

## Identity and Witness:

### Liturgy and the Mission of the Church

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The text for this lecture is a provocative aphorism which I owe to Stanley Hauerwas. In a 1987 presentation at Trinity Seminary, he said:

The church has missionary power in direct proportion to its liturgical integrity.

I cite this because Liturgy and Mission are often perceived as unrelated, if not actually opposed, to each other.<sup>1</sup> Manuals and exhortations on evangelism often do

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1. In an article in *International Lutheran Revival Newsletter* (No. 100, December 1988), Walther P. Kallestad, pastor of the Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona, writes: "Part of the boredom the non-churched have continually expressed is the sense of being lost and confused by the complicated liturgy. This is not only a potential barrier for the non-churched visitor, it is also a problem for a member who would not bring a non-churched person to a highly liturgical worship service. I have traveled and visited in over 1,000 churches. People all over the country share honestly that they don't invite their friends to church because they could not relate to the traditional order of worship. Many clergy share with me that unless a person knows the routine of the ritual and has an advanced musical understanding, it is difficult for them to get involved or even appreciate the meaning of it all.

I do not suggest that we abandon the Lutheran liturgy. Rather let's offer at least one service that is theologically balanced, but much more informal, less liturgical and non-ritualistic. . . . Treat each visitor like a 'guest,' seeking to meet them where they are, not where we would like them to be."

not relate the Church's mission of evangelization and conversion to the administration of Holy Baptism.<sup>2</sup> Programs and advice on "outreach" which focus on inviting persons to the Sunday gathering of the Church often do not assume that what takes place at the Sunday gathering is the Holy Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> For many advocates of the Church's mission, liturgy belongs to the task of "nurture," and attention to nurture must be balanced by attention to mission. Liturgy is thus viewed as an inward focus, and the fear is that too much attention to liturgy makes the Church narcissistic.

It is my purpose to show that liturgy and mission have a necessary and essential relationship. But I want to preface my attention to that purpose with two explanatory paragraphs on the terms "mission" and "liturgy."

I understand the mission of the Church in its most comprehensive sense to be explicit *witness* to the Reign (Kingdom) of God, to its ultimate grounding and final consummation in Jesus, the Christ. Bolivian Methodist Bishop Mortimer Arias describes its comprehensive character:

The kingdom of God, announced by Jesus, is multi-dimensional and all-encompassing. It is both a present and a future reality. It has to do with

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2. Several notable exceptions are Urban Holmes, *Turning to Christ: A Theology of Renewal and Evangelization* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), and Rolf A. Syrdal, *Go, Make Disciples* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977).

3. Notable exceptions are Alfred C. Drass, *Five Lanterns at Sundown* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), a book on evangelism organized around the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), the best introduction available on the church's mission as witness to the Reign of God.

each individual creature and with the whole of society. It was addressed initially to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but was destined for the "the whole world" and "to the end of the earth." It embraces all dimensions of human life. . . . And it encompasses all human relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Mission, says Arias, should not be understood in terms of such "partial or reductionistic" versions as

the transcendental kingdom in heaven or the inner kingdom of religious experience or the cataclysmic kingdom of the apocalypticists or the political kingdom of a new social order or the ecclesiastical kingdom of church expansion.<sup>5</sup>

Such an understanding of mission includes calling persons to conversion, initiating them into the Church. But such calling, converting, initiating is part of the larger mission of the Church to be witness to the Reign of God.

As we know, "liturgy" originally meant citizens exercising their responsibility for the corporate life of a Greek city-state. Translated into an ecclesial context, "liturgy" means the baptized People of God engaging in that ritual or repeated action through which their community receives and expresses its *identity*, that is, celebrating the Eucharist. That alone is the appropriate Sunday liturgy of people who believe that Jesus is the Christ. Doing anything other than the Eucharist at the Sunday gathering means that we are acting as if we were still "synagogue," as if we are not yet "church." I hasten to add that being "synagogue" does not mean we have ceased to be part of the People of God. But it does mean that we are functioning as the pre-eschatological People of God; we are functioning as if the event of the Christ had not yet happened. To be "church" is to confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. The way the Church

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4. Arias xv.

5. *Ibid.*

believes that Jesus is the Christ in its gathering is to participate in the eschatological meal, the Eucharist. If the gathered community does not celebrate the Eucharist, it cannot be identified as Church, and therefore it cannot give the witness it is called to give: because Jesus is the Christ, the Reign of God has begun and will be consummated.

*The Eschatological Event of Jesus as the Christ*

My explanatory paragraphs have turned out to be something like a thesis. I want to elaborate on the thesis by taking up first the event of Jesus as the Christ and its meaning for the worship of Jesus' earliest disciples.

A. It cannot be said often enough or strongly enough that Jesus was not the "founder" of the religion known as Christianity, one who gave it its doctrines, rituals, and ethos. We have learned in this century to ask in chastened and sober fashion what Jesus was and intended historically, what actually happened in the communities of disciples that came into existence as a consequence of his mission and ministry. However, attention to such questions does not mean we are engaging in the historical quest either anachronistically (reading our own age back into the past) or romantically (seeking to re-pristiniate a kind of apostolic "golden age"). There was and continues to be development after and out of the matrix of Jesus and the early apostolic communities. But attention to the matrix enables us to discriminate, to ask the question of authenticity as we look at the various developments, and above all to get a fix on the direction in which we ought to be moving.

B. We must begin with the fundamental confession of the apostolic scriptures. It is deceptively simple: Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus has been raised from the dead. These two statements are not alternatives.

They are two ways of saying the same thing. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the starting point of Christian confession.<sup>6</sup> "Jesus is the Christ" or "Jesus is Lord" is the substance, the content of Christian confession. Both are "eschatological" in character. We will not understand what took place in the assemblies of Jesus' disciples unless we grasp that fundamental fact.

"Eschaton" means "end" in the sense of the goal or outcome or consummation of history. What the followers of Jesus experienced when they were encountered by Jesus after his execution and burial was not Jesus' resuscitation, although, as Edward Schillebeeckx points out, "it

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6. Guenther Bornkamm, in *The New Testament: A Guide to Its Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 23-24, writes: "The Gospels and the Jesus tradition they enshrine are rooted in the certainty of the resurrection of Christ. . . . It may sound like nonsense, but we venture to say that the gospel story begins with its end. For Jesus' Jewish opponents and for the Roman occupying power, there could be no doubt that his end on the cross was the annulment of his story. For the disciples, on the other hand, the appearances of the risen One and their experience of his presence in the Spirit meant that his end was a new beginning, in the sense of a final and absolute act of God for the salvation of the world. Men had condemned Jesus, but God turned their no into a yes. In that yes God committed himself to the world that rejected him." Cf. Robert Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), who writes on p. 199: "The Gospels are Easter books not only because they end as they do. They are Easter books from beginning to end, penned by people who in various ways--not in the same way--knew Jesus as raised from the dead, forever alive, and mighty." Cf. also James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), Chapter 3 and the bibliography on p. 109, and Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus is Risen* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

cannot be denied that there were certain Jews and Christians who compared the resurrection of the body with resuscitation of a corpse."<sup>7</sup> That would have meant that Jesus returned to the same mode of existence that was his prior to death, that he resumed his life where it had left off. That was indeed the expectation of many pious Jews, that righteous martyrs, unjustly deprived of the fullness of life, would return to live an appropriate length of days.<sup>8</sup> What the disciples encountered was infinitely more awesome. Jesus had been raised to the "eschaton," to the final future of the Reign of God. That is the significance of the appearances and disappearances that are not subject to the limitations of space and time. That is finally the significance of Luke's "ascension." Jesus does not go to some "place" within the cosmos. He ascends into the future, and He is therefore not "gone." For He is present with and to His disciples in the power of the future. Luke's Acts of the Apostles is not the story of the community *after* Jesus, but rather the story of the community *under* Jesus.

When the disciples encountered Jesus raised as the eschatological Messiah, ascended to the final future of the Reign of God, present as the power of the future, they were called to radical revision of their relation both to the past and to the future. They were required to re-envision the future and to re-appropriate the past. With regard to the past, the resurrection of Jesus meant that his claim to embody, represent, and inaugurate the Reign of God was indeed valid. His death by execution on the cross was not God's repudiation of his ministry. It was rather the affirmation and consummation of His ministry. His mission to renew Israel, to gather its "lost sheep," and to open it to the Gentiles was, in fact, God's mission. His teaching was not blasphemy. It was, in fact,

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7. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 76.

8. II Maccabees 7. Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 518-525.

the Word that effected what it announced. His signs were not done by the devil, but they pointed to the fact that the Reign of God had indeed "come among" them.<sup>9</sup> Taking up the cross was to be both the way and the consequence of discipleship. Hence the past was to be re-appropriated as the disciple communities retold the stories of Jesus with the "aha" of Spirit-given post-resurrection insight.

But even more radically, they were required to re-envision the future. The resurrection meant that Jesus had (and has) death ultimately and definitively behind Him. "Death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). That means the future belongs to Him. He can make unconditional promises, promises not conditioned by death.<sup>10</sup> The Reign of God, not the reign and power of death, will have the last word. This is what led the Church to the eventual confession that Jesus is God. For if "God" means whatever has the last word in history, then Whatever or Whoever raised Jesus from the dead is "God." And because Jesus has been raised from the dead, He now defines and determines what we mean by God. He and the "Abba" whose mission He embodied and the Spirit, the dynamic of the future, through whom history receives its direction and goal, are now the "Name" by which God is finally known.

This means something has happened to the world. The power of death and the power of sin, which depends upon the power of death, have been broken. The world is no longer the same. When it acts as if death still has the last word, it is acting in "bad faith." All the powers of the "old age" operate on the basis of death. They have power because they deal in death. They have power because they threaten death. The "old age" measures power in

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9. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 7-20.

10. Robert Jenson, *Story and Promise* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 48-61; Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 36-44.

terms of that which can dispense death. "Sin," writes Shusaku Endo, "is for one man to walk brutally over the life of another and to be quite oblivious of the wounds he has left behind."<sup>11</sup> We participate in the reign of death, live under the "old age" and its bondage to sin, whenever we enjoy benefits at the expense of others because we can threaten more dispensation of death. We "trust" the powers of death whenever we engage in self-defense, self-aggrandizement, or self-hatred. We trust the powers of death whenever we oppress, exclude, exploit, or destroy others. We trust the powers of death whenever we denigrate, deprecate, or destroy ourselves.

We trust the Reign of God whenever we live as if there were more to do with our lives than preserve them. We trust the Reign of God whenever we live as if there were more to do with our lives than destroy them. To believe the resurrection of Jesus changes the way we participate in the world. To believe the resurrection of Jesus is to see through the powers of death, to recognize they are passe', and therefore to be free of their domination. Hence the ultimate *martyria*, the ultimate witness, is the freedom to suffer death because one knows that death does not have the last word.

C. Jesus' mission was the renewal of Israel so it could fulfill its function in the eschatological triumph of the Reign of God. Israel was to be the focus for the gathering of the Gentiles. Jesus suffered the cross because of his mission to Israel and to its future for the Gentiles. Hence he died for, on behalf of, the world. But he did not die in order to found a new religious community. His death was not the repudiation of Israel. It was rather God's final, total commitment to Israel. Gerhard Lohfink's dramatic insight is that the "many" for whom His "blood of the covenant" is "poured out" is a reference "first of all to Israel itself, just as the (new) covenant must first refer to Israel."

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11. Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980) 132.



Jesus . . . understood his death as a salvific act of God who heals what unbelieving Israel did to him. Israel's dreadful deed would be overcome, and the people's path to repentance would once again be open. Those who had ruined their lives through their hardening against Jesus receive from God, freely and without merit, the possibility of new life (in biblical terms, atonement). God transforms the murder of his emissary into a deed of his *faithfulness* to Israel (in biblical terms, covenant); he turns the death of his emissary, planned and brought about by men, into the establishment of *definitive and irrevocable* faithfulness to Israel (in biblical terms, new covenant) and thus preserves his claim on the chosen people of God.<sup>12</sup>

Hence the earliest disciples of Jesus simply announced to Israel and within Israel that Jesus was and is the Christ, the eschatological Messiah. Luke uses the words of the prophet Joel to interpret what happened in the Pentecost experience. Joel simply says, "It shall come to pass *afterwards*" (Joel 2:28). Luke pointedly introduces the Joel quotation with an eschatological formula:

And *in the last days* it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)

The gift of the Spirit to all flesh, and not just to chosen individuals, is a mark of the Messianic age. Paul, among others, drew the conclusion that if Jesus was and is the Messiah, if the messianic age has truly come, then Gentiles are to be gathered to the People of God. If Jesus is now "The Way," the Torah, then to be baptized into Jesus replaces both Torah (Galatians) and the "old age" powers of death (Colossians). Jews and Gentiles

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12. Lohfink 25.

together witness by their being One People that the messianic age has begun (Romans, Ephesians).

D. The significance of this for the assemblies of the apostolic communities now becomes clear. We can reconstruct the development of the communal rituals in the following way. The Jewish disciples of Jesus continued to participate in the life of the synagogue and, when in Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 C.E., in the rituals of the temple. Paul also goes first to the synagogue whenever he comes to a new city, and he maintains his commitment to the temple until the end.

Simultaneously, however, the disciples of Jesus assembled in homes for that ritual which identified them uniquely: the messianic meal. We find both features in the same passage in Acts: "And day by day, attending the temple together and *breaking bread in their homes*, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people." (Acts 2:47) Obviously, not all Jews, not even the majority of Jews, believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. But those who did were *identified* by the ritual Luke calls "the breaking of bread," a phrase which Joachim Jeremias has correctly recognized as a technical term for the Eucharist.<sup>13</sup> This is significant because the meal was understood to be a characteristic of the messianic age. If Jesus was indeed the messiah, and if the messianic age had begun, then they would witness to and participate in this fact, this messianic event, by being at the messianic banquet table. Initially, then, the "worship" of the disciples of Jesus was: participation in the scriptures, exposition, and prayers of the synagogue in common with all Jews; participation in the messianic age inaugurated by Jesus through the common meal for those baptized into Jesus in private homes. Initially there was a thanksgiving with bread before a regular meal and a thanksgiving with the cup after the meal. Robert Jenson continues the description:

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13. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 120.

In Paul's Corinth we see that the first blessing has migrated to join the second, making a special thanksgiving-meal after the regular meal; this order is supposed by the Markan text. Next the two meals became distinct observances, and the two thanksgivings of the thanksgiving-meal were joined into one; we do not know quite when or how these things happened, but they had already occurred in Justin Martyr's congregation by the year 150.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of the first century the break between Jesus' disciples and other Jews became complete. There was no longer a place for Jesus' disciples in the synagogue. (We must always remind ourselves that this was a break imposed by the six to seven million Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire upon a few thousand Jewish and Gentile disciples of Jesus.)

Between 80 and 90 C.E., members of the Pharisaic party gathered at Jamnia (NW of Jerusalem, 4 miles from the Mediterranean Sea) and carried out a series of reforms that made Pharisaic Judaism normative. In the process they eliminated all competing varieties of Judaism, including the Jewish-Christian. They excluded Jewish Christians by inserting into the liturgy the *Birkath ha-minim*, which included a curse on the *Nosrim* (Nazarenes).<sup>15</sup>

The place once occupied by the regular meal in the assemblies of the disciples of Jesus was now filled by a synagogue-type ritual of Scripture and prayer. By the time of Justin (150 C.E.) we have the ritual which he describes (Apol. I, 67):

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14. Robert Jenson, "The Means of Grace," in Robert Jenson and Carl Braaten, editors, *Christian Dogmatics II* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 340.

15. Reginald Fuller and PHEME PERKINS, *Who Is This Christ?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 82.

On the day which is called Sun-day, all, whether they live in the town or in the country, gather in the same place. Then the Memoirs of the Apostles or the Writings of the Prophets are read for as long as time allows. When the reader has finished, the president speaks, exhorting us to live by these noble teachings. Then we rise all together and pray. Then, as we said earlier, when the prayer is finished, bread, wine and water are brought. The president then prays and gives thanks as well as he can. And all the people reply with the acclamation: Amen! After this the eucharists are distributed and shared out to everyone, and the deacons are sent to take them to those who are absent.<sup>16</sup>

Behind this simple ritual structure and action lies a consistent understanding of Jesus, of the world's history, of the disciple community, and of its mission which has the meal at its center. Jesus is the eschatological messiah. The community of His disciples understands the messianic age to have begun and anticipates its consummation. Here and now their mission is to bear witness both to what has happened and to what they anticipate. They are identified as messianic community by their participation in the messianic banquet.

#### *The Eucharist as Messianic (Eschatological) Banquet*

A. Such an understanding of the Eucharist as the ritual which uniquely *identifies* the communities of Jesus' disciples has its roots deep in the Scriptures of the Israel. The basic work supporting this statement was done by Geoffrey Wainwright in *Eucharist and Eschatology* (1971). After tracing the role of the meal in the cultic life of Israel, Wainwright explores the linking of the meal and God's future salvation in the prophets of the Exile, Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. According to Isaiah the Lord will feed his people on their homeward journey

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16. Quoted from Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961) 9.

through the desert (49:9f) as he fed the people of old in the wilderness (48:21). The nations will come to Israel to share in the blessings of the everlasting covenant (55:1-5). Wainwright calls special attention to the passage in the late Isaianic apocalypse "which is of particular significance for the Eucharist; it speaks of a future feast for all peoples, in a context of the abolition of death and a day of salvation and rejoicing."<sup>17</sup>

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. (Is. 25:6-8)

B. Following the Exile, the meal motif in relation to messianic expectation intensifies. The age to come will be an age of plenty. The God who fed the people with manna in the wilderness will feed his people again (II Baruch 29:8). Wainwright quotes the Midrash Rabbah: "Just as the former deliverer (Moses) made manna descend, so also the latter deliverer (the messiah) will make manna descend."<sup>18</sup> Strong eschatological and messianic expectations came to be attached to the Passover by the time of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> According to the Ethiopian Enoch, 62:13-16, "The righteous and elect shall be saved on that day, And with

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17. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971) 21.

18. Wainwright 22.

19. Wainwright 23.

that Son of Man shall they eat and lie down and rise up for ever and ever."<sup>20</sup>

C. It takes neither much imagination nor much specialized scholarship to recognize why and how the meal plays such an important role in the teaching and activity of Jesus. The feeding of the multitude is the only incident besides Jesus' baptism and the passion week narratives which is present in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21, Mark 6:32-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15) with additional feedings of multitudes in Matt. 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-10. In John the feeding is the occasion for explicit messianic reflection (John 6:16-59). Central to Jesus' activity is his table collegiality with "sinners" and outcasts (Luke 15:1-2), and the parables which follow conclude with feasting when the lost is found or restored to the family. Jesus' parables of the Reign of God include meal settings (Matt. 22:1-14, Luke 14:16-24). Jesus' sayings pick up the eschatological expectations of Gentiles at the messianic banquet table (e.g., Matt. 8:11). In the last meal with His disciples before His execution, Jesus interprets the bread and cup in terms of his imminent death. But of equal importance, Jesus looks beyond His execution to the eschatological consummation. "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29 and parallels)

D. It is clear, therefore, why the apostolic communities assembled on the "eighth day" (their eschatological name for their day of worship)<sup>21</sup> and why, when they assembled, it was for the "breaking of bread." In the

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20. Wainwright 24.

21. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 277 *et passim*; cf. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977) 278-302.

resurrection of Jesus the eschaton had begun. They were at the messianic banquet table. Through their participation in the meal they were identified by the Messiah as the messianic community, the eschatological People of God.

Paul addresses the Christian community at Corinth on the subject of the Lord's Supper with a noteworthy preface, "when you assemble as *church*" (I Cor. 11:18). Groups could assemble to be many things, but the ritual of a group's assembly as *church* was the eschatological meal. Now, however, comes the apostolic scolding, and it involves the way in which some Corinthian Christians were violating their identity as *church*, as eschatological community, by what they were doing (or not doing) at the eschatological meal. The more affluent members of the community had refused to share the food and wine they brought for both the regular and the eschatological meal with the poor.<sup>22</sup> Their self-protective refusal meant that their meal was no longer "the Lord's Supper," and they could not be church when they came together for such a distorted meal. They could just as well stay home and eat, wrote Paul. By their action they were oppressing and humiliating others, and thus they denied their identity as eschatological community. By their inability to engage in self-offering they demonstrated that they were still in the grasp of the power of death. Hence Paul "reforms" them by rehearsing the tradition once again, that the Reign of God is grounded in the death of Jesus, that is, in Jesus' self-offering, not in his self-protection. When they participate in the messianic meal they proclaim the Lord's *death* until he comes. They participate in Christ's way of being for the world (self-offering) by offering themselves to be his body for the world.

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22. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) 157-162.

*The Eucharist and the Mission of the Church*

A. The church eventually lost Paul's perspective. It lost the apostolic understanding of itself as eschatological community. How this came about is too long a story to tell at this point. That it is the reality we face becomes evident in a delightfully wicked "marketing plan" for revitalizing American religion written by Kansas City advertising executive Jack Cashill for the readers of the *Wall Street Journal*.

My strategy is to consolidate the various name brands, even the strong flagship brands like Southern Baptist, into one identifiable, Exxon-like entity. The target audience here is Mom, Dad, Butch and Sis--solid suburban Americans who want a little God in their life and a place to go before brunch. And after test-marketing various possibilities, I have decided upon the name *Middle American Christian Church*, or *MacChurch* for ad purposes. I will not be sure of MacChurch's theology until focus groups are run, but I plan on following the promotional path blazed so successfully by Holiday Inn. In other words, this will be your "no surprises" church. When Dad brings the family here, he can be sure that they will not be asked to speak in tongues, handle snakes, or give money to the Sandinistas.

Cashill proposes a "market segmentation" approach for Roman Catholicism: RC Light for post-Vatican II liberals, RC Classic for traditionalists, and RC Free "for those more interested in liberation theology than in Papal Bulls."<sup>23</sup>

One thing is clear in light of Cashill's "marketing plan." When the church does not understand itself as eschatological community it has historically assumed a consumer orientation. The Eucharist is then no longer

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23. Quoted by Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney in *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 229.



eschatological meal but is transformed into consumer goods. In the fourth and fifth centuries the Church became a salvation institution.<sup>24</sup> One could be assured of salvation after death so long as one was a consumer of the Church's sacraments. Worship responded to consumer questions, always couched in terms of the minimum required for maximum benefit. What is the least that must be said to consecrate bread and cup, transform it into the product one needs? Just the "Words of Institution," said St. Ambrose, and with his answer the eschatological Thanksgiving was lost to the Western Church. How long does one have to remain at mass in order to get the benefit? Just through the consecration, was the answer; and the Sanctus bells informed worshippers that they could leave without communion. Does one have to be there at all? Just on days of "obligation," was the answer; and "private masses" proliferated. How often does one have to receive communion? Once a year, said the 4th Lateran Council in 1215, and delivered Christian piety into the hands of the "Easter Rule."

In the wake of the Reformation, the territorial and national churches of Protestantism became "service churches" (to use the apt term coined by Johannes Baptist Metz). Through the churches, the rulers provided religious services to the citizens. In the competitive denominational climate of the USA, the "service church" came fully into its own, and the consumer orientation reached its zenith. The Lord's Supper was "offered" on the basis of the presumed need of the congregation. Even when the frequency was increased, the argument was to make it more readily available. Hence, Protestants sometimes gave different answers, but they continued to ask most of

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24. Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 91-97, esp. 96. Cooke dates this development during the time of Gregory VII, at the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century. However, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 48-52, dates this development at the end of the patristic era, probably as a consequence of the Church's becoming the religion of empire.

the consumer-oriented salvation institution questions. The end result was that in both Protestantism and Catholicism the connection between Church and Eschaton, Sunday and Eschaton, Eucharist and Eschaton was no longer understood. The insight of J. J. von Allmen is that Protestants falsify Sunday by not having the Eucharist every Sunday; Catholics falsify Sunday by having the Eucharist every day.<sup>25</sup> When the eschatological character of church and day and liturgy were lost, the Church lost the connection between liturgy and mission. Indeed, the Church's very understanding and expression of its mission was seriously attenuated, if not actually lost.

B. The point of this theological and historical survey should be clear. Recovery of the Church's liturgical integrity means recovery of the Church's identity as eschatological community. Recovery of the Church's liturgical integrity therefore means recovery of the Church's authentic mission. That mission is witness to the Reign of God as it is grounded in the activity, death, and resurrection of Jesus and as it will be consummated in the denouement, the outcome, of history.<sup>26</sup> The mission has a two-fold character: (1) Explicit witness to the Reign of God in the Church's being, proclamation, and action; (2) Calling humanity to join its anticipatory experience of God's salvation through the evangelization centered in

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25. J. J. von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) 213-227, especially 226.

26. An excellent summary of the mission of Jesus and the mission of the church is in Arland Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 36-37, 174-177, *et passim*.

Baptism. It is impossible in the brief time available to us to deal with the second of these dimensions.<sup>27</sup> I must limit myself to pointing briefly to some of the implications of the Eucharistic liturgy for the mission of the Church. I will use the rite of *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) for purposes of illustration.

C. The Church witnesses to the Reign of God by its being, that is, by the way it is constituted at the eschatological table and by the way it takes responsibility for the liturgy. Because the coming of the Reign of God is the breaking down of "the dividing wall of hostility" between Jew and non-Jew (Eph. 2:11-22), the community which gathers for the Eucharist pre-figures (always in its vision and whenever possible in concrete expression) the eschatological unity of all humanity. This is why every evidence of discrimination against and/or oppression of those who are "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28) compromises, if it does not actually destroy, the Church's witness. This is why concern for the visible unity of the Church is a necessary dimension of the Church's life (I Cor. 1:10 ff., I Cor. 12:12 ff., Eph. 4:1-6, John 17:20-26, etc.).

Because this witness is the function of the community's very being in the world, the liturgy is fundamentally the celebration of the people. It is what the *people* come together to do because they are and understand themselves to be the eschatological People of God. They come together to rehearse the stories of God by which their communal identity is created, informed, and shaped. They

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27. Cf. William A. Norgren and William G. Rusch, editors, *Implications of the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1988) 78-82, for a brief discussion of the relationship of Baptism and evangelization. The whole of Chapter V deals with the mission of the Gospel. Cf. also Lawrence J. Johnson, editor, *Initiation and Conversion* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1985), especially the essays by Regis A. Duffy (13-34) and James D. Shaughnessy (57-76).

come together to offer themselves (and time and possessions) into the service of the Reign of God. They come together to participate in the eschatological meal which anticipates the final banquet of the Messiah and which therefore shapes their witness in the world. One of the functions of public books for liturgy is to facilitate the people's ownership of the Sunday liturgy. The people must, of course, be taught--better, must actually teach themselves--how to use their book. This is neither difficult nor complicated. A cadre of assisting ministers, all members of the community, can be the structural vehicle through which the People of God exercise ownership of and take responsibility for their liturgy.

This understanding of the Church as the eschatological People of God gathered to anticipate the eschatological banquet helps explain why the documents of the New Testament are utterly unconcerned about the identity of those who preside over the Eucharistic celebrations. Although priests are among the disciples of Jesus (Acts 6:7), they do not function as priests in the liturgical gathering. There is evidence from the second century C.E. (Didache 10:7) that itinerant prophets functioned as liturgical presidents along with presbyter-bishops.

That eucharistic presidency is now assigned to ordained clergy must not pre-empt the responsibility of the People of God for the celebration of the liturgy and therefore for the mission of the Church. That is why it is significant that the leader is designated "presiding minister." By the time of Justin (150 C.E.) the president of the liturgical assembly was responsible for just two features of the rite: the sermon and the great thanksgiving. If the being of the Church is its witness, it is important that ordained leadership be open to all, specifically to women. The basis for this is most profoundly the Church's

identity as eschatological community. For in the eschatological community authority comes from the *future*, from the eschatological promise of the Reign of God.<sup>28</sup> As eschatological community the Church offers hope and possibility to those who receive neither from the precedents of the past. That is, in fact, central to the meaning of the Holy Spirit as eschatological gift. The Spirit is the "down payment" on the future (Eph. 1:14, II Cor. 1:22). The full participation of women in every dimension of the Church's life is in our time one of the most eloquent signs of the Church's witness to the Reign of God; and the denial of such participation to women is both resistance to the Holy Spirit and failure to be the eschatological community.

D. In *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, the most important function assigned to the lay assisting minister is leadership in prayer. Two instances of such leadership are of special significance for the relationship between liturgy and mission. The first instance is leadership in the prayers of the people. Prayer in the Christian community does not mean finding the right words or fulfilling the conditions through which we have a chance of getting whatever we request from a manipulated deity. Such misuse of prayer treats the universe as a kind of cosmic casino, with prayer as the slot-machine through which we might hit the jackpot. Rather prayer in the Name of Jesus identifies us as the messianic community and becomes the place where we work at the concrete implications of that identity for our life and mission.

The People of God have the responsibility of identifying their agenda. One way to do this is to have members of the gathered community make those parish announcements at this time which need to be included in the prayers. It is especially appropriate to have persons other than the presiding ministers request prayers for the ministries to

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28. Letty M. Russell, *Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) 17-28; John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985) 168-208.

those about to be married, to those who are ill and/or homebound, to those who are bereaved, to those who are receiving catechetical instruction, etc., in order to keep in the consciousness of all present that these are ministries of the community, not chaplaincy services of the clergy. The rubrical direction that "prayers are included for the whole Church, the nations, (and) those in need" (*LBW*, Rubric 22) will expand the vision of the community beyond the parochial. Regular, perhaps weekly, meetings of the liturgical leaders will help to identify the subject matter for prayers. Attention to the specific needs of other Christian communities, of synagogues, and of adherents of other religions will enable us to struggle with the ecumenical (universal) character of God's mission in the world. Two aspects of Christian prayer must never be neglected: One, how the eschatological Gospel of the Reign of God shapes and even changes our asking, our petitions, our struggle to discern the will of God as revealed in Jesus; two, how we become the agents and ministers of the Reign of God individually and corporately in our vocations.

As a matter of course, the community's "business" will come to expression in the prayers of the People. Everything the community does--stewardship, evangelization, ministries of care, social ministry, ecumenism, education--should and can originate in and be shaped by the Sunday liturgy. Congregational officers should be first and foremost assisting ministers in the Sunday liturgy. It is from among the ministers of the liturgy that the corporate officers should be selected (or elected). One could, of course, reverse this and select assisting ministers from among corporate officers; but that would, in my judgment, be a less appropriate move. It would imply that "corporation" (embodiment) is prior to liturgy, rather than the reverse. But the reverse is most appropriate. *Because* we are made Body of Christ (corpus) in the liturgy we become corporation (embodiment) and require corporate (embodiment) officers.

The second instance of prayer leadership which is of special significance for the relationship of liturgy and mission is the offertory prayer. The lay assisting minister sets the table and leads the community in the offertory prayer because we are placing *ourselves* on the table.

Through Holy Baptism we are initiated into the community of the messiah, the community which anticipates the final consummation of the Reign of God. We want to be taken up into the mission of the messiah, to be the Body of Christ in and for the world. That is the significance of the eschatological banquet in which we are about to participate. We offer ourselves so that our ministries can be shaped by the once-for-all-time offering of Christ for the world. This prayer is the basis for all Christian "stewardship," which is not about giving enough money for the support of the Church's ministries (although that, too, needs to be done). Stewardship is rather about the living of our lives in the service of the Reign of God, as indicated by the title of an excellent book by Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death*.<sup>29</sup>

E. Appropriate attention to the prayers of the people and the offertory prayer will mean that the two functions of the liturgy which are the primary responsibility of the presiding minister, preaching and leadership in the great thanksgiving, will serve the relationship between the community's identity and mission. The preacher, as the principal bearer of the community's "ritual rhetoric," proclaims the eschatological deed of God in Jesus, the Messiah. The sermon announces what has, in fact, happened to the world, "that a decisive turn of the ages has taken place in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, that a new age has been inaugurated."<sup>30</sup> Because we are now free from the reign of death to participate in the Reign of God, the sermon exposes the ways in which the reign of death in us and in our world still resists and denies what God has done; and it explores with us what it can mean in our lives that we believe the advent and promise of the Reign of God.

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29. Published in 1985 in New York by Friendship Press for the Commission on Stewardship of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

30. Hultgren 177.

Leadership in the great thanksgiving is the climax of the relationship between our identity and our mission as the eschatological People of God. It is a moment not to be hurried, not to be abbreviated. Here God is reminded of the promise of the eternal reign of heaven, grounded in the saving finality of Jesus, now present and available to us through participation in the bread and cup. The invocation of the eschatological gift, the Holy Spirit, includes prayer for our living witness to the Reign of God with all the saints and servants "of every time and every place."

The great thanksgiving does not and cannot transform the direction of the liturgy at this crucial moment. For although the blessing is addressed to God, it is we who are being taken up into the blessing which God bestows upon us in the eschatological banquet. We Lutherans should know from Martin Luther's powerful insight into the nature of Christian prayer that our asking is always an expression of that faith which confidently receives all the promises of God. Thanksgiving is above all a way of receiving both our identity and our mission. That is how we bless the God "who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," who has sealed us "with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it." (Eph. 1:3, 14)

Now we cannot regard the table as if it were a private *tete a tete* with God. To be part of the eschatological community at the banquet table of the present and future Reign of God frees us for witness to the universal vision of peace with justice when every tongue confesses "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That is why we can receive our sending with the acclamation, "Thanks be to God." That is why whatever we ask, believing, in the name of Jesus, will be given. For what we ask in that name is nothing less than to participate in His mission. There will never be an oversupply of God's saving People, a surplus of witnesses to the Reign of God. We will not have to wait in line to participate in God's mission.



I return to the Stanley Hauerwas aphorism. "The church has missionary power in direct proportion to its liturgical integrity." If identity and mission are determined by the eucharistic liturgy of the gathered People of God, then time spent on teaching about, planning for, and doing the eucharistic liturgy is not time taken from other ministries which serve the mission of the Church. It is rather time devoted to and determinative of all ministry and mission of the Church.