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Do This, in Memory of Me!

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Do This, In Memory of Me!

By

Joseph WeiWei Qui-Lin Zhang

A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Seminary of Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Theological Studies, MTS.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

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This paper was written under the direction of Dr. Martin Connell, PhD

Dr. Martin Connell, PhD

Do This, In Memory of Me!

Description:

In order to better understand the meaning of the Eucharist, in this paper I describe three theologians' views about the Eucharist. Their views represent three denominations of the Church. They are: Martin Luther (Lutheran), Alexander Schmemmann (Orthodox), and Thomas Merton (Roman Catholic). I compare their views from three aspects: The meaning of the presence of Jesus Christ in bread and wine in the Eucharist, the qualification of receiving communion, and the entire meaning of the Eucharist.

This paper may be duplicated.

Wei Wei Qui-lin Zhang

May 25, 2017

Do This, In Memory of Me!

Can a Protestant receive Communion in a Catholic mass? What is the meaning of “Amen” when a recipient receives the Eucharist? What are the different perspectives of the Eucharist between the Lutheran, Orthodox Church, and Catholic Church? These questions lead us to think about a very important thing---Eucharist which is the center and most important Liturgy of the Christian religion. In this paper; I will discuss three differences between the Lutheran, the Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church. First, how each tradition understands the presence of Jesus Christ is in bread and wine in the Eucharist; second, who can receive the Eucharist and finally some considerations of the overall meaning of the Eucharist. I will quote the views of Martin Luther (Lutheran), Alexander Schmemmann (Orthodox Church) and Thomas Merton (Roman Catholic Church) .

First of all, how does the real presence appear in the Eucharist? Luther thought that while the Eucharist is real presence¹ the bread and wine aren't changed as they are in the “Transubstantiation.”² Luther believed that the meaning of the real presence of Jesus Christ is homogeneity, and that the essence of the bread and the wine are not changed in the Eucharist. In other words, Jesus Christ is present in the bread and the wine and it can be compared to a person living in a house because, the bread and the wine are not changed in the Eucharist, under the form of the substance of the bread and the wine, Jesus Christ is present, we cannot use the Transubstantiation to assume what is happened in the Eucharist. Because this word “Transubstantiation” comes from St. Thomas Aquinas, he used the

¹. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. P130-131

². Which is the doctrine of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. (I will explain in next chapter)

philosophical term to explain the Eucharist, neither the evidence of the Bible or the usage of the fathers, so it hasn't authority. This is Luther's argument of the Eucharist. There were two stages in his viewpoint of the Eucharist. In the first stage, Luther stressed that in order to receive grace from the Eucharist one must have faith. His opinion is that the faith causes grace in the Eucharist. In the second stage, Luther stressed the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist because he was against the understanding of the Eucharist taken by Zwingli. Zwingli argued that the Eucharist is just the memory of Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is already seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. As a result Christ cannot really be present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. How did Luther make this decision about the Eucharist? The answer is from the Holy Bible, understanding of the Holy fathers and from his own knowledge and understanding. When we consider an understanding of the Eucharist, we must find the sources from the Holy Bible, but, as we know the Eucharist is not directly mentioned in the Old Testament. The New Testament is the first and basic origin. "The Scriptures must be the final authority for our acceptance or non-acceptance of this or that understanding of the Sacrament. Our final doctrine on the Lord's Supper will be taken from and based on them."³

Luther didn't think that the John 6 is the basic doctrine of the Eucharist, because Jesus Christ talked about his spiritual food in Jn6, but he did not talk about his body and blood in the Eucharist. This is the reason that Luther did not think John 6 is the firsthand source of Eucharist. "In the first place the sixth chapter of John must be entirely excluded from this discussion, since it does not refer to the sacrament in a single syllable. Not only

³ Sasse, Hermann. 1959. *This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House.P3

because the sacrament was not yet instituted, but even more because the passage itself and the sentences following plainly show, as I have already stated, that Christ is speaking of faith in the incarnate Word. For he says, "My words are spirit and life,"⁴ which shows that he was speaking of a spiritual eating"⁵. Luther believed that two sources of the New Testament are directly teach about the Eucharist: the Gospel narratives of the Lord`s Supper and Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. Martin Luther`s opinion of the Eucharist came from these texts which he thought were more important than others. "Now there are two passages that do bear very clearly upon this matter: the Gospel narratives of Lord`s supper and Paul in 1Cor 11,"⁶ and Luther claimed that the doctrine of Transubstantiation (the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that the essence of bread and wine are changed, but the appearance of the bread and the wine aren`t changed when they become the body and the blood of Jesus Christ) is not the traditional understanding of the Catholic Church; and Luther believed that this word-- transubstantiation was created by the Catholic Church. "The church kept the true faith for more than twelve hundred years, during which time the holy fathers never, at any time or place, mentioned this transubstantiation (a monstrous word and a monstrous idea), until the pseudo philosophy of Aristotle began to make its inroads into the church in these three hundred years."⁷ Furthermore, Luther explained the meaning of the Gospel "That the pronoun "this," in both Greek and Latin, refer to body, that in both of these language the two words, this and body, are of the same gender. In Hebrew, however, which has no neuter gender, this refers to bread, so that is would be proper to say *Hic (bread) Est corpus*

⁴ John 6: 63

⁵ Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.p133

⁶ Ibid.: p134.

⁷ Ibid.: p147.

meum. Actually, the idiom of the language and common sense both prove that the subject pronoun (this) obviously points to the bread and not to the body, when he says: *hic Est corpus meum, das ist meyn leyp*, that is, this very bread here (*iste panis*) is my body.”⁸

Luther believed that the authorities of the Catholic Church didn't understand the meaning of this message. They were not willing to take the words of Scripture at face value. So, they created new word “transubstantiation.”

On the Orthodox side of the Church, Schmemmann, thought that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist. This is the definition of communion for the Orthodox and the materials (bread and wine) were changed in the Eucharist by Holy Spirit. This transformation is beyond the understanding of human beings. “It is the Holy Spirit who manifests the bread as the body and the wine as the blood of Christ. The Orthodox Church has always insisted that transformation (*metabole*) of the Eucharistic elements is performed by the epiclesis—the invocation of the Holy Spirit—and not by the words of institution.”⁹ For Schmemmann It is obvious that the Holy Spirit makes the transformation, which means that the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. “How is this possible? How does this happen? And what exactly does happen in this transformation? And when exactly? And what is the cause? No answer seems to be satisfactory. Symbol? But what is a symbol? Substance or accidents?”¹⁰ The answer is faith, the sacrament is not magic. The Eucharist is a “mystery of faith,” and the sacrament is celebrated in the Liturgy, which is not a common thing, but “something is lacking because the theologian thinks of the sacrament and forgets

⁸. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. p151.

⁹. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p43.

¹⁰.Ibid.:p42.

the liturgy”¹¹. When we say the liturgy, it is not only the work of humans or the church or the sacrament itself, but it is also the work of God, especially the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. So, the liturgy is *Opus Dei* (the work of God). Indeed this Orthodox understanding of the Eucharist has influenced the present Catholic rite: “You are indeed Holy Lord, the font of all holiness, make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eucharist prayer II of the Catholic Church Missal).” So, for Schmemmann, the real presence of Jesus Christ means that the bread and wine are changed in the Eucharist (Thanksgiving) of the Liturgy and they are the true body and true blood of Jesus Christ although they are in the same form as they were before the blessing. Actually, they were changed in the Liturgy after being blessed by the Holy Spirit.

On the side of the Catholic Church, For Thomas Merton, he totally agrees and follows the doctrine of the Catholic Church: Jesus is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Especially, he used the doctrine of the Council of Trent to prove and confirm his view. “In the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there is contained truly, really and substantially, the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, together with His soul and divinity, indeed the whole Christ” (Session XIII, canon 1). Jesus Christ entirely is in every part of the Eucharist, “The consecrated species of bread contains Christ’s Body as a direct effect of the words of consecration,”¹² meanwhile, the mode of presence in the Eucharist is hidden under the substance of the bread and wine. But his hidden presence doesn’t reduce

¹¹. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.p42.

¹². Thomas Merton, 1956. *The Living Bread*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. P56.

the whole Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The bread and wine was changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ after it is consecrated by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine still remain, but the essence already is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How can we better know it? Or how does it happen? Actually, no one can totally understand this because it is mystery,¹³ but we still can better approach this mystery by our effort, Thomas Merton quoted Dom Anscar Vonier`s words to explain what is the form of Jesus Christ`s presence in the Eucharist, “The sacraments have a mode of existence of their own, a psychology of their own, a grace of their own.”¹⁴ Furthermore, in order to better understand the real presence, Thomas Merton distinguished Jesus Christ`s two different kinds of presence: the natural presence and the sacramental presence. The natural is also his local presence, it means that Jesus Christ was present in the world and now he is in heaven, “He remained locally present at the head of the supper table and became sacramentally present in the bread which He had changed by transubstantiation, into Himself.”¹⁵ The other important thing is Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist; he is not separated when the bread is divided, whatever the faithful receive of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, and the whole Jesus Christ is received.

The second question explored in this paper concerns who can receive the Eucharist? In other words, who is the eligible to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ? Luther believed the Christian should find the answer from the Bible. “In the first place, in order that we might safely and happily attain to a true and free knowledge of this sacrament

¹³. Ibid,P59.

¹⁴. Ibid,P59.

¹⁵.Ibid,P62.

(Eucharist)....., we must turn our eyes and hearts simply to the institution of Christ and this alone, and set nothing before us but the very word of Christ by which he instituted the sacrament, made it perfect, and committed it to us¹⁶. And these words are according to Mt.26:26-28, Mk14:22-24, Lk 22:19-20, 1Cor11:23-25. Luther thought that the only condition with respect to who can receive the Eucharist is faith, and he believed that faith causes the grace of the Eucharist; it means he stressed that the believers cannot receive grace from the Eucharist unless they have faith. ¹⁷Luther thought that the Eucharist is a testament, and when Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist in the Lord`s supper, he gave himself to everyone, because Jesus Christ said: “This is my body, which is given, this is my blood, which is poured out.”¹⁸ Luther thought that Jesus Christ said these words to refer to his death. In Luther`s idea, according to this passage, Jesus Christ said clearly that this testament is instituted for everyone (many), when people have faith (believe that Jesus Christ is in the bread and the wine), they would approach and receive the Eucharist. “From this you will see that nothing else is needed for a worthy holding of mass than a faith that relies confidently on this promise, believes Christ to be true in these words of his and does not doubt that these infinite blessings have been bestowed upon it.”¹⁹ But, what is the preparation of how do we prepare to receive the Eucharist? This is a very important thing for the recipient, because the person will receive the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.²⁰ Luther believed that everyone who was baptized can receive the

¹⁶. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press., p153.

¹⁷. This idea is against the teaching of the Catholic Church, because the Catholic Church believed that the grace of the Eucharist is caused by the valid and licit sacrament (Eucharist).

¹⁸. Luke 22:19-20.

¹⁹. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. p158.

²⁰. The Catholic Church`s doctrine says the sinner cannot receive the Eucharist, because sin prevents the grace of the Eucharist.

Eucharist, even for sinners, because the Eucharist is instituted for the forgiveness of sins.

“Christ says: “the new testament in my blood”²¹, not somebody else’s, but his own, by which grace is promised through the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, that we may obtain the inheritance. According to its substance, therefore, the mass is nothing but the aforesaid words of Christ: “Take and eat,” etc.²² it is as if he were saying: “behold, sinful and condemned man, out of the pure and unmerited love with which I love you, and by the will of the Father of mercies.”²³ For Luther, everyone is sinner who have faith can receive the Eucharist and they can receive the grace of the Eucharist, because the Eucharist is a testament which comes from Jesus Christ. Baptized people have the right to receive the Eucharist when they keep faith and desire to approach the Eucharist, and any sin will be forgiven in the Eucharist by Jesus Christ. In this case, Luther recognized that the Eucharist calls all of the faithful to approach, because God is willing to give his Son’s life to the faithful in the Eucharist.

With respect to the Orthodox position, Schmemmann, doesn’t clearly discuss the condition and qualifications of the recipient of the Eucharist. In his opinion, the Eucharist is a Holy Gift from God. There is no one who has the qualifications to receive the Eucharist. Here, we just talk about the preparation of the people who desire to accept the Eucharist. We get this opinion from two parts of Schmemmann’s book. His view is that people who have not sinned and have a desire can be recipients. Schmemmann believes that the Eucharist is liturgy, “The liturgy of the Eucharist is best understood as a journey or procession, it is the

²¹. Luke 22:20; 1Cor11:25

²². Matthew.26: 26

²³. Martin Luther. 1970. Three Treatises. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.p158.

journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom.”²⁴ This journey requires Christians to depart their life and their world. It means they should leave their everyday situation to approach God with Church members in the Eucharist (Jesus Christ). They can share the joy of heaven, and they will be formed in a new life in the Eucharist.”²⁵ To leave, to come... This is the beginning, the starting point of the sacrament, the condition of its transforming power and reality.”²⁶ Schmemmann, declared that in the beginning of the liturgy of the Eucharist, people must leave the world and their life (sin). In other words, when people want to attend the Eucharist, they must have a pure conscience. “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.”²⁷ When people stand before the altar; they approach the Son of God. In the Eucharist, when we offer bread and wine, Schmemmann said the meaning of the bread and the wine is our life, ourselves and all of us. “The Church is all those who have been accepted into the Eucharistic life of Christ. And we do it in remembrance of Him because, as we offer again and again our life and our world to God, we discover each time that there is nothing else to be offered but Christ Himself—the Life of the world, the fullness of all that exists. It is his Eucharist, and he is the Eucharist.”²⁸ It is the same teaching that we find in Rom12:1-2, “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing

²⁴. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p26.

²⁵. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p27.

²⁶. *Ibid.*: p28.

²⁷. Psalm 24:3-4

²⁸. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p35.

to God, your spiritual worship.” In his preface of the book,²⁹ Schmemmann mentioned the role of faith; he thought that faith is important for the sacrament, especially, for the Eucharist. He believed that the liturgy of the sacraments connects with faith, life, and the whole world.³⁰ Yet in his writing on the Eucharist, he does not talk about faith in relation to when and if people can receive the Eucharist. “No one has been ‘worthy’ to receive communion, no one has been *prepared* for it. At this point all merits, all righteousness, and all devotions disappear and dissolve. Life comes again to us as Gift; a free and divine gift. This is why the Orthodox Church we call the Eucharist elements Holy Gifts.”³¹ It is very obvious that nobody truly has a right to accept the Eucharist. The Eucharist is just a Holy Gift from Jesus Christ. He likes to give us his holy body and holy blood, in order to share his life, and because it makes us become like him. Actually, for everyone, we need the Eucharist, because Jesus said, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes.”³² As we know, Jesus Christ is the word of God. He is really present in the Eucharist. And the Eucharist will keep us in the life of Christ forever. “I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die, I am the living bread that came from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”³³

For the Catholic Church, for Merton, there are many requirements to receive the

²⁹. Ibid,P8

³⁰. Ibid.:p8.

³¹. Alexander Schmemmann 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p45.

³². Matthew4:4

³³. John 6:58-61

Eucharist; first of all, faith is the most important aspect for the recipient, no faith, no receives. Because sacraments require faith, in other words, who has no faith cannot receive the Eucharist, "Faith is the door to this experience of spiritual realities."³⁴ And "All the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, are protestations of our faith in the Son of God."³⁵ It means that human beings cannot know the Eucharist by their own eyes and their limited knowledge; they must have faith to approach and receive the Eucharist. When the priest say: "The Body of Christ," and the Faithful respond: "Amen," the Faithful proclaim that they receive the bread and the wine is true Body and true blood of Jesus Christ, and this mystery overs human beings` understanding, we should entirely believe by faith.

Furthermore, in addition to faith, Thomas Merton mentioned that the pure heart is not enough for the faithful to receive communion, the desire is another significant portion for recipient, who is willing to be close to Jesus Christ and to unite with him, "In order for Him to come to us, we must 'come to Him.'"³⁶ Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ desires to give himself to us, in order to save and help us. Jesus Christ`s desire calls us to response to him, it is not for his benefit, but for us, because, who hasn`t this food and drink, hasn`t eternal life. In this state of desire, the deep meaning is to desire to fulfill the will of God, the Father, on the one hand, God, the Father wants us to approach Jesus Christ and believe him, and then we connect with Jesus Christ, and are united with him in the Eucharist. The faithful become a new person, with new life, the faithful desire to fulfill the Father`s will as Jesus Christ did.³⁷ Jesus Christ desires to fulfill the will of the Father and offer his life, for the recipient. The

³⁴. Thomas Merton, 1956. *The Living Bread*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. P90

³⁵. Ibid, P97

³⁶ Ibid, P99.

³⁷ Ibid,P100,P102.

desire to receive the Eucharist is not for the faithful own personal benefits, but to do the will of the Father.

The last part is the love, including many meanings, one is love of neighbors, “If we do not love one another, we cannot eat the Bread of Life.”³⁸ When the faithful receive the Eucharist, they unite with Jesus Christ and the Father in the Eucharist by the Holy Spirit, because Jesus Christ is with the Father, the faithful become another Jesus Christ, and they must achieve the same life as Jesus Christ did. And another is to love Jesus Christ and the Church. Thomas Merton stressed that there are two modes of Jesus Christ’s body, one is the Eucharist, in this case, Jesus Christ is really present by the sacramental mode, another is the Church, which is the mystical body of Jesus Christ. It means in the Eucharist, the faithful unite Jesus and the Church; this is the “full mystery of the Eucharist.” As a recipient, if the faithful lack this love, they still cannot receive the Eucharist, “Jesus gives us His Body not merely as the principle of our own individual life and sanctification, but as the principle of unity in His Mystical Body,”³⁹ and the faithful receive the Eucharist not by mouth, but love “For without our unity in charity the Blessed Sacrament would lack its real meaning.”⁴⁰

The third question addressed in this paper concerns the meaning of the Eucharist. For Luther, the Eucharist is not a sacrifice; the Eucharist is a testament of receiving the grace from God.⁴¹ “When he (Jesus Christ) instituted this sacrament and established this testament at the Last Supper, Christ did not offer himself to God the Father, nor did he perform a good work on behalf of others, but, sitting at the table, he set this same testament before each

³⁸ Ibid,P106

³⁹. Ibid,:P108

⁴⁰. Ibid,:P108

⁴¹. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press., p171.

one and proffered to him the sign,..... so that if it had been necessary to offer the mass as a sacrifice, then Christ`s institution of it was not complete.”⁴² Luther thought that the Eucharist (mass) is a testament, because there is only one sacrifice that Jesus did on the cross, so for Luther, the mass is the remembrance of the last supper, we fulfill the commandment of Jesus Christ when the Mass is celebrated, because Jesus Christ gave us an order: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24). So, the mass is the promise of Jesus Christ, he left it for us in order to nourish us, for those who have faith can gain this benefit, and the faith is the only thing for the faithful, “Hence the only worthy preparation and proper observance is faith, the faith by which we believe in the mass, that is, in the divine promise.”⁴³ Luther emphasized that Mass is the testament and promise, the other important reason is he thought that the Mass is not a work of human beings, in other words, the mass relies on the promise of Jesus Christ and the pure faith. There is not any work of human beings; he used it to against the position of the Catholic Church, because the Catholic Church declares both the faith and work are important.

For Schmemmann and the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is like a journey or procession. The destination is heaven. It means the believers will be taken into heaven in the Eucharist, and the people will partake in the life of God, especially the new life (restored from the fallen world) and they will experience the joy of God. Schmemmann also stressed that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, because he wrote, “The liturgy has led us into the all-embracing Eucharist of Christ, and has revealed to us that the only Eucharist, the only offering of the world is Christ. We come again and again with our lives to offer; we bring and ‘sacrifice’—

⁴². Ibid.: p172.

⁴³. Ibid,:P 161.

that is, give to God—what He has given us; and each time we come to the End of all sacrifices.”⁴⁴ It is very clear that the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who now is seated on the right side of the Father in Heaven, he is the victory. We communicate with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and also the Eucharist is the faithful’s sacrifice because the Eucharist invites the faithful to unite with Jesus Christ, then the faithful have a new life in Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the Eucharist calls the faith to leave their own life and this world, make them towards to God, and experience the Joy of God, “In the Eucharist we are standing in the presence of Christ, and like Moses before God, we are to be covered with his glory.”⁴⁵

The position of the Catholic Church, For Thomas Merton, and the Eucharist is food which nourishes the faithful on the journey to heaven. (In this case, his views is similar with Alexander Schmemmann.) It is to say: the Eucharist is the Manna of this journey, “Every Communion is a ‘viaticum’—it is food and drink to sustain us in our journey toward God.”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the Eucharist is a salvation, as in the OT, God saved the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land, from slavery to the people of God. In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ delivers us from the world to the heaven, it means the faithful belong to the world no longer, they belong to Jesus Christ. “The Mass perpetuates for us the great ‘intervention’ of God in our world by His Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection, and keeps ever before our mind the fact that He is a God of power and of mercy, who has delivered us from the flesh and given us the freedom of His sons, He has made us His People and called us to journey to

⁴⁴. Alexander Schmemmann, 1982. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p35.

⁴⁵.Alexander Schmemmann, 1982.*For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p30.

⁴⁶.Thomas Merton, 1956.*The Living Bread*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. P95.

seek Him in the Promised Land of Heaven.”⁴⁷ There are many challenges in this journey for the faithful as there were for Israel in the wilderness and desert, but God is with us, he nourishes us by the Eucharist, in order to help and protect us on the way to heaven.

Martin Luther believed that John 6 is about the Spiritual food that is Jesus Christ, because in the time, the Eucharist was not established by Jesus Christ, “For he says: ‘my words are spirit and life (John 6:63), which shows that he was speaking of a spiritual eating.’”⁴⁸ Thomas Merton thought that John 6 is the chapter directly describing the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is not only the Spiritual food; it is the whole Jesus Christ. Why do people confuse Jesus Christ’s words? The reason is they lack Faith, they don’t believe the power of God, “Jesus answers that what they need is not more external signs from Him, but faith in the depths of their own hearts.”⁴⁹ So, for Thomas Merton, John 6 is a literal word of the Eucharist, not just spiritual words of the Eucharist.

In conclusion, the Eucharist is a mystery of faith. We cannot totally understand the meaning of the Eucharist. Luther believed that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist, but the bread and the wine aren’t changed, and he believed that faith is the only condition for the recipient of the Eucharist. Luther also thought that the Eucharist is a testament, it is not a sacrifice. Schmemmann thought that the transformation of the bread and the wine happens (by the work of the Holy Spirit) in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is a Holy Gift. No one has a qualification to receive the Eucharist. It is a free gift from God, and so people should have faith, desire and a pure heart to accept it. The Eucharist is like a journey or

⁴⁷.Ibid,:P 96.

⁴⁸. Martin Luther. 1970. *Three Treatises*. 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. P133.

⁴⁹. Ibid,P 97.

procession that towards heaven. For Thomas Merton, he held that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist, it is undoubtable, for the faithful, the faith, and desire and love are the requirements for receiving the communion. The Eucharist is the Manna of the journey to heaven as the Manna for Israel when they lived in the wilderness and desert; The Eucharist helps and protects the faithful during this course until to the day when the faithful live in heaven. In my opinion, all of positions are not the best, and human beings' languages are so limited, but they can be mutually complementary in the light of the Holy Spirit. The best understanding of the Eucharist is faith. Human beings cannot completely understand the Eucharist, because it is a Mystery of faith. As Thomas Aquinas said: Faith for all defects supplying, where the feeble senses fail.

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