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**The Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue on the
eucharist with focus on the contribution of Thomas F.
Torrance**

by/par
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Declaration

As required by the university regulations, I hereby declare unequivocally that this project, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the possibilities of theological agreement between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches on the Eucharist from the Reformed perspective. The first chapter is dedicated to the theology of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin on the Lord's Supper. It unveils two aspects: first it shows that although they have different perspectives on the Christ's Eucharistic presence, their views converged; second, it shows that their views stand in contrast to the Roman Catholic conception of the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. The second chapter deals with the fourth session of the first phase of the Reformed–Roman Catholic dialogue, which focused on the Eucharist. It highlights that the final report does not reflect all the convergences of the dialogue concerning the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The third chapter argues that agreement or at least greater convergence is possible on the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist by the contribution of Thomas F. Torrance, who has developed a Reformed Eucharistic theology through what he called a Christological and Eschatological correction.

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Introduction

According to the constitution of the World Council of Churches:

*The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.*¹

From this statement, the one Eucharistic fellowship is, for me, the most important aim of the ecumenical movement. It was my main concern during my studies in the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, because its existence or absence can be conceived as the measure of our faithfulness to our Lord. Therefore I have chosen the topic of the Eucharist, particularly the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharist, hoping that progress is possible in this field.

I shall start by summarizing the Reformed theology on the Eucharist which will serve as a background material for the following topics. One of the main topics of my thesis is to evaluate the achievements of the fourth session of the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue *The Presence of Christ in Church and World*, on the Eucharist.² The other is to point out the contribution of Thomas F. Torrance to the dialogue by the interpretation of his Eucharistic theology. My main question is whether the dialogue exhausted the possibilities for convergence and agreement or there is still room for further progress.

¹ *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches*. 23.02.2006. 24.05.2012.
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/constitution-and-rules-as-adopted.html>

² For this I will use the archive of the meeting. Fourth Session of the Reformed/Roman Catholic Study Commission *The Presence of Christ in Church and World: The Eucharist*, Woudschoten – Zeist (Netherlands), February 18-23, 1974, Geneva, WCRC Archives, Uncategorized, Box RC/WARC dialogue 1974, 4th Session, The Eucharist.

Chapter One

The Eucharist in Reformed theology

The first chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the classical Reformed teaching on the Eucharist, namely to the teaching of John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli. Although what we call Reformed teaching may vary among the Reformed churches, it remains true that Calvin and Zwingli have largely determined what we call today Reformed theology. Those who engage in ecumenical dialogue on behalf of Reformed churches are normally expected to somehow represent their views. Thus this overview can serve as a background material for the topics dealt with in the following chapters, namely the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue on Eucharist and the Eucharistic theology of Thomas F. Torrance.

In order to understand the teaching of Calvin and Zwingli we must first treat the Roman Catholic Eucharistic doctrine to which they reacted.³ Then I will summarize the teaching of *Ulrich Zwingli* on the Eucharist using the *Commentary on True and False Religion* and his treatise *On the Lord's Supper*.⁴ Finally I turn to the teaching of *John Calvin* treating his main ideas in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* concerning our theme and in the *Short Treatise of the Lord's Supper of our Lord and Only Saviour Jesus Christ*.⁵

³ Both of their teachings were formulated in debate with Luther and others as well however here I can treat only their position against Rome.

⁴ Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, trans. Clarence Nevin Heller, Durham N.C.: The Labyrinth Press, eds.: Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller, 1981. Ulrich Zwingli, "On the Lord's Supper," in: Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *Zwingli and Bullinger*, London: SCM Press, 1953.

⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008.

John Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper of Our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ," in John K. S Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. John K. S. Reid, London: SCM Press, 1954.

1.1 Roman Catholic theology on Eucharist

Here we can only outline the main ideas, but it will be helpful to see the sharpest differences between Reformed and Roman Catholic theology concerning the Eucharist.⁶

Let us start with the doctrine of sacraments which after the death of Augustine remained underdeveloped and somewhat confused until the twelfth century.⁷ From then however it was worked out in a coherent and comprehensive system. Its heart is the definition of the sacrament as the *cause of grace*, in which “grace is contained and by which it is objectively conferred.”⁸ Grace was conceived as a supernatural power which comes from God in order to nourish the soul weakened by sin. It is mediated through the church and the sacraments. Grace is objectively there in the sacraments. Through the performance of the rite grace is automatically infused into the soul (*ex opera operato*).⁹

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist can be understood best through the teaching of Thomas Aquinas and particularly how he understands the transubstantiation. According to him the substance of the bread and the wine is changed to the substance of the body and blood of Christ while the accidents of the elements remain. That is to say, the inner realities of the elements become the inner realities of the body and blood of Christ which we can discern only by faith. Thus, what we receive is no longer bread or wine even if we perceive with our senses what remained that is the external qualities of the bread and the wine such as color, shape, taste, etc..¹⁰

Finally let us turn to the Roman Catholic conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice which is based on the view that the Eucharist is not only a sacrament but also a sacrifice. The common point is the transubstantiation. “The Eucharist is the offering to God of the Christ who is present under the *species* of the consecrated bread and wine.”¹¹ It means that in the Eucharistic sacrifice the same is the victim who has

⁶ The summary is based on Alasdair Heron’s statements on the medieval Eucharistic theology in Alasdair Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist*, Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1983.

⁷ *ibid.*, 87.

⁸ *ibid.*, 89.

⁹ *ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 96.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 102.

offered himself for us and therefore the same is the offering. The only distinction is that the offering of the church is bloodless.¹² Originally this offering was regarded as one which is wholly dependent upon the offering of Christ. In medieval theology however it took on a distinct role and was interpreted as sacrificial in its own right. It was seen as a sacrifice which makes satisfaction to God and obtains satisfaction “in proportion to the faith and devotion of him who makes it, or those whom it is made.”¹³ Therefore the celebration of the Mass and the offering of the sacrifice became in themselves a meritorious and beneficial action.¹⁴

1.2 Zwingli’s teaching on Eucharist

According to Zwingli the Eucharist is “the thanksgiving and common rejoicing of those who declare the death of Christ, that is, trumpet, praise, confess, and exalt.”¹⁵ Elsewhere he states that it was instituted by Christ as a remembrance to his redemptive work that we might never forget it and that “we might publicly attest it.”¹⁶ Elsewhere he calls it a confession of belief in Christ.¹⁷ That is to say for Zwingli it is a thanksgiving, remembrance and confession of faith.

His view derives from his definition of the term *sacrament* and his symbolical interpretation of the sentence “This is my body.”

He approaches the phrase *sacrament* from different angles, i.e. as the event and as the sign. As the event it is an initiatory ceremony or a pledging, an initiation or public inauguration. In this case he formulates his teaching on the sacraments against the teaching *ex opera operato*. He emphasizes the initiation of men, but he is aware that God has the power to “free the conscience.”¹⁸ As the sign is the sign of a holy thing and since (in the case of the Eucharist) “the sign and the sign signified cannot be one and the same. Therefore the sacrament of the body of Christ cannot be the body itself.”¹⁹

¹² *ibid.*, 104.

¹³ *ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 200.

¹⁶ Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 234.

¹⁷ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 200; Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 235.

¹⁸ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 181-182.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 188.

He chooses the figurative and symbolic interpretation of the sentence “This is my body” due to the errors of the literal interpretation and due to the evidences of the New Testament, and asserts that the word ”is” in the sentence “This is my body” must be taken metaphorically or figuratively and thus the sentence means “The bread signifies my body” or “The bread is a figure of my body” and from the sentence “Do this in remembrance of me” it follows that the bread “is to remind us in the Supper that the body was crucified for us.”²⁰

According to these issues we can conclude that for Zwingli the Eucharist is a human act and nothing more happens in the event only human activity, and, what is more, Christ is not present.²¹ However for the correct interpretation of Zwingli’s assertions we should take into consideration the following issues. He formulates his teaching as a “counter teaching” of the Roman Catholic practice;²² in most of his works the focus is on *what is not the Eucharist*,²³ therefore when he seems to deny Christ’s presence in the Eucharistic celebration, in fact he asserts that Christ is not present according to the Roman Catholic theory.²⁴ In fact it is clear that Christ is present (also) in the celebration according to his divine nature whereby he is omnipresent.²⁵ This is strengthened that he does not attack the idea of spiritual manducation and of eating “quite apart from external perception”.²⁶

The belief in Christ has a crucial role in our relationship with Christ. It is interpreted by Zwingli as the nourishment of our souls,²⁷ because Christ himself is the spiritual food.²⁸ It is also not restricted only to the Eucharist but we can interpret it as the communion with Christ, i.e. we receive what he achieved for us.²⁹

Finally it is worth to mention how Zingli conceives of Eucharistic sacrifice. In his view, the Mass is a dishonoring of Christ; it is against the once-and-for-all character of his sacrifice and it has no basis in any institution of Christ or of the

²⁰ Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 225.

²¹ *ibid.*, 229.

²² His debate with Luther had a great influence to his teaching as well.

²³ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 216; Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 223.

²⁴ An example for this is in Zwingli, *On the Lords Supper*, 192.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 212-213.

²⁶ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 216; Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 196.

²⁷ Zwingli: *On the Lord’s Supper*, 198, 200, 205.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 203.

²⁹ It is worth to note here that Zwingli’s concept of Christ’s person is explicitly non-dualistic. He speaks of Christ’s whole person with his words and deeds, not of his body and blood. He is aware of the existence both of the divine and the human will of Christ; he interprets Christ’s flesh as Christ’s humanity and he avoids the underestimation of the flesh against the spirit. Good example for this is his interpretation of the sixth chapter of Gospel according to John in Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, 199-207.

Apostles.³⁰ He contrasts the Mass and the Lord's Supper. The latter is nothing but the commemoration by which we proclaim Christ's life-bringing death, that is, "preach it with praise and thanksgiving."³¹

We can conclude that Zwingli is aware of the depth of the mystery of Christ, of his presence to the believers and our communion with him through faith; however he does not regard the Eucharist as the culmination of these issues, in a sense he keeps these quiet in his treatise of the Eucharist. Its reason is that he focuses on the Roman Catholic practice and his main intention is to deny its theory and to prove against it that the Eucharist is a thanksgiving and common rejoicing, in which between the sign and thing signified there is no (bounding) connection at all.

1.3 Calvin's teaching on Eucharist

For Calvin the sacrament is an external sign of the invisible divine grace (Augustine). It has two aspects, divine and human. On the one hand by this "the Lord seals on our consciences his promises," which we need due to the weakness of our faith. On the other hand it is a human testimony of piety towards God before himself, angels and men.³²

In the sacrament the word and sign can not be separated, because the word provides the meaning of the sign.³³ The thing signified, i.e. the divine grace can be received only through faith, which is increased by the reception.³⁴ The efficacy of the sacrament occurs by the agency of the Holy Spirit alone who is the author of the faith and "procures access for the sacraments into our souls."³⁵ The sign and the thing signified is conjoined in the sacrament, we should distinguish, but not separate them.³⁶

³⁰ Cf. Zwingli, *Commentary*, 235.

³¹ *ibid.*, 237.

³² Calvin, *Institutes*, 843. For Calvin the divine aspect is more important than the human. An example for this is in *ibid.*, 849.

³³ *ibid.*, 844.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 846.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 847.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 851.

Calvin grounds his teaching on sacrament on Augustine's which involves the dualism whereby the sign and the thing signified can fall apart, however he succeeds to avoid this tendency here speaking of the sacraments in general.³⁷

Now let us see how these principles are used in Calvin's treatise on the Eucharist. Due to the limit of the thesis we can focus only to his main ideas and can not treat in depth his reflection on various theories however we should keep in mind that his thoughts, like Zwingli's, are formulated in a debating context.

The Eucharist is union with Christ and thus the nourishment of our souls for the heavenly immortality. God was pleased to give us this spiritual food. The signs are the bread and the wine by which God adapts to our capacity.³⁸ In the union of Christ a 'wondrous exchange' occurs, i.e. which is Christ's becomes ours, which is ours becomes Christ's, e.g. Son of Man – sons of God; mortality – immortality, etc.³⁹

The eating is not only believing, but communion with Christ.⁴⁰ The communion is not only partaking of the Spirit, but the communion with the life-giving body and blood of Christ.⁴¹ Christ is at such a distance from us in respect of place however the Spirit truly unites things separated by space thus the body of Christ is given to us through the incomprehensible agency of the Holy Spirit while the visible symbols are given however it can be received only by true faith.⁴² It is owing to the Spirit alone that we possess Christ wholly, that everything that Christ has and is, is derived to us.⁴³

Calvin does not deny the consecration of the signs in that sense that they "are to be considered in a different light from common food" to be seals of promises however the bread needs to be true to be able to represent the true body of Christ.⁴⁴ Moreover there are two restrictions which we have to take into consideration in our attempt to express his presence in the Eucharist. "First, let there be nothing derogatory

³⁷ It is worth to note that the connection is taken for granted as in the case of Augustine's theology as well. Example from Calvin is in Calvin, *Institutes*, 852. Augustine's view is treated in Heron, *Op. Cit.*, 73.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 896. The union is not restricted only to the Eucharist.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 896-897.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 898. Here he appears to reflect on the teaching of Zwingli.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 898.

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, 900-901, 919-920. Concerning the unfaithful partaking Calvin states that "I admit and hold that the power of the sacrament remains entire, however the wicked may labour with all their might to annihilate it. Still, it is one thing to be offered, another to be received." in *ibid.*, 920.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, 902. Calvin focuses on the body and blood of Christ during his debate however he is aware that the 'mater' of the sacrament is the whole Christ, his divine-human one person with his deeds.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 903.

to the heavenly glory of Christ”⁴⁵ It means that he sits at the right hand of the Father therefore he can not be affixed to the signs.⁴⁶ “Secondly, let no property be assigned to his body inconsistent with his human nature.”⁴⁷ That is to say, his body should have one certain place, its own dimension and its own form.⁴⁸ He concludes “But when these absurdities are discarded, I willingly admit anything which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, as exhibited to believers under the sacred symbols of the Supper, understanding that they are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life.”⁴⁹ and elsewhere “Now, should any one ask me as to the mode, I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and to speak more plainly I rather feel than understand it.”⁵⁰

In the *Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper* Calvin expresses some of his ideas more clearly than in the *Institutes*. First of all he points out the place of the Eucharist in a wider horizon stating that Jesus Christ is the only provision of our souls who we receive by the Word of the Lord however since “we are cannot receive him with true confidence of heart, when he is presented by simple teaching and preaching, the Father ... desired to attach to his Word a visible sign (i.e. the Eucharist).”⁵¹ We can see that on the one side there is the divine care, on the other the human uncertainty. The focus is on Christ and the incomprehensible communion with him, which we receive by the Word and by the Eucharist. Thus the Eucharist is described as one of the instruments of God adapted to our capacity whereby God helps us to comprehend (and to make us sure of) our communion with Christ.

The second clarification refers to the relation of the sign and the thing signified. “The sacraments of the Lord (i.e. the signs) ought not and cannot at all be separated from their reality and substance (i.e. the thing signified). To distinguish

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 906.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 906.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 906.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 906.

Calvin insists to the Augustinian principle according to which “Christ gave incorruption and glory, but without destroying its nature and reality.” It can be found in *ibid.*, 912.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 906-907. We can regard the concept “Christ raises us to himself” as an alternative of the mode of communion. This can be found in *ibid.*, 905.

It is worth to see how he understands the dynamism of Christ’s presence in heaven, in earth and in the Eucharist Examples for this is in *ibid.*, 906, 913. One of the crucial sentences states that “our whole Mediator is everywhere, he is always present with his people, and in the Supper exhibits his presence in a special manner.” It can be found in *ibid.*, 918.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 918.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Short Treatise*, 144.

them so that they be not confused is not only good and reasonable but wholly necessary. But to divide them so as to set them up the one without the other is absurd. ... We have then to confess that if the representation which God grants in the Supper is veracious, the internal substance of the sacraments is joined with the visible signs.”⁵² In sum we can distinguish but not separate the sign and the thing signified,⁵³ because they are joined by God who performs the thing signified.⁵⁴

Calvin reflects on the teaching of Zwingli (and Oecolampadius) so “now because it was very difficult to remote this opinion (Roman Catholic teaching on the carnal presence of Christ), rooted so long in the hearts of men, they applied all their mind to decry it, remonstrating that it was quite gross error not to acknowledge what is so clearly testified in Scripture, concerning the ascension of Jesus Christ, ... While they were absorbed with this point, they forgot to define what is the presence of Christ in the Supper ... and what communication of his body and his blood one there received.”⁵⁵ Calvin reckons Zwingli as his fellow against the Roman Catholic teaching, however he misses one point from Zwingli’s thought which has a crucial role in his own. Whether Zwingli indeed *forgot* that or not we do not know however as we saw his main attempt which could have determine his teaching on the Eucharist was to prove the errors of the Roman Catholic doctrines.

Finally it is worth to mention what is Calvin opinion on the Eucharistic sacrifice. He completely refuses the Roman Catholic conception of the it because according to him it is the denial of the perfect sacrifice of Christ which he performed once and for ever and whereby he fulfilled all that was necessary for our salvation; it obliterates the only death of Christ because it repeats that and it prevents us from being sure that our sins have been forgiven by the sacrifice of Christ.⁵⁶ He contradistinguishes the sacrifice of the mass from the Lord’s Supper on the basis of the contradiction between receiving and giving. While the Supper itself is a gift from God which we receive with thanksgiving the sacrifice of the mass “pretends to give a price to God to be received as satisfaction.”⁵⁷ The only sacrifice which Calvin accepts

⁵² *ibid.*, 148.

⁵³ The same description is used to the relation of Christ’s two natures and of the persons of the Trinity.

⁵⁴ Here we can see that the substance of the teachings on the Eucharist is the same in the Reformed and Roman Catholic Church. The differences are the transubstantiation and the objectifying approach, i.e. the mode of presence.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 164, 165.

⁵⁶ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 936, 937, 938,

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 938.

as our offering includes charity, prayers, praises, thanksgiving and every act of worship whereby we offer to God all that we are and we have.⁵⁸

Conclusion

After the summaries we can draw the following conclusions. Calvin's teaching on Eucharist is based on Augustinian principles which express the mystery of the Eucharist in dualistic worldview therefore the crucial question is how the sign and the thing signified relate to each other. In Augustine's thought system the bond is taken for granted which concept is used by Calvin emphasizing that God exhibits the thing signified in the Eucharistic celebration thus God is who grants the bond. To express the relation between them Calvin applies the same idea that is used to explain the oneness of distinctive things in the Christology and in the teaching on the Trinity, i.e. we can distinguish but not separate them. Reflecting on the Roman Catholic dogmas Calvin emphasizes the distinction, concerning Zwingli's view he stress their joint thus he can avoid letting the sign and the thing signified fall apart.⁵⁹

The difference of Calvin's and Zwingli's thought on the Eucharist based on the different definition of what is a sacramental event.⁶⁰ Zwingli is aware of its divine aspect (Christ died for us and now he is the nourishment of our soul) however he stresses the human one (we gives thanks for that) while Calvin focuses firstly on the divine aspect and secondly on the human one as a response.

To Zwingli the Eucharist is remembrance, thanksgiving, praise and confession of faith and not communion with Christ however the believers have communion with him and Christ is present. The concept of 'spiritual manducation' was not his view but considering his openness to that, the maturation of his teaching in his lifetime,⁶¹ and the traces in his treatise concerning the presence of and the communion with Christ we can presume that the consensus between Calvin and Zwingli could be possible.⁶²

We can understand the teachings of the Reformers only if we focus not on the signs or the Eucharistic event, nor even on the thing signified in that sense that it is the body of Christ. To understand it in depth we should focus on Christ himself and

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 943.

⁵⁹ Against Heron's opinion in Heron, *Op. Cit.*, 132.

⁶⁰ Though both of them use the definition of Augustine, that is, the sacrament is the sign of a holy thing.

⁶¹ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 198.

⁶² Calvin's openness towards Zwingli supports our assumption.

his work for our salvation and that we have communion with him and receive the efficacy of his sacrifice even without the Eucharist if we are Christians.⁶³

To Calvin the signs are the mean of divine help to make us sure that God is at work during the Eucharistic event. To Zwingli the event is a human answer to the act of God. The standpoint depends on what abilities are attributed to the human comprehension and faith. If we suppose that they are strong enough we do not need divine help to make us sure that we are the partakers of the communion with Christ and receive the gifts. On the other hand if we suppose that they are weak or in the case of the faith that it is something which can mature we do need divine seals.⁶⁴

If we regard the Eucharist as a divine help to comprehend our existing communion with Christ and to strengthen our faith it is no more a *means of grace* in that sense that it is the only way to Christ to receive the grace and it is necessary to our salvation however in the Eucharistic event we really receive that by our communion with Christ. If we need it to our salvation, i.e. if we need full comprehension of our communion with Christ to have salvation, or what measure of comprehension do we need, it is not clear in the teaching of Calvin on the Eucharist. But maybe these questions are wrong because we speak of human abilities instead of the divine help. God was pleased to help us in this way according to Calvin. These questions however help us not to be satisfied with the level of comprehension what we reached by Calvin's treatise and to go on seeking for the substance of the mystery – as Calvin encourage us

*... a mystery which I feel, and therefore freely confess that I am unable to comprehend with my mind, so far am I from wishing any one to measure its sublimity by my feeble capacity. Nay, I rather exhort my readers not to confine their apprehension within those too narrow limits, but to attempt to rise much higher than I can guide them.*⁶⁵

Both Calvin and Zwingli are against the Roman Catholic view that the Eucharist is not only a sacrament but an offering to God as well. Calvin uses the term “sacrifice” for charity and thanksgiving and these notions turn up in the teaching of Zwingli as well however in this topic it seems to be a wider gap between the Roman

⁶³ Due to the limit we can not treat how someone becomes a believer and has communion with Christ according to Calvin and Zwingli. In their treatises on the Eucharist this question does not arise.

⁶⁴ The different views reflect on their style of treating the Eucharist. Calvin tries to comprehend the glorious mystery of God while Zwingli interprets the plain evidences of the Scripture with confidence.

⁶⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 899.

Catholic and Reformed theology than concerning the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. While we can have conversation on the presence of Christ and the main question is the mode of presence, the dialogue on the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist seems to be impossible on the basis of the Reformers' teaching.

Chapter Two

Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue

The second chapter of my thesis is dedicated to the fourth session of the Reformed - Roman Catholic conversation *The Presence of Christ in Church and World*, which is the most representative dialogue on the Eucharist so far between the representatives of the *World Alliance of Reformed Churches* and the Roman Catholic *Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity*. I shall summarize the background documents and highlight those points of the discussion which led to the agreement and those statements to which not enough attention was given but they could at least reduce the doctrinal differences. I shall treat the paper of George B. Caird *The Eucharist in the New Testament*;⁶⁶ of James Quinn, S. J. *The Eucharist (Sacrifice and presence) in the Catholic Perspective*;⁶⁷ of Thomas F. Torrance *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist*;⁶⁸ of J. F. Lescrauwaet *Eucharist and Church*;⁶⁹ the summaries of discussions on the papers;⁷⁰ the analysis of general discussions⁷¹ and the final report of the session⁷² to trace the achieved agreement.

In the papers the authors seek to present faithfully the traditional teaching of their respective churches and in order to facilitate the agreement they introduces new

⁶⁶ George B. Caird, "The Eucharist in the New Testament" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 6-10.

⁶⁷ James, Quinn, S. J., "The Eucharist (Sacrifice and Presence) in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 11-19.

⁶⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, "The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 20-41. It is published also in Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays toward Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976, 106-138.

⁶⁹ Josephus F. Lescrauwaet, "Eucharist and Church" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 48-56.

⁷⁰ Markus Barth, and Joseph Hoffmann, "Summary of Discussions on Paper I" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 57-58.

Gottfried Locher and Joseph Ernst, "Summary of Discussions on Paper II" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 59-60.

Roger Aubert and David Willis, "Summary of Discussions on Paper III" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 61-63.

Alex Bronkhorst and Charles Moeller, "Summary of Discussions on Paper IV" in the archive indicated the footnote 2, 64-65.

⁷¹ Thomas F. Torrance, Markus Barth, James Quinn and Josef Hoffmann, "Analysis of General Discussions" in the archive indicated in footnote 2, 66-67.

⁷² It has been published in Harding Meyer and Lukas Visser (eds.), *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of the Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, New York: Paulist Press, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984, 449-456.

approaches, e.g. James Quinn does so concerning the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist and Torrance regarding the whole doctrine of the Eucharist.

The summaries connect rather to each other than to the papers on which they are to reflect; therefore by summing up them together we can see the train of thought which led to the formulation of the final report.

Starting from the end which can help us to understand the overall view of the final report, it concludes the following points of agreement: “Both traditions hold to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; and both hold at least that the Eucharist is, among other things: a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord; a source of loving communion with him in the power of the Spirit and; a source of the eschatological hope for his coming again.”⁷³

This moderate phrasing is true for the entire report in which the main ideas of the dialogue remain hidden, but are still present for the reader of the background documents. The reason for the ‘silence’ is that “the terminology which arose in an earlier polemical context is not adequate for taking account of the extent of common theological understanding which exists in our respective churches.”⁷⁴ Keeping in mind these statements, let us start to treat the papers and the summaries of discussions exploring in depth the “common theological understanding.”

2.1 The 1974 Papers on the Eucharist

It is enough if we pick up only the main statements of George B. Caird because the discussion on his paper follows a different way of interpretation of the New Testament narratives concerning the Eucharist.

Caird’s principle is that there is only one explicit mention of the Eucharist in the New Testament in 1 Cor 11:17 ff and he states the followings in its interpretation: The emphasis is on the verb *synerchesthai* (meet together) and on the proper conduct toward the sacrament and to one another; The sacrament took place in the course of an ordinary meal, and the aim of Paul’s instruction was not to separate them; To Paul the broken bread and the shared cup (with Jesus’ words) are ‘commemorating symbols’ pointing back to the Calvary; The parallel of the ‘bread’ is the ‘cup’, not the ‘wine’;

⁷³ *ibid.*, 456.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 456.

The copula 'estin' has the value of 'symbolizes' or 'represents'. There is no indication to 'presiding' at the Eucharist.⁷⁵

Caird interprets the 1 Cor 10:14 ff and the chapter 3 and 6 of the Gospel according to John as well however on these there is no reflection in the discussions therefore I do not summarize them.

The next paper is by James Quinn, S. J., who summarizes clearly the Roman Catholic doctrines on the Eucharist.

He states that the efficacy of the Eucharist comes about by divine action and human cooperation (ordained, celebrant, right intention, and Church's ritual).⁷⁶ In the Eucharist we live in the present of the event of salvation, and we bless the Father not only for Christ, but through, with and in Christ.⁷⁷

To understand the Eucharistic presence he distinguishes three aspects of personal presence, both of which are fulfilled in the Roman Catholic Eucharist: 'presence in Spirit', 'presence in sign', and "the most crucial to the Catholic understanding" 'presence in body'. This third aspect, "which makes possible the Eucharistic sacrifice," is the 'real presence'.⁷⁸

"The presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist is effected by the Holy Spirit through the Eucharistic change," which has three levels: transignification (change of meaning); transfinalization (change of purpose) and the transubstantiation (change of reality). This third change is necessary to Christ's 'presence in body', without this only the first two aspects of presence occur. He refuses that the teaching of the Church would impose the philosophy from which the term 'substance' (important term in describing the process of change) is taken and distinguish this kind of change from what occurs in the Baptism.⁷⁹

After the transubstantiation the presence continues "until the 'species' are consumed or corrupt" and he regards the devotion to Christ in the reserved Eucharist as legitimate, because it is directed towards Christ himself.⁸⁰

There are two sacramental aspects in the Eucharist. On the one hand it is a sacramental meal, i.e. the body and the blood of Christ is consumed, on the other hand it is a sacrifice. A new approach contributes to clarify that it is not the repetition of the

⁷⁵ Caird, *Op. Cit.*, 6.

⁷⁶ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

⁷⁷ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 12.

⁷⁸ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 12-13.

⁷⁹ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 13-15.

⁸⁰ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

sacrifice of Christ. Christ's 'act of will', which is one aspect of his death, making it a voluntary sacrifice, is continuing in his resurrection, ascension and heavenly life as his personal self-giving to the Father. In the Eucharist we really enter into his sacrificial act of self-giving. Christ is present in order that we may be one with him in offering his sacrifice.⁸¹

We can see that according to the interpretation of Quinn the entire Roman Catholic Eucharistic teaching is based on transubstantiation. By transubstantiation Christ is really present therefore we might participate in his body and blood and we might enter into his sacrificial act. If Christ is not really present, i.e. in accordance with the Roman Catholic view, we do not have communion with him and there is no sacrifice in the Eucharist. Keeping in mind these ascertainments let us go on to treat Torrance's paper after which I shall compare their teachings.

There is no space to treat in depth the paper by T.F. Torrance, but by picking up the main ideas and train of thought we can get to know a reformulated Reformed theology of the Eucharist and we are able compare the main issues open for consensus in the dialogue, i.e. the real presence and the sacrifice of Christ.

Torrance focuses in his paper on the 'paschal mystery of Christ' which is the focus both of the Last Supper and of the Eucharist. He avoids to approach the Eucharist from its ritual or human aspects which can obscure the seeking for its meaning.⁸²

In the concept of 'paschal mystery', the humanity of Christ, which takes up our whole humanity, body-soul-mind, has a crucial role. Regarding as union with us it enables us to participate in the saving work of Christ.⁸³

The saving work of Christ has two aspects: his self-giving to us, and his self-offering to God. His self-giving means his incorporation into our humanity, in order to take away our sins and endows us with divine holiness. His self-offering means "his obedience and atoning sacrifice to God," which, being accomplished in our humanity he also shares with us.⁸⁴

We participate both in the 'self-giving' and 'self-offering' of Christ in the Eucharist. This is our 'anamnesis', which we do "in and through the real presence of the whole Christ (through the Spirit) ..., so that the bread which we break and the cup

⁸¹ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 15-18.

⁸² Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 21.

⁸³ *ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 27.

of blessing which we bless are communion in the body and blood of Christ and the *Eucharistic offering* of Christ to the Father which we make through him is communion in his own sacrificial self-offering to God the Father.”⁸⁵

The presence of Christ means the presence of the *whole Christ* with his body-spirit- mind, in his full humanity and divinity, in the oneness of his Word, Work and Person, through the Spirit, that is, through the same kind of “inexplicable creative activity” whereby he was born and rose again.⁸⁶

Torrance does not stop here: he extends the scope to a cosmic level asserting that the Eucharist is ‘the place’ where we meet with Christ, who is the ‘one place’ where “heaven and earth, eternity and time, God and man fully meet, are united and are reconciled.”⁸⁷

After this statement he analyzes *the shift of view* which occurred by taking up into theology the Neo-Platonic distinction between *mundus intelligibilis* and *mundus sensibilis*, which determined and still determines in different ways both the Roman Catholic and Reformed thinking on the Eucharist. Instead of this view he proposes a rather holistic approach of the theme, arguing that this shift is already occurring in theology and even in the western science.⁸⁸

Reflecting on the papers by Quinn and by Torrance we can sum up the main issues relating to the presence and sacrifice in the Eucharist in the following way:

For Quinn the presence occurs by divine action (Holy Spirit) and human cooperation through the Eucharistic change⁸⁹; to Torrance through an inexplicable manner by the work of the Spirit.⁹⁰ To Quinn the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist means that “we enter into Christ’s sacrificial act of self-giving,”⁹¹ to Torrance it means that “we ... are so intimately united to Christ ... that we participate in his self-consecration and self-offering to the Father.”⁹²

In both cases the intention of the doctrines is the same, i.e. to express that Christ is present, that through the Eucharist we receive his gifts and we participate in his self-offering. The divisive factors are the Roman Catholic ‘physicalist’ and

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 41.

⁸⁹ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 11-15;

⁹⁰ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 29.

⁹¹ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

⁹² Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 38.

‘objectifying’ approach and the identification of the sign and the thing. Moreover it seems so that the agreement on the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist depends on the agreement on the real presence, because as we have seen the Roman Catholic Eucharistic sacrifice is based on the transubstantiation.

The “renewed understanding of the part played by the Resurrection in Christ’s sacrifice” on the Quinn’s side and the holistic reinterpretation of the Reformed theology on Eucharist on the Torrance’s side facilitated a lot the convergence of the traditions in the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist.

The last paper, by Lescrauwaet, treats the relation of Eucharist and Church in six theses. In his first, second and third theses the focus is on the terms ‘body of Christ’ and ‘*corpus mysticum*’ and on the sacramentality of the Church and of the Eucharist which describe the special relationship between them.⁹³

In the fourth and fifth theses the Eucharist is presented as the sign of the Church’s unity and from this follows that the purpose of exhortation to participate in the Eucharist is to strengthen the unity, and the purpose of the exclusion to save it. This idea led to the existence of separate communions referring both to churches and ‘Eucharists’.⁹⁴

In the sixth thesis Lescrauwaet treats this situation. “There exists a real bond between Catholics and Protestants and in virtue of this bond we are obliged to come closer to each other; at the same time this bond is not (yet) such an ‘ecclesial’ bond as to enable us to celebrate the Eucharist together.” (Second Vatican Council)⁹⁵ In a more clear way he asserts: “the communion would be contrary to the reality of separately existing communities,” because the Eucharist is “an expression of the Catholic faith as a whole.”⁹⁶ Here we can see the practical aspect of the relation between Eucharist and Church in the interpretation of the author.

In Lescrauwaet’s paper we can see how inseparably the Eucharist relates to the Church in the Roman Catholic thinking and how this relation determines the convergence of the churches. It is interesting that there is no reflection on the paper of Lescrauwaet in the discussions.

⁹³ Lescrauwaet, *Op. Cit.*, 48-53.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 53-55.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 55.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 56.

2.2 Discussions of the Papers on the Eucharist

After the summaries of the papers, let us turn to the treating of the discussions. The summary of the first discussion starts with correction of Caird's statements and then points out the tokens for the correct interpretation of the biblical resources.

The Eucharist is self-evidence for the primitive Church as well as the presence of Christ, but on the narratives we can not deduce a consistent doctrinal system and the Eucharistic event also relativizes the 'church-dividing' doctrines.⁹⁷

Our teachings on the Eucharist are influenced by time and culture. Certain parts of them are determined by dualistic Anthropology and Cosmology, which can not describe the mystery of the Eucharist adequately and supported the church-separation.⁹⁸

For the correct understanding of the Eucharist's meaning the Old Testament background must be recognized in the interpretation of the accounts. In the institution narratives the word 'is' "rather than to indicate "transformation" or "change of meaning", it can give an answer to the question 'why'";⁹⁹ the word 'remembrance' means more than a mental act; the 'spirit' and 'body' describes the whole person in his/her relationships with God and with his others; the 'new covenant' means rather the restoration of the covenant than definitive rejection of Israel; by the prospect to the second coming the Church is pictured as a pilgrim people of God. In the narratives it is unanswered who leads the Eucharist.¹⁰⁰

As the Church does not exist for itself, its celebration of and its reflection on the Eucharist should serve its 'priestly ministry to the World'.¹⁰¹

The participants are aware of the contextual character of the doctrines on the Eucharist by pointing out the influence of the dualistic anthropology and cosmology, and of the necessity of taking into account the background in the interpretation of the biblical texts. It can help in the better understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist and therefore facilitate the convergence of the traditions.

One question arises here, i.e. can a better understanding of the biblical resources change a doctrine in the tradition? Here we touch the question on the

⁹⁷ Barth and Hoffmann, *Summary of Discussions on Paper I*, 57.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 57.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 57-58.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 58.

relation of the authority of scripture and of tradition, which is not allowed to treat due to the limit of the thesis.

In any case there seems to be reached a consensus on the interpretation of the biblical basis of the Eucharist, which can be a basis for the further examination of the doctrines.

In the second discussion Quinn's sharp distinction between Christ's presence in body and in Spirit, was not accepted. The critique on his inconsistent statements on the work of the Holy Spirit shows the need for clarification of the Spirit's role in the Eucharist and the indication of his failed intention to loose the dogma of the transubstantiation from its historical philosophic conception, the need for clarification of the original intention of the timely-bound doctrinal formulations.¹⁰²

Against the objectification of the sacrament the participants describe the Eucharist as an event, on which Christ himself is at work. According to them the consequence of this view is that *signum et res* remain the same.¹⁰³ Without interpreting this statement we can assert that here the participants bump to the problem of dualism first during the discussions.

The summary of the third discussion starts with the report that "little attention was paid in the discussion to the role and nature of sacrifice whereas the eternal sacrifice of Christ is a crucial part of Prof. Torrance's paper. Does it mean an acceptance by the group of the interpretation Prof. Torrance gives to the eternal sacrifice, or what?"¹⁰⁴ There is no other mention of this topic in this summary or later. The participant obviously avoided this aspect of the Eucharist.

In the following part we can read about a development in agreement concerning the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. First the possible common ways "to describe the meaning of the mystery of the Real Presence" are treated. These are (a) usage of the concept 'Ontorelational connection'; (b) correction by Eastern especially patristic categories; (c) recognition of the way contemporary Roman Catholic Eucharistic doctrine makes use of *interpersonal analyses* to illuminate and redefine the nature of the Real Presence; (d) expression by political categories, especially the political framework of Israel's Eschatology.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Locher and Ernst, *Summary of Discussions on Paper II*, 59.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Aubert and Willis, *Summary of Discussions on Paper III*, 61.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 61.

The focus is on the interpersonalist framework as the possibility for an agreement that may enable the two partners in dialogue to move forward. As the summary reports: “One common factor emerged, that to speak of bodily presence is to speak of visible presence of the spirit of someone, i.e. the way one is really available to another (thereby overcoming the spirit-body disjunction and thereby overcoming the false dichotomy between ‘bodily presence’ and ‘presence by Spirit’).”¹⁰⁶

We can find the following statement among the assumptions for further consideration: “No one in this Reformed/Roman Catholic dialogue disagrees that in the Eucharist Christ is really, actually, fundamentally, ontologically present.” This good sign however is not firmly based yet, due to the unclarified meaning and the search for a new terminology.¹⁰⁷

In the summary of fourth discussion we can read the more crystallized ideas of the previous ones and further convergence on the main issues.

The first idea concerning the concept of mediation seems to express the awareness of the consequences of the dualistic tendency in the theology which determines both traditions thinking on the Eucharist, as we saw in the paper of Torrance.¹⁰⁸ About the relation of the sign and thing signified it is asserted: “We have to avoid the danger of separation on the one hand and of identification on the other hand; perhaps we could speak of an ecclesiastical nestorianism and of an ecclesiastical monophysitism. We should respect the legitimate attempts to honor the Lordship of the Lord but also the desire to make clear that the Lord is really coming to us and is really communicating his gifts to his people.”¹⁰⁹ This statement leaves open the door for the explanation as to how the sign and the thing signified connect to each other, while both the identification and the objectification are excluded.

The next important issue is the reference to Calvin’s teaching: “When Calvin speaks about this real presence, he avoids the expression ‘transubstantiation’ and underlines the importance of the action of the Holy Spirit, who is the agent of the presence and communication of Christ with his people. In this context we remembered the central importance of the epiclesis in the liturgy ... We should never forget that this real presence of Christ in the Eucharist by the Holy Spirit for Calvin

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 62-63.

¹⁰⁸ Bronkhorst and Moeller, *Summary of Discussions on Paper IV*, 64. This arises also in point 5 of the summary-

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 64.

does not by no means signify a purely symbolical relation.”¹¹⁰ In this statement Calvin’s teaching is recognized and interpreted as reminder for the importance of the epiclesis and it can help to clarify the role of the Holy Spirit in the in the Eucharistic celebration.

The further parts do not treat the main issues though they point to further convergence by raising the possibility that the whole controversy originates in certain Augustinian dualistic conceptions and by underlining the need to examine doctrines in connection with praxis.

The awareness of the need for a new terminology, which was present all along the discussions, leads in the close of the fourth discussion to the prospect that representatives of different traditions speak of the same essential faith on Eucharist in different ways.¹¹¹

The last summary is the *Analysis of General Discussions*, which reports the primary issues which have emerged from all sessions. We can read mostly about themes in it, but there is one remark which is the missing link in our study “Common agreement in rejecting a physicalist approach to the real presence and to change in elements.”¹¹² This comes after the reflection on the rediscovering of the importance of the epiclesis.

We can conclude that the decisive factors that we have identified in the comparison of the papers of Quinn and of Torrance, i.e. the Roman Catholic ‘physicalist’ and ‘objectifying’ approach and the identification of the sign and the thing, were excluded during the dialogue by the description of the Eucharist as event; by the interpersonalist reinterpretation of the ‘presence’; by avoiding both the separation and identification of the sign and the sign signified; by the recognition of Calvin’s teaching and the emphasis on the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit; by the rejection of the physicalist approach to the real presence and to change in elements.

We have seen that the Roman Catholic conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice is based on the doctrine of transubstantiation. Therefore by the agreement on the real presence the agreement on the Eucharistic sacrifice becomes possible. I shall treat this topic in the third chapter of my thesis.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 64.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, 65.

¹¹² Torrance, Barth, Quinn and Hoffmann, *Analysis of General Discussions*, 66.

It is worth to mention that the (re)interpretation of the Reformed theology by Torrance and of the common theological heritage by the participants from both sides have an important effect to the entire dialogue, without which the lines of agreement would not have been possible.

2.3 From the Papers and the Discussions to the Final Report

Finally let us see what ideas of the discussions became the part of the final report. The final report starts with the reflection to the biblical sources. It uses mostly the statements of the first, second and third discussions, pointing out the tokens of correct interpretation of the biblical texts, which can help ‘to mitigate the confessional quarrels.’¹¹³

The title of the second part of the final report is *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist*. First it treats the relation of Christ, the Church, the Eucharist and the World. The emphasis concerning the role of the Church in ‘God’s economy of salvation’ is on the fact that Christ sends the Church in fellowship with him into the World rather than on the Church is a ‘mediatrix of salvation in Christ’.¹¹⁴ “The whole saving work of God has its basis, centre and goal in the person of the glorified Christ.”¹¹⁵

The following at chapter seem to follow Torrance’s paper but without the same depth: Christ shared our spatial and temporal existence. In solidarity with him, we live in the reality which he opened up to us. In him person and work can not be separated. He is the mediator and the mediation. His once-for-all self-offering is continued by him for ever in the presence of the Father in virtue of his resurrection. In the Eucharist Christ himself is present. The Church through, with and in him offers itself to the Father.¹¹⁶

The next chapter treats the topic, in which the participants reached the consensus, *The presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper*. The emphasis is on the

¹¹³ Compare Barth and Hoffmann, *Summary of Discussions on Paper I*, 57-58; Locher and Ernst, *Summary of Discussions on Paper II*, 61; Aubert and Willis, *Summary of Discussions on Paper III*, 61. with Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 450.

¹¹⁴ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 451. Compare with Lescrauwaet, *Op. Cit.*, 51-53. See also Heron, *Op. Cit.*, 146.

¹¹⁵ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 451. See also Barth and Hoffmann, *Summary of Discussions on Paper I*, 58.

¹¹⁶ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 451-452. Compare with Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 20-42.

epiclesis and the inexplicable work of the Holy Spirit referring to the birth and resurrection of Christ as examples.¹¹⁷ “In the Eucharist Christ communicates himself to us in the whole reality of his divinity and humanity – body, mind and will, and at the same time he remains the Son who is in the Father as the Father is in him. ... The specific mode of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist is thus to be interpreted as the presence of the Son who is both consubstantial with us in our humanity and bodily existence while being consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.”¹¹⁸ Here we can see a reflection on the presence from the doctrine of Incarnation and of Trinity, but there is no real exposition about the mode of presence. After the reflection on the ‘extra Calvinisticum’, which is the same as in the fourth discussion (omitting the paragraph in which Calvin’s teaching is recognized)¹¹⁹, we can read an obscured reference to the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist.¹²⁰

The further part of the final report treats themes not closely related to the separating issues, one of them however can be important in the further convergence. The participants are aware of the existence of particular dogmatic and liturgical formulae whose original task was to safeguard the faith against misinterpretation, but, which can become sources of misunderstanding, ‘especially in the ecumenical situation’.¹²¹

Conclusion

In this chapter of my thesis I have dealt with the fourth session of the Reformed - Roman Catholic conversation *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* on the Eucharist. I have summarized its background documents and highlighted the main points of the discussion which led to the agreement on Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. I have pointed out that the agreement at the meeting was wider than it is reflected in the final report. One important issue remained untreated, i.e. the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist, where the convergence of the churches seems to be possible. I will treat this topic in the third chapter of my thesis.

¹¹⁷ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 29; Bronkhorst and Moeller, *Summary of Discussions on Paper IV*, 64.

¹¹⁸ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 455.

¹¹⁹ Bronkhorst and Moeller, *Summary of Discussions on Paper IV*, 64.

¹²⁰ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 454.

¹²¹ Meyer and Vischer, *Op. Cit.*, 455.

Chapter Three
Thomas F. Torrance and
the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue on the Eucharist

The last chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the theology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance on the Eucharist and its contribution to the Catholic-Reformed dialogue. We have seen in the second chapter that his ideas had some influence on that dialogue. We can assume that the common clarification of the meaning of the Eucharist and thus the mutual understanding and convergence about it may gain new impetus if his thought is more fully taken into consideration.

In order to understand Torrance's theology of the Eucharist, I will start by showing how Torrance conceives the history of theology and what he regards as the right way further for the theology in our time as well as what basis there can be for further theological 'development.' Then I will show his attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church: how he conceives the ecumenical dialogue in general and how he imagines the Reformed–Roman Catholic conversation in particular; how he developed the Reformed teaching on Eucharist and finally how he could still contribute to the Reformed–Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharist.

3.1 Torrance on the Roman Catholic Church and ecumenical dialogue

3.1.1 Dualism and Theology

Let us start with the history of theology according to Torrance by highlighting some ideas from his book *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* that concern our theme.¹²²

Torrance states that in the beginning of Christianity the Gospel was proclaimed in a world entrenched with dualist thought. Dualism penetrated Christian theology through Gnostic sects and the Arian movement as they separated the realm

¹²² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980.

of the uncreated and the divine, from the realm the creaturely and the human.¹²³ Classical Christianity, however, insisted on the idea that this world of ours is intersected by the divine world in the *parousia* of Jesus Christ who in his own being belongs both to the eternal world of divine reality and to the historical world of contingent realities. The linchpin of this theology as it was formulated in the great ecumenical creed of all Christendom at Nicaea and Constantinople is the so called *homoousion*.¹²⁴ Thus Christianity reconstructed the dualist foundation of ancient Greek and Roman culture in philosophy, science, and religion.¹²⁵

However all the way through the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries when the theological reconstruction was going on, dualism operated below the surface corroding the new ideas and then broke out into the open and was given paradigmatic status through the blending of Christian theology with Neoplatonic philosophy and Ptolemaic cosmology by St. Augustine.¹²⁶

We have seen in the first chapter that the both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic sacramental theologies have been influenced significantly by St. Augustine, which means that dualism has also penetrated them. They struggled with the Neoplatonic distinction between *mundus intelligibilis* and *mundus sensibilis* in their teaching on the Eucharist and applied inadequate attempts to cope with the problems which derived from that. The characteristic Catholic and Protestant approaches to the Eucharist stem from the same source, a damaged understanding of the relation of God to the world.¹²⁷

This leads Torrance to call for a recovery of the principles which have been formulated in early Christianity.¹²⁸ As a matter of fact this is what he attempted in his Eucharistic doctrine. His views on the Eucharist are rooted in his interpretation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is presented in his book *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*.¹²⁹ Within the limits of this thesis we can only outline its basic ideas. In the heart of the Creed there is the doctrine of *homoousion*, i.e. the oneness in being and act of the Father and the Son

¹²³ *ibid.*, 37-38.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 39-40.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, 61.

¹²⁷ Cf. Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 30-36.

¹²⁸ Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*, 73-74, 126-127.

¹²⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.

(and the Holy Spirit).¹³⁰ It expresses that between God and the world there is a dynamic relationship. Through the incarnated Son we have objectively grounded direct knowledge of God;¹³¹ in him God gives Godself to the humanity and in him “it is none other than God himself who is savingly and creatively at work for us and our salvation.”¹³² I will treat later its significance for Torrance’s Eucharistic theology.

3.1.2 On the Roman Catholic Church

Torrance’s attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church is characterized by sharp critique and brotherly responsibility. Concerning his critique he argues that Rome got involved in Christological heresies in the formulation of its doctrines; he also calls into question its apostolicity due to the declaration of the physical assumption of Mary.¹³³

Two examples help us understand Torrance’s first critique. Regarding the conception of grace he asserts that according to Catholic theology grace causes the deification of the person, which means “the transubstantiation of human nature into the divine” thus involving Monophysite error in the doctrine.¹³⁴ In this case there is only analogical relation between doctrine and Christology. That is to say it is not the relation of the two natures of Christ which suffers alteration but a created reality in its nature by becoming divine. It can be regarded only indirectly as Christological error unlike in the case of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Torrance by picking up the interpretation of Calvin states that it involves Docetic and Eutychian heresy because such a property (invisibleness) is attributed to the humanity of Christ which is contradictory to its nature.¹³⁵

This distinction must be drawn in order to understand precisely the critique of Torrance, though in both cases the problem is the same. The Christological principles are not applied consequently in the formulation of doctrines.

According to him in order to enter into real discussion it is necessary to start at the Christological level, i.e. to examine the history of the doctrine of Christ, and

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, 48, 125, 130.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, 51, 53.

¹³² *ibid.*, 138.

¹³³ Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol.1, London: Lutterworth Press, 1959, 148-149, 162.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 148.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 166.

particularly the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, in order to establish the basis for investigation of further doctrinal differences.¹³⁶ However at this point a new obstacle rises which originates from the Roman Catholic view of tradition. The Roman Catholic Church claims ultimate authority over Christian tradition and identifies the divine truth with its own subjectivity. This is made clear in the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope and its application to the doctrine of the physical assumption of Mary, which has no apostolic legitimation. Therefore Torrance queries the apostolicity of the Roman Catholic Church.¹³⁷

In spite of his critical approach Torrance appears to follow Edmund Schlink, who was the leader of a group of Protestant theologians in the time of the National-Socialist régime in Germany, whose purpose was to contribute to the Roman Catholic discussion on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.¹³⁸ In the same way, Torrance, with brotherly responsibility, endeavors to point out the errors of the Roman Catholic theology in order to be able to reach back to the Apostolic and Early Church tradition. This is, in his view, the main significance of the ecumenical conversations: they happen through “constructive battles” wherein the participants are enriched and corrected in their faith and life.¹³⁹

He holds that there are theologians in the Roman Catholic Church who has already returned to the biblical and apostolic foundation and those who are “deeply hurt and abashed” by the development taking place in the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴⁰ He also envisages the possibility of a “great prophetic outburst” when the fixed dogmatic institutions will be replaced by biblical tradition within the church.¹⁴¹

In spite of these even the possibility of the dialogue becomes questionable according to Torrance until Rome does not find its way back to the Apostolic tradition and become capable of historical-scientific approach. Dialogue should then begin by addressing the fundamental questions concerning Christology. It is noteworthy that he regards “a great movement of reform going on in the Roman Church” in connection with the revival of the biblical theology as an encouraging sign.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, 151-152.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, 155.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 155-156.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 200.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 162.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 155.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 164.

Torrance's new approach pointing out to Christology as the starting point could reinvigorate the dialogue. However his fear that the Roman Catholic Church is not capable of dialogue because it is unable to transcend itself has been confirmed in his exchange of letters with James Quinn who rejected all of his critical remarks even those related to the development of Roman Catholic biblical theology.¹⁴³

3.1.3 On dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church

For Torrance the Ecumenical Movement means that churches are ready to correct their teaching by the critique of other members. In dialogue, Christian theology in its soundness can be restored as traditions realize that they carry distortions. In this process different doctrines correct each other.¹⁴⁴ According to him the Christological correction of Ecclesiology and the Eschatological correction of both are the most necessary.¹⁴⁵

The Christological correction has already taken place in the Reformed Church directed not only to the doctrine of the Church but of the sacraments as well. The Roman Catholic Church however lacks this correction. On the other hand he states "if the doctrine of Christ and the Church have themselves suffered from arrested development in the Reformed Churches that is undoubtedly due to the failure to think eschatology into the whole."¹⁴⁶

In the years following Vatican II, he imagined the dialogue with Rome as one which would take a "seminar form" that is "a group of theologians 'work together on an agreed set of texts, preferably from the Greek Fathers outside the immediate traditions of Roman and Reformed Churches.'"¹⁴⁷ Inasmuch this type of dialogue would be realized it would be able to correct both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic theology as well as, which seems more important according to Torrance, the Roman theologians would be able to hear voices other than their own outside their "immediate tradition."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁷ Torrance quoted by Odair Pedroso Mateus in Odair Pedroso Mateus, *Beyond Confessionalism: Essays on the Practice of Reformed Ecumenicity*, São Paulo: Emblema, 2010, 81.

¹⁴⁸ Torrance states that the Roman theologians "are so turned in upon themselves that they are unable really to listen to others." in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, vol. 2, 146.

The dialogue however did not take this shape and its purpose was instead to get involved in a “constructive battle,” “to locate the present convergences, continuing tensions, and open questions.”¹⁴⁹ Therefore Torrance could fight such a battle only alone that is to correct the Reformed theology and to present it to the dialogue meeting in a well-developed form. This process is what we will outline in the following pages.

3.1.4 The correction of Reformed theology

The correction of the Reformed theology does not mean that Torrance would refuse the principles which the Reformers laid down, but rather to strengthen the Christological framework of the doctrine of the Eucharist and highlight its Eschatological implications. We can see the former in his interpretation of the Reformed Eucharistic teaching.¹⁵⁰

According to Torrance in the time of Reformation the Mass as a timeless rite, the “counterpart in time, ..., of a timeless reality”¹⁵¹, was replaced by “the historical Supper” which is grounded on the actions of the historical Jesus. Its eschatological aspect has been, however, preserved by insisting on the presence of the living Christ in whom the new age has overtaken us. In the Supper the coming Kingdom of God becomes sacramentally unveiled.¹⁵² Thus the Reformed theology is able to express the right mode of *sacramental relation* between Christ and us which has to reflect and image the mode of hypostatic union in Christ.¹⁵³ This relation is dynamic and because it is brought about by the Holy Spirit, it is incomprehensible to us. The only way to approach it is to conceive it after the pattern of the hypostatic union.¹⁵⁴

Torrance states that the *effect* of our communion with Christ has two “moments”. The first is that we receive “His Gift of Himself in all that He has done on our behalf.”¹⁵⁵ The second is that we participate “in the whole of His obedient Self-oblation to the Father” that is we “lift up our hearts in praise and thanksgiving

¹⁴⁹ Meyer and Visher, *Op. Cit.*, 436.

¹⁵⁰ I will treat his interpretation using his paper *Toward a Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* in Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2, London: Lutterworth Press, 1959, 133-153. It was prepared for the Creed Association of the Church of Scotland.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, 139.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 139.

¹⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, 139-140.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 142.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 147.

..., in which we cling to the royal intercessions of the ascended Lord.”¹⁵⁶ It is worth to note that at this stage Torrance’s train of thought is in an intermediary level. He already transcended Calvin’s conception of *sursum corda* but does not yet express the “double movement,” i.e. God-humanward and human-Godward, within the Eucharist as clearly as he will do in his paper *The Paschal Mystery*.¹⁵⁷

The same is true for Eucharistic character of the Lord’s Supper. Torrance by basing his argument mainly on the thought of Calvin contrasts the notion of “propitiatory sacrifice” and the “eucharistic sacrifice” with respect to the Lord’s Supper. The former had been offered by Christ once and for all and we can offer to God only praise and thanksgiving accompanied by charity responding to that sacrifice.¹⁵⁸ Torrance goes on to state that Calvin, by emphasizing the role of Christ as the one Priest and excluding the Roman conception of propitiatory sacrifice, can even speak about “offering Christ to the Father and setting Him before the Father’s Face” however he takes the edge off this citation asserting that it means that “we have place in Christ’s Self-consecration on our behalf and Self-presentation before the Face of the Father in Heaven.”¹⁵⁹ It is far from his complex concept of the Eucharistic sacrifice as it appears in his later study.¹⁶⁰

Now let us consider how Torrance looks upon the Eschatological implication of the Eucharist. Its importance is reflected in that according to Torrance the differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation in the Eucharistic teaching narrowed down considerably by the return of the Roman theologians to “a deeper understanding of the sacramental and eschatological significance of the Eucharist.”¹⁶¹ These are the topics which he unfolds in his paper *Eschatology and the Eucharist*.¹⁶²

The Eucharist is an eschatological event. In it the *parousia* of the Lord takes place and in him the breaking into the history of the Kingdom of God as well as the mystery of the union between Christ and the Church becomes unveiled however none

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 147.

¹⁵⁷ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 42.

¹⁵⁸ Torrance, *Towards a Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper*, 149.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 150.

¹⁶⁰ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 22, 37.

¹⁶¹ Torrance, *Eschatology*, 154.

¹⁶² It was published in Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2, London: Lutterworth Press, 1959, 154-202. This paper was prepared for the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, and published also in Donald M. Baillie and John Marsh (eds.), *Intercommunion*, London S.C.M. Press, 1952, 303-350.

of them in their fullness as in the Second Advent.¹⁶³ It has more implications two of which we shall treat, the latter more fully in order to be able to compare with the later views of Torrance.

In the Eucharist the Church gets under the impact of the *eschaton*, participates in its new being and confronts with it. This confrontation reveals the contradiction between its form and order and the form and order of Kingdom of God as well as that the Church is also an earthly institution. Therefore the Church receives judgment upon its forms which does not belong to its *esse* but to this passing world.¹⁶⁴ In fact it is a sharp critique against the Roman Catholic Church. It generated heavy debate between Torrance and James Quinn on the pages of *The Scotsman*.¹⁶⁵

Torrance conceives the relation between the action of Christ and the Church in the sacraments on the basis of the Chalcedonian formula with the proviso that the latter is subordinated to the former. The *actio* of Christ and the *re-actio* of the Church relate to one another as Christ's two natures.¹⁶⁶

They may not be identified with or separate from each other however they are united "in the *koinonia* of the eternal Spirit, ..., through whom we are given participate in that oblation made on our behalf."¹⁶⁷ This participation is eschatological which means that the Eucharistic rite will be displaced by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Nevertheless this future Supper interpenetrates the present one and the *re-actio* of the Church is **displaced** by the *actio* of Christ (eschatological substitution) who is the "true Celebrant at the holy table."¹⁶⁸

The idea of subordination and displacement of the Church's action has an important role in Torrance's view on the Eucharistic sacrifice. The bearing of the divine judgment which is the essence of the deed of Christ's atonement can not be prolonged or repeated in a ceremonial cultus. "It can only be proclaimed and celebrated."¹⁶⁹ The Eucharistic sacrifice as a sign points to the divine action and is subordinated to that. We are given to participate in Christ's sacrifice but "in such a way, ..., that He removes Himself to a holy distance from us."¹⁷⁰ Therefore we can

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 170-171.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 174-175.

¹⁶⁵ The exchange of letter has been collected by Torrance and published in the first volume of his book *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 164-189.

¹⁶⁶ Torrance, *Eschatology*, 163.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 178.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 178.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 181.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 182.

conceive the Eucharistic sacrifice only in that way that we offer ourselves and all that we have to the Father and lay it on the altar who is Christ however ultimately our offering will be displaced by of Christ.¹⁷¹ This view is opposed quite clear to the Roman Catholic teaching involving identity between the sacramental sings with the glorified Body of Christ and between the action of the Church and the action of Christ. Behind these Torrance suspects a Pelagian doctrine of the atonement.¹⁷²

By the subordination and substitution Torrance appears to defend the Reformed principles concerning the Eucharistic sacrifice however doing so he fails to apply consequently the Chalcedonian pattern. In *The Paschal Mystery*, however, he does not emphasize so strongly these features of the relation between the action of Christ and the Church in the Eucharist but the unity of them.¹⁷³ That is, Torrance's correction of the Reformed theology does not stop at this point but by the consequent application of the Christological principles proceeds and as we shall see reaches that point where the difference between the Roman Catholic and Reformed Eucharistic teaching further narrows down.

3.2 Torrance's contribution to the Reformed–Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharist

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, Torrance intends to exclude the dualistic implications from theology by applying to it the Christology of the Early Church. According to him both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches struggle with the dualism in their Eucharistic teaching. In his contribution to the Reformed-Catholic dialogue session on the Eucharist, he presents the corrected doctrine of the real presence and the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is one of the Ecumenical significances of his paper. I shall treat it in detail later. Let us start by looking at Torrance's main ideas in order to understand his study in whole.

According to Torrance the Eucharist points beyond itself to the paschal mystery of Christ. That is to say its substance consists in the vicarious humanity of Christ and his mediatorship between God and humanity.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, 183.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 183-184.

¹⁷³ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 21,23.

He states the following about the mediatorship of Christ: The Son of God in his incarnation assumed and sanctified all that is ours in order to present us in and with himself to the Father. Thus Christ as the Mediator between God and humanity received the things of God for us and receiving what is ours offered it in himself to God; he acted as our High Priest in the vicarious receiving and in vicarious offering.¹⁷⁵ Here two activities become evident in the mediatorship of Christ, one from the Father towards humanity and the other from humanity towards the Father.¹⁷⁶

In Torrance's view, however, Christ's redemptive mediation did not stop in the end of his earthly life. After his ascension it continues in his heavenly priestly ministry, worshiping God and making intercession for us before the Father.¹⁷⁷ Thus his redemptive agency is 'prolonged' and we can not regard it as an event occurred in the past but as his living activity taking place constantly for our salvation.

Torrance, following Cyril of Alexandria and Athanasius, emphasizes the importance of the role of Christ's praying and worshiping in his vicarious human life and thus in the saving economy. In becoming man Christ worshiped as man, as one of us in his whole life on earth and after ascension in the heavenly sanctuary. He does not only worshipped God as one of us but vicariously on our behalf, worshiping 'in spirit and truth', i.e. in a worthy manner. He is the praying and worshiping High Priest in our place and on our behalf, "in union with whom we may approach the Father and be accepted by him as his dear children."¹⁷⁸ Concerning the Eucharist the heavenly worship of the incarnated Son toward the Father has a great emphasis. These ideas will be important in the definition of the meaning of our Eucharistic celebration.

Turning back to the twofold activity of Christ as Mediator, it is described by Torrance on the one hand as the activity of God as God towards humanity and on the other hand as the activity of God as human towards Godself. The former is the self-giving of God to us through the incarnation of his Son and the latter is the self-offering of Jesus Christ through his ascension to the Father. We participate in both. In the Eucharist, however, the latter aspect is more prominent.¹⁷⁹

The first aspect constitutes the basis for the understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. On the basis of the inherent oneness of the Giver and the

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 22, 27.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 27. It was expressed in the prayers of the first centuries offered *through* the Son to the Father.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 27-28.

Gift, what we receive in the Eucharist is not something from Christ, e.g. created grace, his body and blood, etc., but the whole Christ and through him God himself.¹⁸⁰ There does not seem to be any difference between the Eucharistic *parousia* and the *parousia* of God through the incarnated Son in the earthly life of Jesus Christ except in one aspect, i.e. that the *parousia* in the Eucharist takes place in the Holy Spirit who is also one in being and in activity with the Father (and with the Son) thus his presence in the Eucharist means the presence of God himself. That is to say that in the Eucharistic celebration we have union with Christ in the Spirit, “such as he has with the Father eternally in the same Spirit ... thus the real presence of him who is both Giver and Gift in the Eucharist is a real presence of the most exalted kind, one grounded in the real presence of God to himself.”¹⁸¹

Here we can see that Torrance strengthened the Reformed conception of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist by asserting that “through the Spirit” means no less than a similar bond which takes place between the persons of the Trinity.¹⁸²

The second aspect, i.e. the self-offering of Christ to the Father, or in other words the activity of God as human towards godself, lays the foundation for how we conceive of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The right approach ensues from the inherent oneness of the Offerer and the Offering as in the case of the Eucharistic presence of God in the Eucharist. The identification of the Offerer and the Offering means that what the incarnate Son offers to the Father on our behalf is his human life in unity with his divine life, his self-offering to the Father.¹⁸³ In the Eucharistic celebration we, united to Christ through the Spirit, participate in this self-offering to the Father and thus appear with him and in him and through him before God in worship with the sacrifice of our Mediator and High Priest.¹⁸⁴

We can see that in both cases the agency of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. Through the Holy Spirit we participate of the whole paschal mystery of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who is in charge of the actualization of the redemption in our life. Through him or rather in him we partake both of the self-giving of God concerning

¹⁸⁰ Even the notion of *grace* can be proved improper in this context if we understand it as a created intermediary between God and man.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 30, 37.

¹⁸² Elsewhere he states that „No union, save that of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, could be closer, without passing into absolute identity, than that between Christ and His Church as enacted in the Holy Eucharist.” in Torrance, *Eschatology*, 188-189.

¹⁸³ Here the emphasis is on the human nature of Christ however the universal range of Christ historical self-offering is based on the doctrine of *homoousion*.

¹⁸⁴ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 38.

the Eucharistic *parousia* and of the self-offering of Christ regarding the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Finally let us turn to definition of Eucharistic worship according to Torrance on the basis of the thoughts presented above. The Eucharistic celebration as a human act is prayer, thanksgiving and worship. However, the human acts and the acts of God are inseparable. Concerning the relation of the human and the divine acts the human can not be described as an answer to the acts of God.¹⁸⁵ In worship “through the Spirit we are given to share in the vicarious life, faith, prayer, worship, thanksgiving, and self-offering of Jesus Christ to the Father.”¹⁸⁶ As we are united with Christ when we pray, it is Christ who glorifies the Father. On the other way round, in Eucharistic worship there takes place a living presentation of Christ to the Father.¹⁸⁷ The Eucharistic celebration is our participation in the vicarious obedient life, self-offering and heavenly worship of Christ toward the Father through the Spirit, i.e. it is participation through the Spirit in the whole vicarious life, earthly and heavenly, of Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁸

First, it is worth to note that here Torrance does not emphasize the distinction between human and divine act in the Eucharist in order to avoid their identification as he did previously, but he stresses the unity of them. His teaching developed definitely. By the consequent application of the sacramental union which, according to Torrance, is to be conceived on the analogy of the hypostatic union, he is able to speak of the human and divine act without any separation focusing on their togetherness.

The main ecumenical significance of Torrance’s Eucharistic theology derives from this development whereby the Reformed–Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharistic sacrifice becomes possible.

At the fourth session of the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* the participants avoided to treat the topic of the Eucharistic sacrifice.¹⁸⁹ However, if we compare the ideas of James Quinn and Torrance, some interesting similarities can be observed.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 22,23, 39.

¹⁸⁹ Aubert Willis, *Summary of Discussions on Paper III*, 61.

According to Quinn the Eucharistic sacrifice is not the repetition of the one sacrifice of Christ.¹⁹⁰ Torrance obviously agrees with this because the one of the Reformers' main critique against Rome was that the priests repeated the sacrifice of Christ at the Mass.¹⁹¹

In Quinn's view Christ's redemptive work did not end with his death.¹⁹² Torrance states the same.¹⁹³

Quinn asserts that both the priest and the victim in the Eucharist is the "whole Christ," as Torrance does but he uses the terms Offerer and Offering.¹⁹⁴

Quinn insists that the "eucharistic sacrifice is more than a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. ... we really enter into his (Christ's) sacrificial act of self-giving."¹⁹⁵ Torrance writes that the Eucharist "must to be understood as act of prayer, thanksgiving and worship, ..., but as act in which through the Spirit we are given to share in the vicarious life, faith, prayer, worship, thanksgiving, and self-offering of Jesus Christ to the Father."¹⁹⁶

On this basis, we can conclude that there is another topic concerning the Eucharist, beyond the real presence of Christ, on which agreement or at least the reduction of differences, is possible.

Conclusion

In this chapter of my thesis I have treated the theology of Thomas F. Torrance and some aspects of his contribution to the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue. I have pointed out that in his view the crucial task of the theology today is to get rid of the dualistic thoughts which penetrated into it and he calls for a recovery of the principles which have been formulated in the early Christianity.

I have shown that by his critique against the Roman Catholic Church he intends to call the attention for the errors of its doctrines which need Christological correction. He hoped that this correction will take place in the dialogue however it did not take that shape what he proposed and which would facilitate the mutual

¹⁹⁰ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

¹⁹¹ Zwingli, *Commentary*, 234-235; Calvin, *Institutes*, 937- 938,

¹⁹² Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

¹⁹³ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 22.

¹⁹⁴ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 18; Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 37-38.

¹⁹⁵ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 17-18.

¹⁹⁶ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 22.

correction. Its purpose was rather to clarify the doctrinal divergences and convergences.

Then I outlined how his Eucharistic theology developed by the Christological and Eschatological correction of the Reformers' teachings and became capable to facilitate the dialogue between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches on the Eucharist. I have concluded that on the basis of his thoughts the agreement or at least the reduction of differences concerning the doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice seems to be possible.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of my thesis I have summarized the early Reformed theology on the Eucharist on the basis of the teaching of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. At first sight there seems to be a wide gap between their perceptions of the Eucharist because of Zwingli's accent on the Eucharist as remembrance. I pointed out that he believes in the omnipresence of Christ therefore we can not conclude that in his view Christ is not present in the Eucharist. On the contrary, Christ is present according to his divine nature. Our communion with Christ is also one of his main concerns. He just does not conceive of the Lord's Supper as a special event of Christ's presence and our communion with him. His openness to the view that we eat Christ's flesh "quite apart from external perception" shows that the agreement would be possible between Calvin and Zwingli.¹⁹⁷

Concerning the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist they have similar views. Both of them are against the Roman Catholic conception of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Calvin can accept only one kind of sacrifice which involves charity and thanksgiving. The interpretation of the Lord's Supper as thanksgiving is important in the teaching of Zwingli as well. I have noticed that at this point the difference between the Reformed and Roman Catholic theology seems to be more significant than in the case of Christ's Eucharistic presence because while in the latter case the question is the mode of presence in the former case the Reformers refuse to deal with the question as to how the offering of Christ and our offering (if we can offer anything) in the Eucharist relate to one another.

In the second chapter of my thesis I outlined the main concerns and achievements of the fourth session of Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* held between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in 1977. During that meeting the main attention was paid to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the participants agreed on the real presence. I have shown that the agreement was wider than it was reflected in the final report. I have come to this conclusion because in the final text there is no indication of the topics on which the delegates agreed and on the basis of which the consensus

¹⁹⁷ Zwingli, *On the Lord's Supper*, 196.

could be reached, e.g. agreement “in rejecting the physicalist approach to the real presence and to the change of elements.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore the final report is not explicit enough and it might lead to confusion.

The other issue on which I have focused in the second chapter is the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. James Quinn and Thomas F. Torrance formulated their teaching on this topic in a very similar way. While Quinn writes that “we really enter into his (Christ’s) sacrificial act of self-giving,”¹⁹⁹ Torrance asserts that in the Eucharist the Godward aspect is prominent, that is “our participation through the Spirit in the self-consecration and self-offering of the whole Christ, ..., to the Father ...”²⁰⁰ This aspect of the Eucharist was not treated during the meeting even though the reduction of the difference between the churches in this field seems to be possible. I have postponed the detailed treatment of this topic to the third chapter.

In the last chapter I have treated the contribution of Thomas F. Torrance to the Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharist. First I have outlined how he interprets the history of theology. His main concern is the problem of dualism in the theology which once already resolved in the first centuries therefore Torrance calls for a recovery of the principles of the early Christianity. I have pointed out that his Eucharistic theology is based on those principles.

Then I have dealt with his attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church and what is his view about the Reformed-Catholic dialogue. According to Torrance the Roman Catholic doctrines need Christological correction. He hoped that this correction would take place in the dialogue; however it did not take the shape that he proposed and which would facilitate the mutual correction.

Finally I have summarized how Torrance developed the Reformed Eucharistic teaching and facilitated the dialogue. I have concluded that his view on the Eucharistic sacrifice entails the possibility of agreement on this aspect of the Eucharist between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches. This suggests that future dialogue on this matter between Catholics and Reformed could benefit more from Torrance’s contribution than what the first phase of the dialogue indicates.

¹⁹⁸ Torrance, Barth, Quinn and Hoffmann, *Analysis of General Discussions*, 66.

¹⁹⁹ Quinn, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

²⁰⁰ Torrance, *The Paschal Mystery*, 27.

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