumenical Ecclesiology and 'The Great Tradition of the Church'* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004) 13.

not by that feigned inclusion of the body itself under the element."²⁷ But it is not just a spiritual communion. "I am not satisfied with those persons who, recognizing that we have some communion with Christ, when they would show what it is, make us partakers of the Spirit only, omitting mention of flesh and blood. As though all these things were said in vain: that his flesh is truly food, that his blood is truly drink [John 6:55]."²⁸

Some ambiguities remain in Calvin's eucharistic theology, as Kilian McDonnell points out. Calvin wants to move from the philosophical notion of substance, even though he uses that term frequently, to that of person. His concept of substance is soteriological; there is a real encounter with Christ the Mediator and Redeemer in the Lord's Supper.²⁹ Other Reformers were more radical. For Zwingli, the Eucharist was only a sign, an aid to memory to remember Jesus in his passion; it was a recollection or remembering of a past event: "Therefore our eucharist is a visible assembling of the church, in which together we eat and drink bread and wine as (*veluti*) symbols, that we may be reminded of those things which Christ has done for us."³⁰

The Council of Trent

The Council of Trent (1545-63) reaffirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation against what it understood to be the Reformers' errors in regard to Christ's eucharistic presence:

But since Christ our Redeemer declared that which he offered under the form of bread to be truly his own body, it has therefore always been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this Holy Council now declares it anew, that by the consecration of the bread and wine a change is brought about of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church properly and appropriately calls transubstantiation (DS 1642)

Trent's language, like all our theological and doctrinal language is important. But it is always a "second order" language. It remains limited, re-

²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,17,26; See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXI, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 1394.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4,17,7; 1366-67.

²⁹ See Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967) 246-48.

³⁰ Cited by W. P. Stevens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 239-40; Z IV 938/16-23.

moved by one or more levels of abstraction from the mystery of God's self-disclosure that it seeks to describe. As Yves Congar says, a doctrine simply expresses the meaning of that which is done within the Church.³¹

A Shared Eucharistic Faith?

More important than a particular theological formulation is the affirmation arising from the experience of Christians since the beginning of the Church; Christ is truly encountered in the Eucharist. Through the action of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy he is present in the bread and wine. Through our sharing in the gifts we enter into a profound communion with the Lord and with one another. We receive his Body and Blood.

But even this apparently very literal language recognizes that the presence of the risen Jesus is not physical; it is sacramental. That is to say, the risen Jesus is present in the sacramental action and remains with us, not in his discrete body and blood understood in a physical sense, but personally, in his glorified humanity. Catholics have long been taught that to receive "under one species" is to receive not just the Body or just the Blood of Christ, but both: it is to encounter and receive the risen Jesus. In other words, it is to receive the whole Christ. In the more traditional language of Trent, under the form of the bread or the wine exists "the true body and the true blood of our Lord, together with his soul and divinity" (DS 1640).

By communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, Christians become themselves Christ's Body for the world (1 Cor 10:16). Since the earliest days they have recognized his presence in the breaking of the bread. While Church fathers have used realistic language in referring to the Body and Blood of Christ since the second century, the emphasis on transubstantiation in the Middle Ages was to result in a one-sided focus on the change in the elements.

Ecumenical dialogues in the last forty years have led to a new appreciation of a shared eucharistic faith, in spite of the different theological languages used by our different traditions. If Luther and Calvin rejected the philosophical implications of the language of transubstantiation, they did not intend to deny that Christ was truly present and that his Body and Blood were received in the meal. Particularly important has been the recovery of the biblical notion of *anamnesis* or memorial (cf. 1 Cor 11:24), recalling the saving events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the eucharistic prayer. When the Church does this, Christ's once for all sacrifice

³¹ Yves M.-J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (New York: Macmillan, 1966) 354.

on the cross is made present through narrative and ritual and Christ himself becomes present in the eucharistic gifts. Speaking of the Eucharist as the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, the WCC BEM text says "Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for us . . . is present in this anamnesis, granting us communion with himself."³²

It remains important today to help ordinary Catholics and Protestants understand how much they have in common, and to work towards the restoration of full communion between their separated churches.

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

The Spirit given in baptism empowers the Christian community with a rich diversity of gifts and ministries to build up the Church as the one Body of Christ and fulfill its mission. Thus baptism, not ordination, is the basic sacrament of ministry.

Paul's term *charisma*, usually translated as "spiritual gift," is derived from the verb *charizesthai*, "to grant freely as a favor." The Greek *charisma* means literally "favored" or "gifted." Paul develops a rich theology of the Church's pneumatological or charismatic structure in 1 Corinthians 12.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts (*charismata*) but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service (*diakonai*) but the same Lord; there are different workings (*energēmata*) but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit (1 Cor 12:4-7).

He sees the Christian community as richly endowed with a variety of service gifts and more permanent ministries. Each is a manifestation of the inner life of the Spirit; each is given for some benefit, for the building up of the Church (1 Cor 14:5, 12). He then gives several lists of the charisms: the first includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:8-11). Then after stressing how all the different members of the human body have to work together, he concludes:

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all

speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:28-31).

He also names both marriage and celibacy for the sake of the kingdom as among the charisms (1 Cor 7:7).

The lists of charisms given in 1 Corinthians contain some more dramatic manifestations of the Spirit, for example, healing, mighty deeds, and tongues. Mighty deeds (*energēmata dunameōn*) is the expression used for the miracles of Jesus in the Synoptic gospels. Tongues, familiar to Pentecostal and charismatic communities, is a form of praise that overflows the boundaries of language. A similar list of charisms in Romans is much more ordinary and commonplace.

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts (*charismata*) that differ according to the grace (*charis*) given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others (*proistamenos*), with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom 12:4-8).

Notice how both this passage and the one in 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 join Paul's vision of the Church as the body of Christ with his discussion of the Church's charismatic structure, listing both activities (giving assistance, discernment, exhorting, contributing or alms-giving) and emerging offices (prophet, teacher, administrator, presider or leader [*proistemenos*]). Prophecy means speaking a word of exhortation or comfort in the name of the Lord; it is sometimes identified with preaching. Prophets and teachers are local church leaders who preach and instruct the community; they may also have presided at the Eucharist (cf. Acts 13:2; Didache 10:7). The gift of faith, in one sense common to all believers, suggests a gift that builds up the faith of others. Mother Teresa is an example of this kind of faith. Administration continues to remain an important role in the Church. Other lists of charisms can be found in Ephesians 4:7, 10-12 and 1 Peter 4:10.

Why the more dramatic gifts in 1 Corinthians? The Church at Corinth was characterized by a certain "enthusiasm" for more dramatic manifestations of the Spirit. Some members of the community were contributing to the divisions that caused Paul's letter by priding themselves on their gifts, as Paul's careful instruction on tongues in chapter 14 indicates. The only mention of tongues in all of Paul's letters is in 1 Corinthians. He makes it clear that while he values this gift, he would rather have the members of

³² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, E. no. 7.

the community strive for more important gifts such as prophecy that build up the church. Finally, he emphasizes that “everything must be done properly and in order” (1 Cor 15:40), since God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

Paul’s vision of the Church is of community richly endowed and structured by the Spirit with a variety of gifts and ministries. Each member had something to contribute for the building up of the Church. We saw earlier how the Second Vatican Council recovered this theology of the charisms, juxtaposing them to the “hierarchical” gifts of the ordained (LG 4, cf. 12). But it is interesting to note that the emergence of the Church’s office of leadership in the Church of the sub-apostolic age corresponded with the tendency to restrict the language of charism to certain leading ministries. In 1 Peter 4:10, a letter probably written in the early 80s, the reference seems to be to a twofold ministry of preaching the word and the works of charity. In 1 and 2 Timothy, written even later, charism is used only of the gift received by the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). Timothy and Titus are apostolic delegates, supervising churches. In these later letters, the rich diversity of gifts in Paul’s churches is not evident.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the term *koinōnia* or communion is a rich theological concept that lies at the heart of the nature of the Church. It applies first to our share in the divine life, and thus, through baptism and Eucharist, to the communion we share with one another. It also refers to the communion between churches, expressed through visible signs, as we will see later, for the Church itself is a communion of churches.

It has never been easy for the Church to be what it must be; a community of disciples reconciled by God’s work in Christ (Gal 3:28), made one Body in Christ through baptism and Eucharist, living in his Spirit. Paul makes the breaking down of barriers through these sacraments, bringing about the unity of Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, even male and female, a leitmotif of his letters. Communion is primarily a spiritual reality that is ours through our sharing in the Spirit. But because communion is expressed through visible and institutional signs, it admits of degrees. When ecclesial communion was lost between churches in the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, the sense of spiritual communion was lost as well. Churches today are divided by differences in doctrine, authority, and structure.

The life of the Spirit is manifested in the community through a rich diversity of gifts and ministries; thus for Paul, the Church’s fundamental

structure is pneumatological or charismatic. As a more developed structure of ministry began to emerge in the later New Testament, this sense for the diversity of the charisms seems to have been lost.

Today the Church has gained a new appreciation for the gifts of the Spirit. Office and authority in the Church presupposes charism (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). One ordained to the presbyteral office should have gifts for pastoral ministry, for example, a charism for preaching, presiding, and leading a community of faith. A bishop should have the charism of being a good shepherd for the local church. Unfortunately, the process of discerning such charisms is imperfect at best, and sometimes fails. A charism is recognized, not created, by the laying on of hands, and that includes a charism for celibacy.

The metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ is unique to Paul and he uses it to express the unity of the community. Though he once uses the expression “Body of Christ” without the article (1 Cor 12:27), he usually says “one body” or “one body in Christ.”³³ To be “in Christ” for Paul is not just a christological reality; it is also profoundly ecclesial. It cannot be understood individualistically. Being in Christ means being a part of the Body of Christ, the Church (cf. Gal 1:22; 3:28; Rom 16:7; 1 Thes 2:14).³⁴

Men and women enter and become the Body of Christ through those rituals or acts of the Church that the Church came to call sacraments. They are baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13), blessed with a diversity of gifts and ministries (1 Cor 12:27-30), becoming one body through their sharing in the Eucharist. Though Christians have long been divided by different understandings of the sacraments, the ecumenical dialogues of the last forty years have brought the churches closer together and moved them nearer to the goal of entering into full communion with one another.

If the metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ is ancient, it is also surprisingly contemporary. Body is the medium for the expression of spirit. Anyone sensitive to “body language” knows this instinctively, for our eyes, facial expression, tone of voice, bodily posture disclose our inner spirit. As the saying goes, “the eyes are the windows of the soul,” for body makes spirit visible.

The metaphor is particularly appropriate for the Church today in a secular world. Jesus in his risen existence is no longer visible as he was when he walked the dusty roads of Galilee or preached in the Temple of Jerusalem.

³³ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Roseleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967) 228–29.

³⁴ Küng, *The Church*, 229.

The risen Jesus is spirit (Paul's "spiritual body," 1 Cor 15:44). He is visible only through his Body, the Church, which hands on the Jesus tradition in its Scriptures and its teaching, proclaims and celebrates the mystery of Christ's presence in word, worship, and communion, and ministers to others in his name. Without the Christian community, the Church in its preaching, teaching, fellowship, ministry, and worship, no one could encounter the risen Jesus or come to know him. Through the Church as the Body of Christ the risen Christ is present to the world.