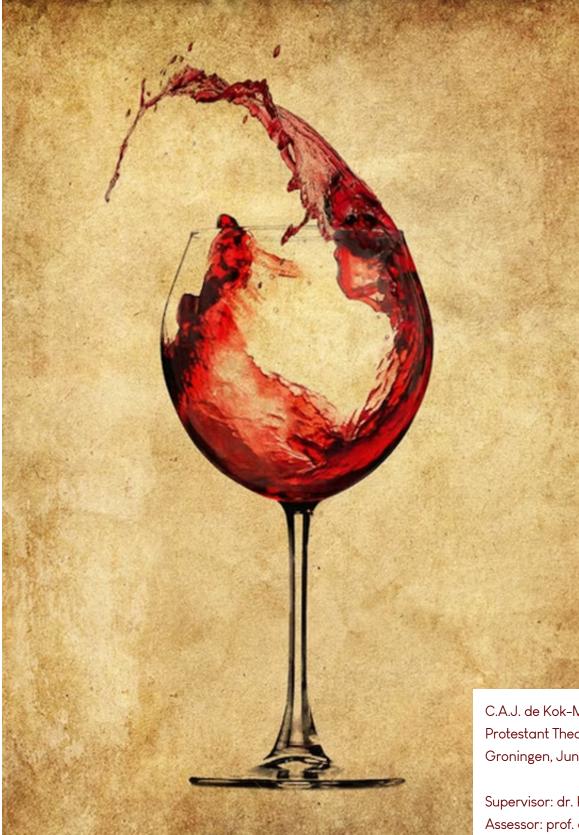# Sursum Corda

An Exploration How Desire for God Enriches
the Experience of the Eucharist in a Secular Age

C.A.J. de Kok–Meeuse (1600907)
Protestant Theological University
Groningen, June 17, 2023

Supervisor: dr. K.L. Bom
Assessor: prof. dr. A. Huijgen

# Sursum Corda:

## An Exploration How Desire for God Enriches the Experience of the Eucharist in a Secular Age

**C.A.J. de Kok-Meeuse** (1600907)

**Protestant Theological University Groningen**

Supervisor: dr. K.L. Bom

Assessor: prof. dr. A. Huijgen

Groningen, June 17, 2023.

# Declaration Sheet Master's Thesis

Name student: _C.A.J. (Lydia) de Kok-Meeuse_

Title master's thesis: _Sursum Corda_

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the aforementioned master's thesis consists of original work. The thesis is the result of my own research and is written only by myself, unless stated otherwise. Where information and ideas have been taken from other sources, this is stated explicitly, completely and appropriately in the text or in the notes. A bibliography has been included.

Place, date: Signature:

_Groningen_ _13 - 6 - 23_ _cajmeeuse_

## DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I hereby agree that the aforementioned master's thesis will be made available for inclusion in the library collection after its approval and that the metadata will be made available to external organizations and/or published by the PThU.
Furthermore, I
■ do
☐ do not
authorize (the library of) the PThU to include the full text in a database that is publicly accessible via the world wide web or otherwise. (This permission concerns only the publication of the master's thesis as described, without further transfer or limitation of the student's copyright.)

Place, date: Signature:

_Groningen_ _13 - 6 - 2023_ _cajmeeuse_

# Abstract

*In this master thesis, I explore how a theological notion of desire has the potential to enrich the experience of the Eucharist for participants whose experience is being shaped by living in a secular age. I explain how desire, as a loving orientation that aims at someone else, is related to experience. With the help of a phenomenological approach, I explore how an experience system that is formed by a secular frame most probably results in a liminal experience of the Eucharist due to an internalised immanent frame that works with a concept of an absolved God. The desire related to this experience remains open and unfulfilled as the Eucharistic gift is not received. When this desire is transformed by the Spirit, who incorporates God's desire in the human heart that is simultaneously lifted up to God, the possibility arises that this desire is already fulfilled by participating in the life of the Trinity. Here the phenomenological approach is transformed and enriched with an ontological approach. The ontological distinction between God and matter remains, but the separation prevalent in the immanent frame is transformed in a relation. This results in a fullness experience of the Eucharist because through the Spirit the Eucharistic gift, the body of Christ, can be received and is experienced as communion.*

**Key words:** desire, experience, Eucharist, secularisation, formation, transformation, immanent frame, phenomenology, ontology

**Word amount:** 25.782 (including footnotes)

# Acknowledgments

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* (Col. 3:18, NIV)

Further, I would like to thank my supervisor dr. Klaas Bom, for the deepening conversations, comments on the concepts of this thesis, and reading Lacoste with me. I am especially grateful that he encouraged me to trust my theological intuitions and to follow my heart. I also want to thank my assessor and teacher prof. dr. Arnold Huijgen, whose holistic how-to-cope advice resulted in an average of 9,3 cycle kilometres per page, and whose (dia)critical eye challenged me to check my use of Oxford commas again. I am grateful to Marco Bijdevaate, for his motivating enthusiasm and inspiring desire for a kingdom that encompasses the entire entangled creation. The joint pondering on and chartering of the delights and shadows of phenomenological methodologies was a case of sharpening iron with iron. I thank Hannah Westerink and Regina Lafeber for sharing not only the hardships of writing a master thesis, but also for the good cups of coffee and "jostling" conversations. Further thanks goes to my other colleague students, Henk Binnekamp and Caleb Alu, for being together in this process. I thank Jeanique de Graaf, my sister in law, for her creative composition in response to my last-minute request. I also want to mention the sisters in the Benedictine monastery in Oosterhout, who within a hospitable and clearly structured environment guided me in practices of contemplation that, by ruminating the beautiful Psalms, help to orient the heart towards God. Last but not least, I want to thank my beloved husband Willem de Kok for tolerating my hyperfocus, cycling together, preventing moths from destroying treasures, and mostly for sharing his life and love with me, which deepens and enriches what desire means to me.

# Contents

## Introduction

*You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water (…) I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods.*
(Psalm 63:1, 5a)

The Eucharist is one of the central sacraments of Christianity. Its rich and complex nature continues to intrigue people on many levels, whether philosophical, theological, or experiential. How people experience the Eucharist is not only related to the structure and content of the practice itself –the commemoration of Christ's death by sharing bread and wine– but is also being shaped by the surrounding culture.[1] A description of today's west-European culture would involve a complex web of intertwined processes, but one of the threads would be secularisation –although not undisputed due to the multivalence of the term and contested verifiability of the process.[2] The process of secularisation, the increasing weight of the earthly plane of domestic life as place for meaning combined with a diminishing role for and relevance of the supernatural realm, changed how people perceive reality.[3] The internalised secular frame entails amongst others an implicit grasp of the world as enclosed, immanent order that is distinct from a transcendent realm.[4] God is not necessarily seen as inexistent, but rather as irrelevant or absolved from everyday life.[5] Moreover, there is an implicit grasp of the self as autonomous, independent, and invulnerable to that transcendence.[6] This secular frame seeps into our bones and affects our experience system, Eucharistic experience included.[7]

What then, do people whose experience is being shaped by a secular frame taste and see when they participate in the Eucharist? What in the sacramental experience feels

---

[1] Cf. James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom : How Worship Works*. 4th edition. Cultural Liturgies, volume 2. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 102.

[2] Peter E. Gordon, "The Idea of Secularisation in Intellectual History," in *A Companion to Intellectual History. Blackwell Companions to History,* eds. Richard Whatmore, and B. W Young (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 230-246, 230.

[3] Definition based on different elements from James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular : Reading Charles Taylor*. 4th edition. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 141-143.

[4] Cf. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. 7th edition. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022), 391.

[5] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 275.

[6] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 27.

[7] Cf. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 12.

comfortably like home in that it coheres with the internalised frame? Can something "transcendent" be experienced through immanent material? Can something invisible affect the self? What feels frustratingly alien and out of reach? And is that necessarily a given, or can the experience of the Eucharist change? Can it be enriched and result in a fullness experience in this life which is a search of many secular Christians? In order to discover this potential enrichment, there is need for an integrative notion that both coheres with and transforms secular experience systems, and that is intrinsically connected with the richness God grants through the sacrament of the Eucharist. That notion, I propose, is the notion of desire.

Whether people experience thirst or satisfaction, frustration or fullness, or something in between, the basic structure underneath is the same: desire. Desire is a loving orientation that aims at something or someone else.[8] An intrinsic yearning and ecstatic longing that stretches forward, reaches out. It is situated in what I intuitively call the heart –a holistic notion of the human, embodied core where thoughts, desires, and affections come together. Desire is intrinsic in every faculty of the human being.[9] This means, amongst others, that humans also experience related to desire. Human desire is not only an existential structure that phenomenologists observe as the place to receive the Eucharistic gift, but also that theologians interpret as created after the image of the Triune God, who is love and desires within himself for himself, and whose abundant desire stretches out to creation.[10] This brings to the topic of this master thesis.

### Research Questions

The main question of this thesis is: How can a theological notion of desire enrich the experience of the Eucharist against the background of experience formation in a secular age? This leads to four subquestions that correspond with the chapters I outline below.

1. How is experience formed in a secular age?
2. How is the experience of the Eucharist shaped through the lifeworld of a secular age?
3. What does a theological notion of desire entail?

---

[8] Cf. James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom : Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. 5th edition. Cultural Liturgies, volume 1. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 47.
[9] Cf. Klaas Bom, "Directed by Desire: An Exploration Based on the Structures of the Desire for God." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 2 (2009): 135–148, 140.
[10] Cf. Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self : An Essay 'on the Trinity'*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6.

4. How can this theological notion of desire legitimately function as an integrating perspective between modern secular experience and the sacrament of the Eucharist in order to enrich the experience of the Eucharist in a secular age?

## Methodology

This explorative systematic research integrates insights from literature that contains a variety of sometimes conflicting but therefore mutually enriching approaches, namely cultural philosophy (chapter 1), French phenomenology of experience (chapter 2), continental philosophy in a broader sense (throughout the thesis), and theological ontology (chapter 3 and 4). This research does not contain a diachronic analysis of the theological meaning of desire, neither does it contain an analysis and evaluation of the secularisation debate, nor does it offer a complete sacramental theology that takes into account both ecumenical and denominational concerns, nor does it offer a neat phenomenological account of Eucharistic experience. It is a theological exploration of experience in the nexus of the Eucharist, secularisation, and desire. Therefore, within systematic theology, the thesis is best situated in anthropology, whereas it touches multiple other loci like pneumatology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology and sacramental theology.

For the practice of doing theology this implies several things. The Anglican theologian Sarah Coakley has been a main source of inspiration in this.[11] Firstly, the methodology of my thesis implies that human experience matters for doing theology. Academic theology engages with lived faith situated in a culture and might even offer a recommendation for life.[12] Secondly, theology should creatively and critically engage with other disciplines, like secular philosophy, in order to connect with human experience.[13] Thirdly, that theology engages with human experience, does not mean that the heart of the theological enterprise, God, is confined to human experience. Theology is about a reality that can be experienced but is at the same time greater and beyond human experience. This means that theology does not only engage with ethics, but also with metaphysics. At the same time, a relation is implied between human experience and that metaphysical reality, which comes together in speaking with God –most commonly known as prayer. With this, the circle ends where it begins, in that there is

---

[11] Cf. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 15ff.
[12] Cf. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 18.
[13] Cf. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 16.

a relation between lived faith and academic theologising. It means fourthly, that theology in her search for a truthful engagement with reality cannot claim to have completed that search, but remains open for correction, transformation, and enrichment.

Within perspective on doing theology, it is important to be transparent both about my confessional and academic positionality. I am a theologian from a Dutch Reformed background. I grew up in protestant circles in the Netherlands. Since the age of 18, I participate in the Eucharist, which is celebrated four times a year in a sober manner. I perceive myself as a "secular Christian" in the sense that my religious experience has been shaped by a secular frame. I did my bachelor in theology at the University of Groningen, where theology and religious studies constitute a faculty. Hence part of my training was influenced phenomenology of religion. I did a master in New Testament theology at the Protestant Theological University in Groningen, after which I continued with a master of congregational ministry at the same university. This thesis is part of that master, where the worlds of the church and the academy encounter and engage with each other.

## Relevance

This thesis is relevant in academy, church, and society for the following reasons.

In the academic field, this thesis is firstly relevant in that it contributes a humble testcase for theologies of desire that attempt to integrate various theological loci, insights from different levels of society and a notion of desire into a coherent systematic theology. Secondly, as theologising about the Eucharist concentrates crucial theological loci and doctrines in one practice, the Eucharist is an ideal and intriguing place to test the relevance and viability of theologising. Thirdly, this thesis touches upon the interdisciplinary debate between theology and French phenomenology. Because of the diverging presuppositions, methods and tasks, the interdisciplinary relation is tense and complicated. But precisely therefore, both disciplines sharpen each other. Theology sharpens French phenomenology by challenging whether its presuppositions do justice to the phenomenon researched. Phenomenology challenges a reflection of theology's core task by asking "what on earth are you doing?"

While most aspects of the aforementioned reasons of academic relevance can also apply to the church, I have two more reasons why this thesis is relevant for the church in a

secular age. The first reason has to do with the self-perception and attitude of churches in relation to secularisation. During my internships as pastor in the north of the Netherlands, I noticed that many churchgoers have a quite depressive self-perception. "Church diminishes, of course." I think this is a highly problematic attitude. As narratives shape attitudes, these negative autobiographies might become self-fulfilling prophecies. The underlying assumption is that secularisation is an inevitable and abstract enemy that reduces numbers of church attendance, not as a lifeworld that influences the everyday experience of all citizens, churchgoers included. And mostly, it shows a lack of confidence in the Holy Spirit, who gives life and joy to the church and preserves her. With this thesis, I hope to encourage church communities to grow in their desire for God. A desire, not based on shortage, but on abundant love. And I hope that the Eucharist may play a central role in the formation of that desire. A second reason deals with the relation between church liturgy and everyday life. Although liturgy and life mutually influence each other, churches often reflect on how liturgy influences life, not vice versa. It is useful to add reflection on the latter, because this might help in communicating the Gospel in a relevant and recognisable way. This thesis attempts to increase the awareness of structures of experience formed through secularity.

Although academy and church are already part of society, I have one more reason why this thesis is relevant for society. This thesis hopes to be relevant in finding words to talk about experiences that cannot be fully explained in a secular frame. People often hear "echoes of transcendence" in their search for meaning or "fullness."[14] This thesis hopes to offer some language for that.

## Research Outline

In chapter 1, I explore in three steps how experience is being shaped in a secular age. Firstly, I explore how experience is shaped through embodied social practices. By activating the body, processes of habituation, imagination, and narration inscribe implicit grasps of reality in the interpretive repertoire of experience. This makes experience possible and sets the limits for it. I explore this by introducing and analysing the philosophical anthropology of James K.A. Smith, a Canadian-American philosopher who is trained in contemporary French thought, especially in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu. Secondly, I connect this

---

[14] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 5.

social and embodied inscription in the experience system with the concept of social imaginaries as coined by Charles Taylor. Taylor, a Canadian cultural philosopher who in his secularisation narrative *A Secular Age* tells in five parts a historical development in order to explain what it nowadays feels like to live in a secular age where belief in God is no longer axiomatic. With the help of his idea of social imaginaries –socially shared prereflective grasps of reality that determine what is believable– I explore two facets of a secular social imaginary, namely the sense of an invulnerable, autonomous, "buffered" self, and an immanent frame in which an immanent and increasingly irrelevant transcendent realm are distinguished. This results, thirdly, in an exploration of everyday experiences of cross-pressure, being tossed between echoes of transcendence and the drive towards further immanentization, and the often frustrated search for fullness in everyday life that are characteristic for experience that is formed in a secular age.

In chapter 2, I analyse experience of the Eucharist to the background of this secular experience formation. I analyse the essay *L'intuition sacramentelle* as written by the French phenomenologist of religious experience Jean-Yves Lacoste. Lacoste stands in the tradition of Heidegger and Husserl, in which experience of the world takes place on the shared horizon of the world and human consciousness. In this essay, Lacoste starts within the conditions of this world –which with nuanced caution can be perceived as a phenomenological variant of an immanent frame– and takes the sacrament seriously as sacrament and does not reduce it to a mere ritual. In this essay, Lacoste works with a concept of God as the Absolute. Experiencing the Eucharistic gift is not impossible, but bumps into boundaries of this world and hence its fulfilment is placed not in the now, but beyond. I explore four aspects of Eucharistic experience that can be characterised by liminality, lack, and openness. The latter is due to Lacoste's connection between the open structure of desire and the possibility to receive the Eucharistic gift an insight that paves the way for the next chapter.

In chapter 3, I continue with the notion of desire as structure in which the Eucharistic gift can be received. As this results for Lacoste in an experience of frustration, then the search continues how the combination of Eucharist and desire can result in an experience of fullness. To do so, I firstly further explore a phenomenological notion of desire, again with James K.A. Smith. After an evaluation of the advantages and limitations of this notion, I argue that both desire and the notion of desire –that is, the methodology with which it is researched– need to

be transformed. I do this with the help of the theological ontological approach of Sarah Coakley, who works with a trinitarian notion of desire which enriches the notion of the human structure of desire with the perspective on God both as source and goal of desire. With her I acknowledge the priority of the Spirit in the right orienting of desire and transforming of experience.

In chapter 4, I return to Eucharistic experience with this transformed notion of desire in a search for a fullness experience. A start from the *epiclesis* and the *sursum corda*, elements of the eucharistic liturgy that respectively represent prayer and hence priority for the Spirit, and the right ordering of desire, prepares for a discussion of the message the celebration of the Eucharist inscribes in its aiming at the body of Christ. I explore the experience of three connected layers of the body of Christ in relation the secular social imaginaries and experiences related to that, and I explore whether the Eucharistic experience can be enriched an characterised by the term communion while remaining the tension of an already and not yet that is inherent to the Eucharist.

## Current State of Research

Within researching the nexus of secularisation, Eucharistic experience, and desire, this thesis engages in a variety of discourses. In order to demarcate this research outline, I remain close to the problem area of the relation between Eucharistic experience and secularisation. I do not offer an exhaustive overview, but sketch three broad lines. After that, I clarify the connection between secularisation and desire.

A first strand of research that engages in this nexus can be found in French phenomenology of religious experience. This relatively recent movement studies, illuminates and systematises our experience of phenomena and their modes of manifestation, especially religious (Roman Catholic) phenomena.[15] Phenomenology is not concerned with empirical or subjective experience, but rather with the way things appear to us and the related structures of that appearance.[16] This field of research is interesting in relation to the theological task and her relationship with philosophy in that it engages with religious themes from a philosophical

---

[15] Christina M. Gschwandtner, "What Is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II): The Phenomenology of Religious Experience." *Philosophy Compass* 14, no. 2 (2019): e12567, 2. Christina M. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested: Toward a Phenomenology of the Eucharist in Its Liturgical Context." *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 315, 1.
[16] Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 1.

discipline. The relation with secularisation or secular thought differs per thinker. Three noteworthy phenomenologists that have written on Eucharistic experience are Jean-Luc Marion, Emmanuel Falque, and Jean-Yves Lacoste. From a starting point of revelation, Jean-Luc Marion explores the Eucharist as a "saturated" phenomenon from a phenomenology of givenness.[17] Claiming to start from a secular position, Emmanuel Falque attempts to recover a strong sense of the immanence of Christian experience that is fundamentally incarnational, by stressing the inclusion of eros, illness, and spiritual –especially eucharistic– experience in phenomenological analysis.[18] The third thinker is Jean-Yves Lacoste, who draws heavily on notion of *Dasein* to discuss the Eucharist as eschatological anticipation. He takes the Heideggerian notion of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) as secular or "neutral" starting point for the human condition.[19] Lacoste sees the Eucharist as a boundary experience that facilitates a shift in repositioning human beings to everyday life and the world.[20] At the same time, Lacoste holds that sacramental experience is "non-experience," because it cannot be articulated or sensed within earthly parameters, such as emotion, affect, place, time, or other conditions of experience.[21]

A second debate that draws insights from French phenomenology, but is often done from a theological or religious studies perspective, concerns a discussion of sacramental presence and transcendence. Exemplary is the volume *The Presence of Transcendence* edited by Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries.[22] In this volume, the authors engage with questions related to sacramental theology and postmodern thought. The relation between postmodernism and secularisation is complex, but shared themes like the relation between transcendence and

---

[17] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn" : The French Debate*, ed. Dominique Janicaud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 176-216 and *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, transl. Jeffrey L. Kosky. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[18] Cf. Gschwandtner, "What is Phenomenology (Part II)," 4. Emmanuel Falque, "This is my Body: Contribution to a Philosophy of the Eucharist." In *Carnal Hermeneutics*, eds. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015) and *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, transl. Georges Hughes. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

[19] Cf. Jeffrey Bloechl, "A Response to Jean-Yves Lacoste," in *The Experience of God : A Postmodern Response*, eds. Jeffrey Bloechl, John D. Caputo, and others. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), 104-105. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.

[20] Cf. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.

[21] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute : Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, No. 40. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 40-54. Cf. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.

[22] Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries eds., *The Presence of Transcendence : Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age.* Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 42. (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

immanence, as well as the modern self, are discussed. In this debate, sacramental theology is rethought in a more "ethical" rather than "metaphysical" way.[23] Noteworthy is the crucial role that is ascribed to the body in understanding sacramental experience. Another type of research that cannot be defined as one school or as a debate on a broad but demarcated issue. It concerns theological reflections on the Eucharist in a secular culture from a more metaphysical perspective. An early, rather countercultural example is the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann, who emphatically discussed the strengths of a theological, creational-sacramental approach of the Eucharist in order to oppose secularism. This thesis uses insights from French phenomenology of experience, just like the second line I sketched. A difference is, however, that I attempt to combine an "ethical" and "metaphysical" approach.

The connection between secularisation and desire can for example be found in the work of Herman Paul. Paul approaches secularisation from a historical perspective and combines it with an Augustinian theology of desire to interpret both the process and the consequences theologically.[24] He argues that people increasingly search for fulfilment of their desires in this *saeculum*, which he calls secularisation of the heart.[25] In a later book, Paul confines his argument to the consequences of capitalistic consumerism on desire.[26] This topic has also been investigated by the Lutheran ethicist Bernd Wannenwetsch.[27] Wannenwetsch urges West-European churches to counterweigh the exploitation of lust while strengthening desire and trust as basic Christian lifestyle. Although Wannenwetsch discusses both the sacrament and the role of the body, his perception on the reordering of desire is mostly doxological, thereby mostly stressing verbal-auditory power in formation. The Pentecostal theologian Daniela Augustine, however, combines the nexus of consumerism, and desire with the formative effect of the Eucharist in a more holistic sense.[28] Both Paul and Augustine use the work of James K.A. Smith in order to connect secular culture, formation, and desire.[29]

---

[23] Cf. Boeve and Ries, *The Presence of Transcendence*, x.
[24] Herman Paul, *De Slag Om Het Hart : Over Secularisatie Van Verlangen*. (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2017).
[25] Paul, *Slag om het hart*, 11.
[26] Herman Paul, *Shoppen in Advent : Een Kleine Theorie Van Secularisatie*. (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum Uitgevers, 2020).
[27] Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Verlangen : Een Theologische Peiling,* eds. Esther Jonker and Herman Paul. (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2014).
[28] Daniela C. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Common Good : Shared Flourishing in the Image of God.* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019).
[29] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 27.

# 1. Secular Experience Formation

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Luke 12:34 NIV)

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how experience is shaped in a secular age. In §1.1, I discuss how James K.A. Smith's philosophical anthropology helps to understand how the basic background against which one makes sense of an experience is shaped through cultural practices and narratives.[30] Key terms for Smith are imagination, habituation, and narration, three interconnected processes that form experience through their appeal to the body.[31] In §1.2, I zoom in on the content of what is carried, transferred, and inscribed in the experience system through secular practices and stories. I work with the term "social imaginary" as coined by the Catholic cultural philosopher of secularisation Charles Taylor.[32] In *A Secular Age,* Taylor narrates how the process we call secularisation has changed the way ordinary people imagine and hence experience the world in an increasingly immanentized way.[33] I focus on social imaginaries of an immanent frame and an autonomous self. In §1.3, I discuss how this secular experience formation influences daily life experiences on less subterranean and more conscious level. I do this in terms of cross-pressure and the often frustrated search for fullness experiences. I end with a conclusion in §1.4.

## 1.1 Experience Formation

The question how experience is shaped in a secular context is a multifaceted and complicated one. For the purposes of this thesis, I work with the philosophical anthropology of James K.A. Smith, a Canadian-American philosopher who is trained in contemporary French thought, especially in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu. He currently holds a chair in applied reformed theology and worldview at Calvin College. In his trilogy *Cultural Liturgies,* and particularly in the second volume *Imagining the Kingdom*, Smith offers a

---

[30] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom.*
[31] See also Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, xiii.
[32] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries.* Public Planet Books. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). For his use in *Secular Age* see Taylor, *Secular Age*, 146.
[33] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 3.

phenomenological discussion of how the basic repertoire against which experience is interpreted, defined as habitus, is formed through social embodied practices.[34]

According to Smith, embodied practices rearrange bodily schemes of interpretation by reconfiguring human imagination. This is the process of habituation. This means, firstly, that meaning making is intrinsically connected with the body. Without the body, there would be no experience at all. To underline this, Smith uses the term "incarnate significance."[35] Via the body, humans acquire interpretive repertoires that form the background of experience. In this regard, a crucial notion Smith derives from Merleau-Ponty is the idea of a between-space.[36] There is, so to speak, a space between instinct (or reflex) and intellect (or reflexivity). This space is not biologically conditioned, but it is formed throughout one's life in such an intrinsic way that feels like a second nature. This is also the place where human beings imagine and desire. Imagination is the nonconscious, pretheoretical driver of human action and behaviour that envisions something.[37] According to Smith, imagination pulls desire towards the thing envisioned. Imagination is reconfigured through the inscription of the orientation practices carry. Practices have a certain orientation, a *telos*, an implicit grasp of reality and of human flourishing. Through repeated bodily practice, the *telos* of a practice becomes inscribed in the human experience system, for example through bodily knowing and the process of narration, in which storytelling works as means of performing meaning.[38] Stories, and especially metaphors, contain a kind of bodily logic. Take for example "affection is warmth" or "intimacy is closeness."[39]

The process of habituation is not only a bodily process, but also a communal process. Smith uses the term "social body" of Pierre Bourdieu to argue that habituation as process of acquiring embodied knowledge is carried in a community of practice.[40] It is not a personal disposition through which an individual constitutes the world, but a social and communal disposition transferred through others, and incorporated through social practices, especially

---

[34] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 79.
[35] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 29.
[36] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 34, 45.
[37] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 12.
[38] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 12.
[39] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 125.
[40] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 79, 126.

of cultural institutions.[41] Habituation does not only make experience possible, but it also sets the limits for the interpretation of experience.[42] The inability to understand a given experience, or intuition, means that the interpretive repertoire of dispositions is not habituated in order to do so. In this way, the *telos* or implicit grasp of reality that social practices carry and through the body inscribe in the experience system, make the interpretation of experience possible and set the limits for it.

I want underline two insights from Smith's philosophical anthropology that are especially fruitful for this thesis. Firstly, the communal as well as embodied nature of formation through practice means that not only secular practices, but also the Eucharist, has a formative effect.[43] In this regard, Smith argues that adequate liturgy (that he defines as a thick identity-forming practice) whether secular or religious, should assume a kind of kinaesthetics (embodiment and movement) and a poetics (aesthetics and narration).[44] Secondly, Smith connects experience, imagination, and desire. There is an ongoing process in the between-space, in which experience is formed through the reconfiguring of imagination, which steers desire, which on its term contributes to experiencing and comprehending the world.[45]

### Interludium: The Enclosed World in *The Magician's Elephant*

The reader who is familiar with Smith's work, knows that his concept of imagination is deeply incorporated in his hermeneutics.[46] Despite their differences, a similar argument can be made for Charles Taylor, to which I turn after this interludium, who holds that social imaginaries are mainly carried in images, stories, and legends.[47] Both authors, therefore, elaborate on books, films, and music. For Smith it is also the practice that counts: reading books full of stories that contain ideas about human flourishing, watching movies while sitting on the couch and eating popcorn, hearing music with your ears and singing it along– through the senses the visions contained in the media are inscribed in one's interpretive repertoire of experiences. Let me,

---

[41] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 80-81.
[42] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 82.
[43] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 133.
[44] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 15.
[45] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 50-51.
[46] Cf. Paul, *Slag om het hart*, 96.
[47] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 172.

as a playful interludium, and in Smith's hermeneutical spirit, sketch a revealing fragment from the animation movie *The Magician's Elephant* (March 2023).

In this movie, a city, once colourful and sunny, became clouded. The sky became filled with white, egg-shaped clouds that stopped the sun from breaking through. A bright fountain stopped streaming. The message was clear: the world became enclosed. People still lived their lives. Selling on the market, training soldiers, it all went on. But there was no magic anymore. Hope was a joke. As time went on, people stopped looking for magic and stopped missing it. Except for one child. This child desired to meet his little sister. Although his caretaker told him she was dead, he was convinced that she was alive. The joyful vision of seeing her again made him do things that others could not imagine.

## 1.2 Secular Social Imaginaries

The next question to be answered concerns what is imagined and narrated, what vision of life becomes habituated in the human heart by partaking in practices and living in a culture that can be characterized with the word secular. In order to answer this, I introduce the term "social imaginary" as coined by Charles Taylor. A social imaginary has to do with how large groups of ordinary people imagine their social existence, their expectations of society and other people, and the normative and deeper notions and images that underlie these expectations.[48] It is a socially shared sense or implicit grasp, in which reality is spontaneously imagined, and therefore experienced.[49] Today this implicit grasp of a shared social space can be described by the word secular.[50] In his book *A Secular Age,* Taylor attempts to grasp the changed conditions of the human experience in terms of shifted social imaginaries in "a secular age."[51] Because of his focus on changed experience conditions, Taylor defines the secular age as an age of contested belief, where religious belief is no longer axiomatic.[52] Secularisation entails a change from a rather naïve belief system in which it was hard to imagine not to believe, to a reflective attitude in which belief became one option among many and for the majority of people not believing has become the default option.[53] Two

---

[48] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 171.
[49] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 325.
[50] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 174.
[51] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 4.
[52] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 3.
[53] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 14.

developments that are also often denoted with the term secularisation, namely the distinction between religious and political-institutional life, as well as the diminishment of religious belief and practice in the form of diminished church participation, contribute to the changed experience conditions especially in that they notably affected the public space, organisation of institutions, and accompanying practices.[54]

Despite their different approaches, Taylor's idea of the social imaginary combines well with Smith's discussion of imagination in the social process of habituation.[55] Where Taylor as cultural philosopher tells an interpretative and normative narrative about the development of secularisation in an epochal way indebted to Hegelian historiography,[56] Smith as phenomenologist is not as much interested in the development of the social imaginaries, but rather in the impact of the social imaginaries on the human experience and desire.

I continue with a sketch of two facets of the secular social imaginaries that are inscribed in the human experience system, in §1.2.1 concerning the sense of self, and in §1.2.2 concerning the immanent frame. The task of confronting secular experience formation with Eucharistic experience permits me to focus on those aspects that are relevant for this intersection.

### 1.2.1 I Make Up My Own Mind: The Secular Self

The sense of self in secular social imaginaries is in short described as "buffered," autonomous, and rationalistic.[57] The secular self is perceived as invulnerable to external spirits or meanings. The individual ratio has gained priority over the body and has become the internal locus where meaning is ascribed to external things. Let me explain.

Taylor describes the development from a "porous" to a "buffered" sense of self.[58] In premodern imaginaries, the porous self was vulnerable and open for the outside world. Both external meaning and spiritual entities could affect it. The buffered self, however, is

---

[54] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 1-2.

[55] Smith himself shows the relation between imagination and social imaginaries on Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 51, 125.

[56] Cf. Paul, *Slag om het hart*, 27.

[57] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 27.

[58] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 35-36.

invulnerable to anything but the human world. This is a secure and autonomous sense of self.[59]

This sense of self is rooted in the Cartesian distinction between the body (*res extensa*) and the mind (*res cogitans*) in which the primacy was given to the latter. This is connected with the opposition between intuition and reason, in which the latter is also prioritized.[60] Taylor calls this a process of "excarnation."[61] J.A. Franklin, an Anglican theologian that reflects on the consequences of Taylors *Secular Age* for ecclesiology, describes excarnation as introducing "a boundary *within the individual* between spirit and body."[62] Broader, the neologism denotes the aversion against embodiment, concreteness, and particularities. For Christianity it resulted in a disembodiment and deritualisation, faith became a belief system that was quite cognitive and less embodied in form.[63] The connotation of the term implies its tense contradictoriness with the doctrine of the incarnation, the belief that the Son of God became enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth.

Connected with the rational self was the relocation of meaning from external to internal.[64] In the premodern imaginary, meaning was situated in a created and enchanted world, where objects could have power and where spirits dwelled. With the relocation in the human mind, there was no meaning besides the human perception or attribution.[65] It was now possible not to ascribe meaning, deny the presence of spirits. Combined with scientific discoveries, one of the consequences was that the world was not necessarily perceived as creation, but could also be seen as disenchanted nature. This brings to the second facet of secular social imaginaries.

---

[59] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 39.
[60] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 9.
[61] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 554.
[62] J.A. Franklin, *Charles Taylor and Anglican Theology : Aesthetic Ecclesiology*. Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 61.
[63] Cf. Franklin, *Taylor and Theology*, 62. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 141.
[64] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 30. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 28.
[65] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 32.

## 1.2.2 Out of the Picture: The Immanent Frame

Key to the secular social imaginaries is an immanent frame. An immanent frame is a "social space that frames our lives entirely within a natural (rather than supernatural) order," which is naturalistic and enclosed.[66] The immanent frame is the result of a process called immanentization. Taylor defines immanentization as

> the process whereby meaning, significance, and "fullness" are sought within an enclosed, self-sufficient, naturalistic universe without any reference to transcendence. A kind of "enclosure."[67]

Terminologically, this frame can for example be seen in speaking about a "universe" rather than about a "cosmos," or "nature" instead of "creation."[68] The metaphysical quality, or the spiritual meaning ascribed to these entities, is stripped off. An example is how time is perceived. In premodern imaginaries, time was understood metaphysically, multivalently, and kariotically –it included higher times– as can be seen in the liturgical calendar.[69] In the modern imaginary, the time-consciousness changed into a merely linear, chronological, and homogeneous perception of time.[70] In the immanent frame, time became experienced as natural succession of moments and as indifferent to the content of those moments.

The influence of immanentization and the immanent frame can also be sensed in the normalised distinction between immanence and transcendence.[71] When God is connected with transcendence, this linguistic distinction places God outside the frame. Although the ontological distinction between Creator and creation has been a generally accepted Christian belief, within it the supernatural and natural realm were connected in a variety of ways.[72] When a social imagination, like the imagination of time, is increasingly determined by a natural, enclosed, immanent world order that is not connected with but separated from a transcendent realm, this has consequences both for the relevance and for the believability of God's involvement in the world.

---

[66] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 141.
[67] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 141.
[68] Cf. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 35.
[69] Franklin, *Taylor and Theology*, 43.
[70] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 55.
[71] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 15-16, 542, 548.
[72] Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles. "'Long Live the Weeds and the Wilderness Yet': Reflections on a Secular Age." *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 356.

The believability of God and especially his agency was not only influenced by the process of immanentization, but also by the imaginary of the buffered self. The problem with God was similar. An active God might intrude the immanent world –that is distinct from transcendence– and affect invulnerable selves –that are invulnerable to spiritual affairs. A gradual shift in the perception of God's providence was also related to what Taylor denotes as an "anthropocentric shift."[73] God's providence not only became increasingly described in immanent terms and but also aimed at human flourishing, especially economic benefit. The increasing emphasis on human benefit and the decreasing believability of God's active agency, resulted gradually in the idea that God ordered the world and then became uninvolved. In this deistic conception of God, God architected the world and provided for its ordering which was impersonal but beneficial for human beings, but then became uninvolved and passive.[74] In this way, God became irrelevant to daily life. God is not necessarily perceived as non-existent, but not involved in the world order. God is not necessarily out, but he is out of the picture.

A crucial consequence of the depersonalisation and decreasing involvement of an active God combined with the aforementioned process of excarnation, is the decrease of communion between God and human beings.[75] The combination of decreased communion between God and human beings, the negative appreciation of embodiment, and the increasing individualistic sense of self results in a negative appreciation of the body –both in the physical sense, in the ecclesial sense, and also in the Eucharistic sense.[76]

I want to underline that this immanent frame is a kind of sense or intuition that "hangs in the social air," a spontaneous, prereflective grasp of reality, rather than a reflected belief. It constitutes what is *believable*, not what is believed. In Smith's words, "we inhabit a self-sufficient immanent order, *even if we believe in transcendence.*"[77] Still many people believe that the universe is created or that God influences their lives. With the sketch of secular social imaginaries I do not want to suggest that secular social imaginaries are just out there or the only imaginaries out there. Social imaginaries are the fruit of human making and are also contested. In the context of this thesis especially the sense of self is a demonstrative example.

---

[73] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 221. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 49.
[74] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 275.
[75] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 278-279.
[76] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 58.
[77] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 93.

Although phenomenological approaches like Smith's and Lacoste's (see chapter 2) work within an immanent frame, their sense of self is very different than the excarnated, rationalistic self I described in §1.2.1, especially in the nexus of meaning making, the body, and communal practice.

## 1.3 Secular Experience

The third step in this chapter, is a reflection on two cases in which it the inscription of secular social imaginaries becomes visible in the human experience. In §1.3.1, I discuss the experience of "cross-pressure," the pressure that is felt either of various spiritual options or of "being caught between an echo of transcendence and the drive toward immanentization."[78] The experience of cross-pressure shows that the self might not be as buffered as presumed. In §1.3.2, I discuss the interrelated search for fullness experiences within the immanent frame.

### 1.3.1 The Cross-Pressured Self

One of Taylor's key terms that demonstrates that secular social imaginaries are contested in lived experience, is the term "cross-pressure."[79] The perceived buffered self might not be as invulnerable as presumed. Cross-pressure is the pressure that is felt either of various spiritual options or of "being caught between an echo of transcendence and the drive toward immanentization."[80] On the one hand, the cross-pressure is related to a memory of transcendence. Smith accurately cites Julian Barnes to illustrate what is meant with this: "I don't believe in God, but I miss Him."[81] Echoes of transcendence are especially heard, as Franklin notes, in ethical, aesthetic, and relational matters.[82] This observation should surprise a theologian. Goodness, new life, beauty, love etc. are all matters that relate closely to God and touch upon the deepest human desires. At the same time, people are often sceptical about the traditional religious ways to speak about transcendence. On the other hand, the cross-pressure is related to dissatisfaction with a life that is entirely interpreted in the immanent order.[83] Taylor calls this the "malaise of immanence" to which I come back in §1.3.2.[84]

---

[78] Taylor, *Secular Age,* 5. Smith, *Reading Taylor,* 141.
[79] Taylor, *Secular Age,* 304.
[80] Taylor, *Secular Age,* 5. Smith, *Reading Taylor,* 141.
[81] Smith, *Reading Taylor,* 66.
[82] Franklin, *Taylor and Theology,* 66.
[83] Taylor, *Secular Age,* 506.
[84] Taylor, *Secular Age,* 309.

There are two social imaginaries related to the sense of self, namely exclusive humanism and expressive individualism, that heighten the cross-pressure. Exclusive humanism is the sense that it is possible to reach human flourishing, find meaning, or experience fullness without an appeal to the transcendent.[85] Expressive individualism entails that each person has his or her own way of realizing humanity, find out what is important and meaningful in life.[86] One should not simply conform to a model or religion imposed form the outside, but discover and explore by oneself. Consequently, many new spiritualities or worldviews originate. The encounter with them leads to a kind of relativism. This means that cross-pressure is both a generally recognizable experience, and that people are on their own in the experience. The mixture of the core values of expressive individualism, namely are authenticity, freedom of choice, independency, and tolerance is demanding.[87] Religion, also traditional religion, can very well have a place within this expressive individualism, as long as it is an individual choice that aligns with the personal spiritual development.[88]

All in all, a secular age is a time of fractures, tensions, and doubts. Despite the closedness of the immanent frame, there are doubts that this is the right worldview. The immanence is haunted, transcendence is doubted.[89] Cross-pressure is confusing. At the root of the experience of cross-pressure, lies the search for fullness, to which I now turn.

### 1.3.2 Fullness, Flatness, and Frustration in the Immanent Frame

An experience of fullness "unsettles and interrupts our ordinary sense of being in the world, with its familiar objects, activities, and points of reference."[90] Fullness interrupts the comforts, or malaise of immanence. It fills the heart with joy or rest, and the mind with meaning. According to Taylor, fullness can have different gradations, namely the experience of fullness, a more regular middle condition, or the negative side of exile, or ennui.[91] In the last condition, the place of fullness is lost and there is no hope that it will be found again. In the middle condition, there is no complete grasp of fullness, but ennui is avoided. This is a bearable condition, because there is the hope for the fullness experience. During the process of

---

[85] Cf. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 141.
[86] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 486.
[87] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 85.
[88] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 486.
[89] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 3, 10.
[90] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 5.
[91] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 6.

secularisation, the place where this fullness was sought shifted to ordinary life in the here and now.[92]

Herman Paul, a historian who in his reflection on secularisation combines historical insights with an Augustinian theology of desire, offers a definition of secularisation that is related to this search for fullness in this life. Paul defines secularisation in terms of absolutizing the *saeculum,* the Augustinian term for the time between the fall and the eschaton.[93] According to Paul, secularised people –also secularised Christians among whom he counts himself– search for fulfilment of desires in this life, without an active hope for a fulfilling afterlife.[94] Paul is not very positive about the fulfilment of the desire for fullness in this life. Also Franklin supposes that the search for fullness in a secular frame will not secure the desire for fullness. It will, in his words, "either settle for what it knows is not really fullness or continue that search in frustration."[95]

As I explained, the cross-pressure is often related to what Taylor calls the "malaise of immanence," with which he denotes negative experiences in a secular age related to the immanent frame. Firstly, a sense of the fragility of meaning and the search for an overarching significance.[96] People might feel a need for a higher goal that transcends the lower goals and gives meaning to the lower goals. There is both a search for this deeper embedding, and a suspicion against such an overarching significance.[97] Secondly, people might experience a flatness of during crucial life-changing moments that used to be linked with the transcendent or sacred in rites of passage, like birth, marriage, and death. The connection with God denoted how special the experience was, as it was felt it should be. Particularly at these moments, people might nowadays experience solemnity. In Taylor's words, "the enclosure in the immanent level leaves a hole."[98] A third negative experience related to immanentization is the flatness or emptiness of the ordinary.[99] This "lack in the everyday" is especially experienced

---

[92] Franklin, *Taylor and Theology*, 35.
[93] Paul, *Slag om het hart*, 11.
[94] Paul, *Slag om het hart*, 11.
[95] Franklin, *Taylor and Theology*, 75.
[96] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 309.
[97] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 308.
[98] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 309.
[99] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 309.

33

in leisure time and cultural activities.[100] Flatness is most often identified with the consumer society. The emptiness is felt in the continuous cycle of wish and fulfilment.[101]

This malaise of immanence is in all three cases related to a sense of flatness or meaninglessness, a lack of fullness. In Taylor's words, "there is a deeper resonance which they lack, which we feel should be there."[102] Smith formulates this sense of loss as follows: "the feeling of *loss* exerts its own kind of pressure, the strange *pressure* of an absence. And if that can be felt in the momentous, it can also be felt in the mundane."[103]

This analysis of Taylor's concept of fullness experiences offers the crucial insight that within secular experience, there is a desire for fullness that is not only situated in an immanent frame that leaves God out of the picture, but also within a temporal frame, namely in the here and now. Fullness is sought in contemporary ordinary life. Nevertheless, this search for fullness is often frustrated and leads to an experience of flatness due to the immanent frame and lack of reference to transcendent realities.

## 1.4 Concluding Thoughts: Pressured Immanent Treasures

In this chapter, I discussed in three steps how experience is formed in a secular context. Firstly, I discussed with help of the philosophical anthropology of James K.A. Smith how experience is formed through a process called habituation, in which imagination and narration in their bodily logic have a special place. Habituation is the acquirement of interpretive repertoires of experience through the reconfiguration of imagination through embodied practices and narrations that carry and inscribe an implicit *telos* or orientation. Habituation is a social process and hence concerns the acquirement of communal dispositions. The acquired schemes of interpretation do not only make experience possible, but also set the limits to what is believable.

Secondly, I explored two facets of the implicit grasp of reality that is carried and inscribed through secular cultural practices with help of Charles Taylor's social imaginaries, namely the sense of a "buffered" and autonomous self that prioritises the mind over the body, and the immanent frame of an enclosed realm distinct from a transcendent realm. A crucial

---

[100] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 309.
[101] See also Paul, *Shoppen in Advent.* Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 98.
[102] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 307.
[103] Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 68.

consequence of the combination of the decreasing value of the body and increasing distinction between the natural world and God, is that it becomes harder to believe in communion between God and humanity, as well as between human beings.

Thirdly, I continued the exploration with two interrelated cases in which the inscription of secular social imaginaries becomes sensible in the experience. Beneath the experience of cross-pressure lies the search for fullness in ordinary life. This search is often frustrated due to the flatness of the immanent frame, what makes people wonder if there might be more. Suspicion towards traditional religion, relativism due to the wide offer of spiritualities drive back to immanence. in this way, the feeling of a hole leaves its own pressure.

In the next chapter, I explore how participants whose experience is being shaped by secular culture experience the Eucharist. As the bodily acquired interpretive repertoire of experience both make experience possible and set the limits of experience, this also counts for the experience of the Eucharist, a practice that challenges not only a buffered self by appealing to the senses, but also the immanent frame with a pressing intuition of more, maybe even fullness.

## 2. Experience of the Eucharist

> *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me*. (John 14: 18-19a)

The aim of this chapter is to explore how the Eucharist is experienced when the experience is being shaped through a secular lifeworld.[104] As I search how desire for God might enrich Eucharistic experience in a secular culture, it is crucial to investigate what this Eucharistic experience entails, as well as the role of desire in that. I base my exploration of Eucharistic experience on Jean-Yves Lacoste's French phenomenological analysis of sacramental experience in his essay *L'intuition sacramentelle* (2015).[105] Firstly, I explain in two steps what it means to investigate Eucharistic experience as Lacoste does with some methodological considerations (§2.1.1) and with an initial analysis of three distinguishable but interconnected structural layers of the Eucharist and related experience (§2.1.2). Secondly, I turn to a deeper understanding of Eucharistic experience with four facets in relation to secular culture. These concern the affective structure of sacramental experience (§2.2.1), the present experience of absence (§2.2.2), the sacramental experience as joyful eschatological anticipation that simultaneously underlines immanent liminality (§2.2.3) and the role of faith and desire (§2.2.4). This leads to the conclusion that Eucharistic experience in a secular context as liminal experience is structured according to a logic of lack that is also inherently open and therefore has a wide range of possibilities.

### 2.1 The Phenomenon of the Eucharist

### 2.1.1 The Possibilities of Understanding Eucharistic Experience as Phenomenon

Jean-Yves Lacoste studies sacramental experience from the perspective of French phenomenology of experience. Phenomenological approaches originate from the work of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl.[106] According to Christina M. Gschwandtner, herself

---

[104] Smith, who frames his book as a conversation with French phenomenology, discusses two single-directed movements, how secular culture influences the experience system and desire, and how Christian practices influence the experience system and desire. He does, however, not discuss the influnece of being secularly formed on experience participating in a Christian practice, which is the aim of this chapter. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, xiv, 201.

[105] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle. Et Autres Essais.* (Paris: Ad Solem, 2015).

[106] Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 1. Especially Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1927, 2005) and *Sein und Zeit*. 19th ed. (Tübingen:

also a phenomenologist, phenomenology of religious experience is helpful for theologians in that it offers the methodological tools to study religion as how it is manifested within human experience.[107] In the case of Lacoste's phenomenology of sacramental experience, three aspects of his methodology will prove fruitful for the purposes of this thesis.

Firstly, the phenomenological working definition of experience. Phenomenology is not concerned with empirical or subjective experience, but rather with the way things appear to human consciousness and the structures of that appearance.[108] These structures are more or less similar for different human consciousnesses, because they appear on a shared horizon. In this way, phenomenological research on religious experience is carefully navigated between the Scylla of a total succumb in subjectivism that can hardly be studied and the Charybdis of illegitimate overgeneralisation and universalisation.

Secondly, in the case of Lacoste, his starting point in the immanent world and the role he ascribes to the existential human structure of desire. Lacoste starts from the Heideggerian notion of *Dasein,* being-in-the-world, as secular or "neutral" starting point for the human condition.[109] Being thrown in the world means that nothing can appear except in the ultimate horizon of this world.[110] Even an experience of transcendence –which is neither unthinkable nor impossible for Lacoste– is immanentized when it is received in human consciousness.[111] This means that all experience, also experience of God, is immanent experience.[112] Part of being-in-the-world is the existential structure of desire, the ever-present longing for something other, on which I come back in §2.2.4.1.[113]

Thirdly, Lacoste aims to treat sacramental experience as phenomenon means that he treats it both as he would treat other phenomena like art or a pencil, and as unique case that

Niemeyer, 1927, 2006) and for Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie : Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie.* Volume I and II. (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1912-1929, 1976).

[107] Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 17.

[108] Cf. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 1. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 499.

[109] Cf. Bloechl, Jeffrey, "A Response to Jean-Yves Lacoste," in *The Experience of God : A Postmodern Response*, eds. Jeffrey Bloechl, John D. Caputo, Kristine A. Culp, Kevin Hart, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Renee McKenzie, Michael Purcell, Michael J. Scanlon, James K. A. Smith, and Barbara Wall. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), 104-105. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.

[110] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 501.

[111] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 505.

[112] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 501.

[113] Joeri Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger: Jean-Yves Lacoste.* (Academia Online, 2011), 36.

should be treated in its own terms.[114] This means that Lacoste starts from the immanent order, yet acknowledges that the presence of Christ is authentic to Eucharistic experience. Even though he has a hard time rhyming this idea with the immanent frame he works from, he does not a priori decide whether God will appear in the sacrament or not. His cautious and respectful attitude comes forth from the conviction that a philosopher cannot a priori decide how a phenomenon might appear and should also not impose conditions on the appearing of appearances.[115]

### 2.1.2 Experience of the Phenomenon of the Eucharist: Structural Layers

Lacoste's threefold answer to the question how the phenomenon of the Eucharist is experienced is related an immanent, symbolic, and sacramental layer of appearance. His initial answer is this: who participates in the Eucharist hears a few words, sees a bit of bread and a chalice of wine –no less, no more.[116] A participant of the Eucharist can choose to remain in that immanent experience.[117] Lacoste, however, perceives this as a danger because it does not take the sacrament seriously as a sacrament.[118] Starting from terms of this world easily leads to a focus on a phenomenology of the appearant and emphasize the material elements, at the cost of a phenomenology of the unappearant and forget about Christ.[119] Therefore he tries to move beyond a description of words, elements, and gestures. Lacoste's secondary answer to the above question is therefore this: who participates in the Eucharist experiences a kind of symbolic order. Bread and wine refer beyond themselves.[120] As the Eucharist is not a mere ritual but a sacrament, Lacoste comes with a third answer: who participates in the Eucharist experiences a sacramental intuition. It is about something sacred, someone present. The visible elements of bread and wine might even distract from that invisible thing.[121]

When starting from the conditions of this world, it is quite an endeavour to describe the sacramental intuition. Right from the start, Lacoste recognises the aporetic character of this enterprise.[122] The combination of the idea that the sacrament is meant for human beings,

---

[114] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 504.
[115] Joeri Schrijvers, *An Introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste*. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 14.
[116] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 505.
[117] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 509.
[118] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 500.
[119] Cf. Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 26.
[120] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 507.
[121] Cf. Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 27.
[122] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 505.

with the experience that the sacrament cannot be fully grasped by human beings is problematic and frustrating. There are aspects of the sacrament that are not coterminous with this world –nota bene– in which all our experience takes place. This already means that I experience something that I cannot experience. Something is not right, which leaves Lacoste with a conundrum: the non-sensible is sensed; the invisible is visibly referred to; something appears to experience that cannot be perceived within the parameters of this world; an absent presence is sensed. This is, in terminology of chapter 1, an instance of cross-pressure in which experience is tossed between immanence and transcendence.

For Lacoste, this results in a perception of Eucharistic experience as boundary experience. It facilitates a shift in repositioning human beings to everyday life and the world.[123] At the same time, Lacoste holds that sacramental experience is to some extent a "non-experience," because it cannot be properly articulated or sensed within worldly parameters, like time, emotion, feeling, space etc.[124] Lacoste will never claim that sacramental experience of the presence of Christ is impossible. It is possible, but not necessary. It is thinkable, but contingent. This nuanced and open phrasing is characteristic for Lacoste's thinking. The presence of Christ is neither denied, nor understood.

In a way, there is nothing new under the sun. Or, on the horizon. The frustrating and problematic nature of the boundary experience of the structural layers of the phenomenon of the Eucharist can also be designated with another, less negative, and traditionally accepted term: mystery. Within secular social imaginary, however, there is not much tolerance for mystery. Due to the high regard of human capabilities as well as the disenchantment of the world, human beings should be able to clarify and explain phenomena.[125] In my opinion, the problem with saying that something is a mystery is that this is easily taken as finish line for speaking. Sacramental experience is however more than a religious fascination or awe for something unfamiliar.[126] Moreover, designating Eucharistic experience in a secular context as mystery already indicates three things. Firstly, it stresses the liminality of human perception and experiential reception. Secondly, it points to a lack of human understanding of sacred

---

[123] Cf. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.
[124] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 40-54. Cf. Gschwandtner, "Mystery Manifested," 5.
[125] Cf. Smith, *Reading Taylor*, 75.
[126] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 518.

things. Liminality and lack may, however, sound rather negative, but carry in them a third aspect which is positively and paradoxically filled with potential, namely openness.

## 2.2 Secular Experience of the Eucharist

Having described Lacoste's understanding of the triple-layered phenomenon of the Eucharist, as it appears on its own terms in a secular world, as experience of mystery characterised by liminality, lack, and openness, I now turn to a deeper understanding of four facets of that experience. In each section, I offer an analysis of Lacoste's perspective, then continue with the takeaways for this thesis.

### 2.2.1 Affected Anyhow

According to Lacoste, an experience of presence is authentic to sacramental experience. He defines presence, not topologically as located in a space, but affectually as being-here for the sake of affection.[127] Consequently, Eucharistic experience is affective experience. This is, however, not necessarily affective in the sense of feeling. A presence can be acknowledged, but not felt. In Eucharistic terms this might mean that a believer who believes that bread and wine re-present the body and blood of Christ, but does not feel accordingly, is still affected. The mere fact that the believer believes –or perceives himself as believing– has an affective tone.[128] One might say, be it frustrating and unfortunate, that he feels that he is not feeling. Even if a believer may not feel what he believes, he nevertheless feels himself to be a believer who does not feel what he believes.[129] Something happens there, something that cannot be denied. So, also in not-feeling Eucharistic experience is affective.

Regarding a believer, Lacoste's discussion of the affective structure of sacramental experience deals with the self differently than the aforementioned buffered self. So, "the Eucharist does not affect my congregants" cannot be a legitimate remark to make about believers in a secular culture. Participants are affected, but maybe on a different level than hoped for. Participants can experience a lack of feeling, but this is not a lack of experience.

---

[127] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 513, 515.
[128] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 513.
[129] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 514.

## 2.2.2 The Presence of Absence

According to Lacoste, the fundamental rhythm of sacramental experience to be discovered in affection is an oscillating interplay of absence and presence, disappearance and appearance.[130] Paradoxically, presence and absence are always interrelated. The appearing of either presence or absence, means the disappearing of the other. The following sequence demonstrates the oscillating interplay. Presence can be felt; presence can be felt to be absent, which means that absence is felt present; presence can be felt as not felt anymore, which shifts presence to the past and absence to the now; slightly different, presence can be felt through memory, which means that it is absent in the now but present in the past and through memory affectively present in the now. The only absence that is solely absent, is the forgotten and therefore non-existent absence. And more concretely, the minister acts on behalf of someone who is absent.[131] The visible elements of bread and wine refer to something absent. This is definitely not a mere wordplay. In this line of thinking, the Eucharist can become a celebration of absence instead of a celebration of presence and meanwhile remain its affective quality.

The relevance of Lacoste's analysis of an oscillating interplay of absence and presence for secular experience of the Eucharist is that the presence of transcendence in an immanent world is not necessary in order to have an authentic experience of sacramental presence. Something can be "present in affection" precisely in absence of memory. Christ's real or spiritual presence is possible and thinkable, but also irrelevant, unnecessary, and as good as unreachable. A connection between God, who is not necessarily non-existent but rather absolved (cf. §1.2.2), and the event of the Eucharist is not necessary for experience. This becomes clear from Lacoste's perception of God as the Absolute as well as in his silence on the Holy Spirit. Non-experience is "the experience one is aiming for does not give itself to intentional consciousness." So, I experience simultaneously that God does not come to experience and I experience that what I am experiencing is not God. In combination with §2.2.1 this results in a twofold experience of absence or lack, namely "I sense that I do not sense" and "I experience that which is lacking from this experience." The Eucharist becomes a celebration of affective absence.

---

[130] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 515.
[131] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 506.

### 2.2.3 Bittersweet Foretaste

The current scarcity is, however, not necessarily a permanent scarcity. The present lack hosts a promise of abundance which is not illogical in Lacoste's thinking. If present absence refers to past presence, then it is also not impossible that present absence contains the possibility of future presence. From another angle, this is possible when the temporality of the conditions of being-in-this-world is overcome, e.g. by death.[132] In sensing that the sacrament contains a future promise, it is anticipated. For Lacoste this results in a description of the sacrament in terms of eschatological anticipation.[133] One stretches out to something beyond this time, and by having the experience of stretching out, something is presently experienced.

Lacoste clarifies this by specifying the relationship between the *gustatio* (taste) and *praegustatio* (foretaste).[134] Strictly speaking, the current Eucharist is a foretaste. The taste is futuritive and at this moment unavailable.[135] It refers to something beyond this time, something to come, but not yet here. The conditions of the world do not admit a realisation of the taste. To put it in theological terms, Eucharistic experience for Lacoste is predominantly a "not yet" and the "already" is only affective in its current absence and hence eschatological.[136] It is possible to have an intuition of the taste, but it is difficult to receive. The foretaste has the double function of excess and return to immanence.[137] Excess concerns the breaking the barriers of history and gives a short time of joy that does not commensurate with the measures of the world.[138] In other words, it functions as a fullness experience (cf. §1.3.2).

However, the simultaneous function of the foretaste is returning to immanence.[139] It reminds that participants are living within the confines of these barriers. So, the intuition of the sacramental gift is given in a consciousness that not only totally remains in the world and but also brings it back to the measures of this world. Sacramental experience is thus an

---

[132] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 511.
[133] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,*
[134] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.
[135] Cf. Jean-Yves Lacoste, "Liturgy and Coaffection," in *The Experience of God : A Postmodern Response*, eds. Jeffrey Bloechl, John D. Caputo, Kristine A. Culp, Kevin Hart, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Renee McKenzie, Michael Purcell, Michael J. Scanlon, James K. A. Smith, and Barbara Wall. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), 102.
[136] Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 38-39.
[137] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.
[138] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.
[139] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.

experience of the gap between the historic order and the definitive.[140] It is an experience of not yet, of confines, of limits and borders, of being stuck in the historic order. The foretaste that was initially so sweet, becomes quite bitter.

Another facet of this foretaste is for Lacoste that it paradoxically also contains a promise of its abolition.[141] The conditions of this world, and hence of experiencing in this world, and the sacrament as it is celebrated in this world, will not be there anymore. Lacoste emphasizes that celestial worship will be from face to face.[142] There is no need for empirical elements to mediate God's presence. Although that sounds as a beautiful promise, it makes me wonder how to "taste" without the sensual and material of the Eucharist. Underneath seems to lie a negative appreciation of the material in relation to God. As if the material is rather a contingent distraction than the reason for affectual presence that is closely related to the promised presence to come.

### 2.2.4 Where the Thinkable might Possible

In order to understand something of the mysterious glimpse of the sacramental intuition, Lacoste emphasizes the crucial initiation in "the world of faith."[143] One is introduced to this world of faith in a rather cognitive way through creeds and explanations. It perceives humanity as living before God and thereby offers its own horizon against which an experience can be interpreted.[144] As one feels the belief put in the sacrament, this mystagogy might lead to a richer intuition.[145] If one does not believe that Christ is present, one will not feel it.[146] According to Lacoste, lack of initiation in that world of faith easily (or maybe even necessarily) results in a misunderstanding of the sacramental experience. Although the lack of the hoped feeling might be utterly frustrating for the believer, the unbeliever –the not-enough-initiated person– is the more unfortunate one. If an unbeliever might attend a sacramental ritual by chance, he is easily fooled. He might feel the presence of architecture or sense the symbolic

---

[140] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 517.
[141] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.
[142] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 516.
[143] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 509.
[144] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 518.
[145] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 513, 522.
[146] Remarkably, this does not work the other way around. If one believes in Christ's presence, it is not necessarily felt (cf. §2.2.1).

connotations of bread and wine, but this little feeling will not give him to feel what they substantially are.[147]

Joeri Schrijvers, a Belgian philosopher and theologian who has written an introduction into the work of Jean-Yves Lacoste, wonders whether Lacoste's position becomes dualistic in his distinction between the world of faith and the world.[148] I do not think that Lacoste proposes a world of faith apart from the world of existence, but rather that he argues for a particularisation of the world of faith that is to be entered by initiation, within the region of existence. Nobody is born into this world of faith, nobody is born a Christian, but becomes one. The world of faith needs to be constituted and allowed to constitute itself.[149] This does not mean that it is separated from the world of life. On the opposite, the lifeworld is predicative for the world of faith and determines its basic conditions. "This is my body" cannot be understood without propositional knowledge from the world of existence. Lacoste therefore holds that no sacramental experience can have a primary position.[150] The logic of faith participates in the logic of factuality, of being-thrown in the world.[151]

Up to now, I have not yet elaborated on the collective nature of participation in the Eucharist. Although Lacoste does not discuss this aspect in *L'intuition sacramentelle*, he does in *Liturgy and Co-affection*. Just as people co-exist and share the same horizon, people also experience together.[152] Co-affection is the experience that there is a "we" –we participate together.[153] This is the basis for a more rich experience of communion.[154] However, similarly to the foretaste, this experience is a presentiment. Communion is for now a relation as anticipation because unity without barriers is not possible within the conditions of this world.[155] It lies in the future and is therefore both possible and unavailable. For it to happen, the world must pass, or at least be bracketed. Even within the world of faith that experiential

---

[147] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 514.
[148] Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 33.
[149] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 519.
[150] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 519.
[151] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 520.
[152] Lacoste, "Liturgy and Co-Affection", 94.
[153] Lacoste, "Liturgy and Co-Affection", 100.
[154] Lacoste, "Liturgy and Co-Affection", 101.
[155] Lacoste, "Liturgy and Co-Affection", 99.

bracketing is not possible.[156] So, even within the world of faith, it is possible to think about the possibility of the thinkable, but it the thinkable seems not yet possible.

Before I continue with the role Lacoste ascribes to desire in this world of faith, I make two paradoxical remarks on Lacoste's idea of initiation. First, the idea that the world of faith is always completely in the world of existence underlines the possibility to investigate how experience of the Eucharist is influenced by a secular lifeworld, because sacramental experience is not of a different order. Secondly, it should also be noted that Lacoste's embedment of the world of faith in the world of existence also has consequences for the perception of reality. It means that belief in a created, God-willed order cannot be primary and is always secondary.[157] The default state of existence is immanent and natural, and just after that a consciousness can be developed that might perceive the world as God-given order (cf. §1.2).

## 2.2.4.1 The Role of Desire

According to Lacoste, the reception of sacramental experience does not only require initiation in the world of faith, but it also achieves an adjustment of a desire that is deeply rooted in human existence.[158] This deeply rooted desire is something that belongs to the basic structure of human existence.[159] This means that every human being has a natural desire, whether one is initiated in the world of faith or not. The structure of this desire is ecstatic. It testifies to the ever-present longing for something other, human or non-human.[160] Due to its open and infinite character, desire results in a kind of restlessness.[161] Lacoste sees the satisfaction of desire as its death.[162] A particular desire can die, but the existential structure in human nature remains. This means that human beings cannot stop desiring. It is an integral and embodied human need for orientation and direction toward the world.[163] A transition from a secular to a theological reading of desire is possible, but not necessary.[164] In his essay on sacramental

---

[156] Lacoste, "Liturgy and Co-Affection", 99, 103.

[157] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 519.

[158] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 521.

[159] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 521.

[160] Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 36.

[161] Cf. Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 40-41.

[162] Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 34.

[163] Cf. Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene : Reconsidering Human Agency and Its Limits.* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 102.

[164] Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 35.

experience, however, Lacoste makes this shift. He even seems to argue that it is a necessary step in order to receive the gift of the sacrament. He interprets desire in the world of faith as a natural desire to see God.[165] This desire might be real, but that is not necessarily the case. This desire for God can be unconscious or concealed, but he seems to imply that it is better – or richer– to be conscious about it. The Eucharistic gift is received by a human being in its capacity to receive God (*homo capax Dei*).[166] This means that for Lacoste, an experience of the mystery of the sacrament cannot remain frightening and fascinating (contra Rudolf Otto), which would rather be a religious experience which, in its satisfaction, might die.[167] The desire for a sacramental experience cannot be satisfied within the time of this world, because the thing of the sacrament remains veiled. In this way, this desire does not die, but restlessly remains open for a future.

## 2.3 Concluding Thoughts: Beyond Experience from Lack?

In this chapter I explored how the Eucharist is experienced when experience is formed through living in a secular lifeworld. I analysed Jean-Yves Lacoste's essay on sacramental intuition in which he gives a French phenomenological reflection on sacramental experience. The human as being-in-the-world whose experience is confined to the limits of the conditions of this existence is his starting point. At the same time, he works with an affectable sense of self. Lacoste takes the sacrament as phenomenon seriously and allows it to appear in its own terms. This means that there must be some experience of presence. For Lacoste this presence is defined in terms of affection. The participant, at least, the participant who is initiated in the world of faith, is affected by the sacrament also if it does not feel Christ's presence. The mere recognition of experiencing an absence or of feeling that one does not feel is a form of affection. In this way, a connection between God and the celebration of the Eucharist becomes not impossible, but unnecessary.

I characterised secular experience of the Eucharist as a difficultly tolerated mystery, which means that it is an experience of lack, liminality, and openness. The lack can be seen in the sensing that I do not sense, and in the presence that is appearing absence. The liminality can be seen in the experience of worldly limits and earthly boundaries as sharp reminders that

---

[165] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 521.
[166] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 521.
[167] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 521.

they do not allow the sacramental intuition to appear fully. The openness can be seen in the wide range of possibilities of experiences that are pre-sensed or foretasted, and in the outreaching structure of desire that waits for its fulfilment.

If Lacoste is right, the outreaching structure of desire is the most promising place to search for the reception of the sacramental intuition. Although initiation in the world of faith is also necessary for him, it is not enough. All this makes me wonder, and let me in Lacoste's spirit think in possibilities, whether it is possible to start from this openness of the human structure of desire and transform it in such a way that it is capable of receiving the sacramental intuition. This brings to the next chapter.

# 3. Desire for God

*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*
(Psalm 27:4, King James Version)

The aim of this chapter is to develop a notion of desire that might be capable of receiving the Eucharistic gift. In §3.1 I further explore the human existential of desire similar to Lacoste's notion by analysing the philosophical anthropology of James K.A. Smith. Smith, who we already encountered in chapter 1, is methodologically a logical choice for a further exploration of this notion of desire, because he, as Lacoste, is a phenomenologist in the line of Heidegger and he also works primarily with the affective mode of intentionality.[168] Although Smith's approach will bring us further especially in his close connection of experience and desire, by seeing a relation between creation and human structures, and by introducing the formative work of the Spirit, it becomes clear that his immanently structured notion of desire will not bring us far enough. After a problematisation of Smith's notion of desire that comes forth from his methodological choices in §3.2, I introduce a theological notion of desire with the help of Sarah Coakley's *théologie totale* in §3.3. The transformed notion of desire acknowledges the priority of the Holy Spirit. Human desire is perceived as rooted in trinitarian desire and as oriented towards God. After that, I return to the question of the capability to receive the Eucharistic gift and offer some initial insights for this. §3.4 contains the conclusion of this chapter.

## 3.1 Philosophical Anthropology of Human Desire

In Smith's philosophical anthropology, desire is defined as a loving orientation aiming at a "kingdom," that is formed through repetitive practice.[169] Rightly aimed desire is the embodied and intrinsic longing for the kingdom of God. Desire is characterised by three things, namely intentionality, teleology, and bodily formation. Firstly, intentionality means –and here Smith shows his indebtedness to Heidegger– that "our being-in-the-world is characterised by a dynamic, 'ek-static' orientation that 'intends' the world or 'aims at' the world as an object of

---

[168] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle*, 497. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 14, 23.
[169] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 47

consciousness."[170] This intending the world can have different modes. Whereas in *Imagining the Kingdom* Smith mostly works with the perceptive mode, here he claims, similar to Lacoste, that the affective mode is the human default mode to intend the world.[171] Human beings worship what they ultimately *love*, whether consciously or not. As worship is a formative practice, this means that one's ultimate desire, one's fundamental orientation, shapes and governs one's being-in-the-world in that it determines our actions.[172]

Secondly, in that the fundamental human structure of desire aims at certain ends or goals, desire is teleological in nature. According to Smith, human desire aims at "a specific vision of the good life, an implicit picture of what we think human flourishing looks like."[173] Smith calls this a kingdom –I prefer the term *telos*– and as I explained in chapter 1, this *telos* is imagined. The imagination steers and forms the human desire in the in-between-space between instinct and intellect.[174] In chapter 1, I described how experience, and the interpretive repertoire of experience, is shaped through habituation, imagination, and narration. Desire is similarly shaped as a habitus.[175] As both are formed in the same way, and as both are situated in the same betweenness, there is good reason to assume that desire and experience mutually influence each other, and thus that the enrichment of desire has positive consequences for the experience of, in this case, the Eucharist.

Thirdly, as human beings are embodied creatures, Smith emphasizes the holistic role of repetitive bodily practice or habit in the formation of precognitive tendencies toward certain ends. In doing practices, the body and senses are activated. Activation of the senses means activation of the human centre and in this way habits become inscribed in hearts. In this way, hearts are trained to desire certain ends, namely the ends that the practices carry. In this way, bodily practices over time mould and shape human dispositions to the world by training desire.[176]

---

[170] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 47.
[171] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 60. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 49. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 497.
[172] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 49.
[173] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 51.
[174] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 125.
[175] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 126.
[176] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 56.

The Eucharist, also a repetitive practice with a special role for the senses, trains desire. For Smith, the sacramental *telos* entails an affirmation of materiality and a sacramental understanding of the entire creation to which I come back in §4.2.1.[177] In this way, the Eucharist functions as a kind of counterformation that resists the immanent frame that separates a natural and a supernatural realm as prevalent in secular social imaginaries.[178] In Smith's way of thinking, one could thus argue, that a repetitive participation in the Eucharist trains desire in such a way, that it becomes more capable of receiving the sacramental intuition. Although this sounds circular –that is because the formation is circular, not the argument– this insight is quite hopeful.

Up to now, the human desire seems to be situated and aroused by the cultural context within this world. For Smith, formation in Christian worship works the same as secular formation (see §1.1).[179] Nevertheless, he strives to uphold Christian liturgy as primary site of divine action.[180] Consequently, Smith holds that the Holy Spirit works within these structures, namely through material practices and existential human structures as Smith has analysed with a phenomenological method and theologically assessed as createdness. The Spirit, working through Christian worship, forms the available repertoire of dispositions and inclinations by reshaping the horizons of constitution.[181] In other words, the Spirit transforms experience, and also the limits of experience interpretation, and desire by forming the background of interpretation. As theological rationale Smith refers to Calvin's accommodation theology in which God meets human beings where they are.[182]

## 3.2 Checks and Balances

Let me continue with an assessment of Smith's philosophical notion of desire with the prolonged nexus of desire, experience, and the Eucharist in mind. In sum, Smith's notion of desire of affectively intentional, loving orientation aimed at a vision of the good life as God intends it is situated in the same betweenness as the interpretive repertoire of experience. This makes an enrichment of experience possible through the right formation of desire. This

---

[177] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 45, 133.
[178] Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 131. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 40.
[179] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 163.
[180] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 15. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 143.
[181] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 40.
[182] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 12.

also means that the misdirection or misformation of desire has negative consequences for the experience. The formation through bodily practices and the special role for the activation of the senses is a promising insight in researching experience of the Eucharist, which is itself a repetitive, embodied practice. Smith's theological intuition that liturgical formation and the Holy Spirit are connected, as well as his evaluation of the human structure of desire as created by God are valuable insights.

Despite the fact that Smith's insights have brought us further, they will not bring us far enough. There are namely some intrinsic theological problems both with Smith's notion of desire and with his phenomenological methodology. Smith perceives the sacrament of the Eucharist as "invitation to be stretched out of the comforts of immanence."[183] However, both his account of the formation of desire (§3.2.1) as well as his teleology of desire (§3.2.2) do not stretch out of comfortable immanence. In my opinion, this is due to his phenomenological method that does not allow him to do so (§3.2.3). By the end of this section, the reader knows that not only a transformation of *desire* is necessary, but also a transformation of the *notion* of desire.

### 3.2.1 Naturalising the work of the Spirit

Although Smith has a good intuition to introduce the work of the Spirit when he speaks of the formation of desire in Christian worship, serious problems arise in the neat and precise way he describes it. Even though Smith himself observes the danger of naturalising the work of the Spirit and instrumentalising liturgy, I hope my verdict is not too harsh when I state that Smith might well be accused of slipping in both pitfalls himself. Despite that he claims that he does not want to construct liturgy as an entirely immanent or natural process, he still starts within this-worldly structures and seems to add the Holy Spirit to them later. Smith's assessment of the doctrines of creation and accommodation gives him the theological basis to do so –God has good reason to work within the structures he created, and God gracefully accommodates to the human level.[184] Nevertheless, the work of the Spirit can never be confined to immanent structures of being-in-the-world. A consequence of that is that formation by the Spirit can neither be surprising nor interruptive. The Biblical account of the Spirit gives plenty of reason

---

[183] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 182.
[184] In both *Desiring* and in *Imaging* Smith does not offer a clear theological perspective on the relation between creation and the Spirit, except for the idea that the Spirit works through created structures.

to have a dynamic idea of his work that is open for ways one cannot analyse. Smith's notion of formation is very robust, slow, and immanent, which makes me wonder to what extent it should just be called "formation," rather than "transformation."

A related problem is Smith's argument that secular and Christian liturgies work the same. Smith only observes a different outcome of the liturgies, not a different process except for, to put it bluntly, the addition of the Spirit. His lack of differentiation results in both theological and phenomenological obscurities. Theologically, various theological aspects of Smith's thinking seem to be incoherent with this idea. Take his ideas of general and specific grace, and his idea of the *missio Dei.* On the one hand, Smith himself observes an unwanted ecclesial marginalisation in emphasizing that all liturgies work the same, which he seems to solve with the Calvinist notion of general and specific grace. With this idea, he acknowledges a special presence of God in the church.[185] He takes this a step further with his speaking about the *missio Dei*.[186] For Smith, this means that people are formed in the church in order to be sent in the world to act and live there as witnesses of the Gospel. As both the idea of general grace, and the idea of *missio Dei* entail that the Spirit is already working in the world and, for the latter that people join this work, it makes me wonder how the formation through the Spirit is related to secular liturgies. If Christian and secular liturgies work the same, would that then not imply that the Spirit also works through secular liturgies? The same liturgies of which Smith claimed that they mis-form, rather than form? Or does the Spirit only form through secular liturgies to the extent that they cohere with the right vision of the kingdom? And vice versa, if secular liturgies work the same as Christian liturgies, and if the Spirit works through Christian liturgies, what does the idea of general and specific grace entail? What is missing in Smith's analysis, is not only a clear differentiation between secular and Christian liturgies combined with a dynamic and surprising idea of the work of the Spirit, but also a sound ecclesiology.

### 3.2.2 Human Desire for Desire

A second problem with Smith's notion of desire concerns the teleology, in this case, the right teleology. Whereas Lacoste's default orientation of human desire seems to be something other –it is just ecstatic– Smith seems to have a more concrete idea about the default orientation. For Smith, desire aims at a kingdom, an image of human flourishing or the good

---

[185] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 140.
[186] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 151.

life. Although this sounds rather faithful, good desire seems for Smith not directly aimed at God, but at a picture of a good world, a vision of the good life, or an imagined "kingdom." One could wonder why Smith's default orientation of human desire, or rather the ultimate Christian desire, would not be desire for God. Is the *telos* of the kingdom of God not God himself? And if that is the case, is desiring the kingdom than not actually a desiring for desiring for God? Although this is not nothing –similar to the beginning of wisdom is searching for wisdom (Prov. 4:7)– it is, in my opinion, unnecessarily indirect.

Smith does, however, speak about desire for God in a few instances that all carry the same core.[187] With the good creation, human desire was oriented towards God. In their current fallen and sinful state, human beings still have an ecstatic structure. Smith's idea about desire for God becomes most clear in his reaffirmation of John Calvin's notion of *sensus divinitatis,* a natural awareness of divinity.[188] Smith interprets this as a passional disposition to worship.[189] Through the fall, this passional disposition is not naturally aimed at God, but this "seed for religion" still remains part and parcel of human beings. That the human heart appears to be a factory of idols is in Smith's reading of Calvin a sign of the human nature as liturgical animals.[190] Remarkably, Smith's conclusion is not that desire for God is the ultimate orientation as it was in the good creation, but just that the fact that wrongly aimed desire is a testimony to the human nature as desiring animals.[191]

There are multiple reasons why desire for God shifts to the background in Smith's argument. Firstly, the role he ascribes to imagination in the formation of desire. It is, especially for a thinker indebted to Calvinist thought, theologically problematic that the *telos* of desire is the same as the *telos* of imagination. If imagining forms desiring, then desiring God is theologically problematic, because it entails an idolatrous *imagining* God. Secondly, as noted above, Smith's analysis of desire remains immanent. The *telos* of "a vision of a kingdom" does not have to stretch out of immanence, but can safely remain inside it. Like the first problem of the naturalisation of the Spirit, I think that this teleological problem goes back to the same methodological root, to which I turn now.

---

187 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 71, 82, 116-118.
188 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 116.
189 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 117.
190 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 117-118.
191 Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 72.

### 3.2.3 Invitation Declined

The both the formational and the teleological problem is rooted in Smith's phenomenological approach that prevents a stretching out of comfortable immanence. Although Smith theologically assesses a lot of his phenomenological analyses –an endeavour that should be applauded, but also critically assessed– he remains heavily indebted to phenomenological presuppositions that prevent proper speech about God. This concerns mostly a confinement of God to an immanent frame that is stretched as far as possible, but still remains immanent. The attentive reader should have noticed that Smith only speaks about the Holy Spirit within immanent structures, and besides never elaborates on the character of God. It is the question whether the human being and her desire can be properly understood within immanent structures only, and if a "stretched immanence" rather than a "stretched out of immanence" is enough for a fullness experience of the Eucharist.

A clear case of Smith's immanent frame is his phenomenological interpretation combined with his theological assessment of the human condition. Smith claims that the human being is a created being. This seems, however, rather a Christian twist to the Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world than an inherently Christian way of thinking embedded in creation theology. This can, for example, be seen in the lack of a notion of being created in the image of God. This comes to the surface on instances here Smith places the idea of creation in a form of perception of the world, rather than as basic reality of embodied creatures.[192] This is similar to Lacoste's idea of the world of faith.[193] In the end, the reader of Smith's trilogy does not really know how human desire and God are related, other than what can immanently be said about God, as initiator of human existence and in the formation of desire.

Let me conclude this assessment of Smith's notion of desire with an evaluation of the role of desire in receiving the sacramental gift. It is striking that Smith, contrary to Lacoste, does not give an explicit role to desire as a way to receive God in the sacrament. What is more, the idea of reception or fulfilment of desire remains absent in Smith's work. Like I explained, this is due to Smith's problematic teleology. Smith's thinking is especially remarkable, when I

---

[192] See for example "we *perceive* the world differently and thus constitute our environment *as* God's good-but-broken creation." (italics are my own) Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 165.

[193] Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle,* 513.

combine three further aspects of Smith's own argument. Firstly, he sees the sacrament of the Eucharist as affirmation of the good creation.[194] Secondly, the human desire in the good creation was aimed at God.[195] And thirdly, his idea that the entire creation is structured to receive the presence of God.[196] When Smith's anthropology sheds light on the nexus of desire and the Eucharist, it still remains open and unfulfilled. Smith's notion of desire does seems not to come further than what was for Lacoste ultimately reachable, namely a boundary experience (see §2.1.2). Within Smith's framework, the invitation to stretch outside of comfortable immanence is declined. Not only a transformation of desire is necessary, but also a transformation of the *notion* of desire, that is the methodology to analyse desire.

## 3.3 Trinitarian Ontology of Desire

My assessment of Smith's philosophical anthropology of human desire requires a further search for a notion of desire that stretches out of immanence. As I have shown, not only a transformation of desire is necessary, but also a transformation of the methodology to search for that notion. Here Sarah Coakley enters the scene. Coakley argues that not only desires need to be chastened, but also systematic theology itself.[197] In her book *God, Sexuality and the Self,* Coakley rereads patristic sources and engages with insights from the social sciences and fieldwork in order to investigate the nexus between trinitarian thought, questions of erotic meaning, and prayer.[198] As Coakley holds that there is an intrinsic entanglement between questions of the right contemplation of God, the right speech about God, and the right ordering of desire, her approach is expected to offer valuable insights in that Smith's approach left me with questions about the right idea of how liturgy works, the right speech about the Holy Spirit, and the ultimate orientation of desire.[199]

Coakley characterizes her own method as *théologie totale*. She opts for a "*contrapuntal* relationship" between secular philosophy and theology with a critical and creative engagement in order to, among other things, remain invested as a theologian in the actual lived religion.[200] Therefore, her methodology is open for engagement with

---

[194] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 133.
[195] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 71, 82, 117.
[196] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 133.
[197] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 66.
[198] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 6.
[199] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 1.
[200] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 18, 68.

phenomenological anthropology.[201] Coakley takes the this-worldly conditions very seriously in that she argues that one of the tasks of theology is to offer a recommendation for life. At the same time, Coakley's theology is not confined to this-worldly conditions, on the contrary. For her, theology involves a metaphysical task of speaking about –or rather praying– the Trinity.[202] The core contribution of Coakley's argument both on the level of a transformation of desire, and on the level of methodological transformation, is summarised in the following quotation.[203] Coakley's book contains

> a presentation of contemporary trinitarian *ontology of desire* – a vision of God's trinitarian nature as both the source and goal of human desires, as God intends them. (...) Here ethics and metaphysics may be found to converge; here divine desire can be seen as the ultimate progenitor of human desire, and the very means of its transformation.[204]

Besides the fundamental differences between Smith's phenomenological and Coakley's ontological notion of desire, there are some similarities that –on top of Coakley's methodological contrapunt– offer ground for connection and hence transformation rather than substitution of the notion of desire. Both thinkers appreciate St. Augustine's theology on desire and want to retrieve his notion of the *homo desiderans* that places desire at the root of the human being. Moreover, both ascribe a fundamental role to bodily practices and appreciate the senses. Moreover, both see a nexus between the body, transformation, and the Holy Spirit. Let me now turn to a more thorough analysis of Coakley's notion of desire.

### 3.3.1 Prioritising the work of the Spirit

Coakley opts for a trinitarian notion of desire, both in theology and in lived faith, that gives priority to the Holy Spirit both in the transformation and purgation of desire, and simultaneously in incorporating in the loving life of the Trinity. She does so against the background of a prolonged balance of the equality of the persons of the Trinity.[205] Human desire is according to Coakley not aimed at a vision of the kingdom that is mostly not yet there,

---

[201] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 17-18.
[202] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 20.
[203] For another instance where desire and the task of theology are connected in Coakley's *théologie totale*, see Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 66.
[204] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 6.
[205] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 100-101.

but at God who is there. In that the Spirit, who is God, works in the human heart and pulls desire and with that the entire human being to God, the Spirit and the human being are connected in a way immanent –or better, created– structures cannot completely grasp, but also in a way where the created structures are intrinsically and indispensably included. Coakley roots this way of thinking in Romans 8, where the Spirit is not linearly understood as a continued revelation of Christ, but rather as the one who catches up the created realm and leads it into the life of God.[206] A prioritising of the work of the Spirit does not shift the redemptive work of Christ to the background, but rather works thanks to it. That the Spirit makes the Christian to participate in the life of God is thanks to Christ's indispensable and necessary mediation. Key is the role she ascribes to the bodily practice of contemplation.

Both Smith and Coakley hold that bodily practice is essential in the transformation of desire, and for Coakley also in the transformation of the notion of desire. Contemplation is, according to Coakley, an intrinsically incarnational and ascetical practice that entails "a graced vulnerability to the Spirit," that works purgatively and transformatively.[207] Contemplation prepares for radical attention to the other –in other words, *ekstasis*.[208] Contemplation is not an individual act of self-cultivation, but rather has social implications.[209] Through contemplation, God can empower to resist structures that are incongruent with the Gospel, both in society and in doctrine. Here a similarity with Smith's communal or social idea of formation can be observed. The role of the Holy Spirit, as well as the role of liturgy are, however, different for Coakley. Spiritually, contemplation "involves a progressive – and sometimes painful – incorporation into the life of God (the 'likeness' of the 'Son') via the 'interruption' of the Holy Spirit, as desire is gradually purified, and anger metabolized into the energy of love."[210] Coakley's idea of this bodily practice truly entails a stretching out immanent structures and a freedom for the Spirit to work. In other words, contemplation does not work like an automated structured practice through which the Spirit forms, but rather a bodily

---

[206] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 111.
[207] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 87.
[208] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 83.
[209] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 84.
[210] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 87. Coakley's use of the term "incorporation" involves both the incorporation of divine desire in the human heart by the Spirit, and the incorporation of the human being in the life of the Trinity. Although I follow Coakley's first use, I doubt the correctness of her second use, because the etymology involves the problematic claim that God has a body. In the case of the second use, I therefore prefer the term "participation."

practice in which the person who prays opens herself and waits for the interruption of the Spirit, who blows where he wills.

Although Coakley is very careful and cautious to use the word "experience" to prevent the misunderstanding that it would be a human gain, she gives priority, both in theological reasoning and in experienced faith, to the Spirit in prayer.[211] For Coakley, prayer is not the communication between an individual and a distant deity, but rather a "movement of divine reflexivity, a sort of answering of God to God in and through the one who prays."[212] In other words, in the bodily practice of contemplative or charismatic prayer, the Holy Spirit leads into the Trinitarian life of God. As the human is pulled out herself to God, this is an ecstatic experience. In this activation, human desires are purged and transformed. It results in a kind of noetic darkness, and loss of control that leads to a place beyond words. Precisely by incomprehensibility, one knows. This apophatism might be a necessary correction on a phenomenological analysis that attempts to keep within a place of words. At the same time, it is congruent with the observation –done from a phenomenological perspective– of the experience of mystery (see §2.1.2).

### 3.3.2 Divine Desire as Source and Goal

According to Coakley, the Spirit incorporates God's desire in the human heart. This means that God is not only the orientation of human desire, but also the source; and it means that God desires in himself. The desire in God is not a desire from need, or lack, or emptiness, nor is it frustratedly unfulfilled. Rather it is a "perfect mutual ontological desire that only the Godhead instantiates – without either loss or excess."[213] God's desire is one of plenitude, abundance, and longing overflowing love. This leads to a trifaceted concept of God, that Coakley in relation to desire describes as follows:

> The 'Father' is both 'source' and ultimate object of divine desire; the 'Spirit' is that (irreducibly distinct) enabler and incorporator of that desire in creation – that which *makes* the creation divine; the 'Son' is that divine and perfected creation.[214]

[211] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 112.
[212] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 113.
[213] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 333.
[214] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self,* 114.

Coakley's development of a notion of human desire that is rooted in incorporative, transformative, divine desire is based on her rereading of patristic texts of Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, and Dionysius the Areopagite with a focus on the intersection of gender, prayer, and the Trinity.[215]

Firstly, Coakley rereads Gregory of Nyssa, especially *The Life of Moses,* and takes over his idea of the loss of control. Gregory of Nyssa asserts that the goal of Christian life is the loss of control and the entrance in apophatic obscurity which resembles male loss of control in sexuality.[216] This loss of control results in a "dark womblike receptivity" and the "yielding to the unknown God in an never-ending desire."[217] Although there is a kind of alignment in human and divine desire, there is a difference between human and divine desire in Gregory's thinking. Whereas in human desire there is a loss of control and order, God does not become chaotic.

Secondly, Coakley rereads Augustine of Hippo, especially *De Trinitate,* and takes over his idea of the effusive Spirit-leading divine incorporation. For Coakley, a core quotation from Augustine's work concerns this divine incorporation led by the Spirit: "when God the Holy Spirit who proceeds from God, has been given to [humanity], He inflames … the love for God and … neighbour, and *He Himself is love*."[218] The Spirit plant the right desire in the human heart, namely desire for God who himself is love. The consequence of taking over these ideas is incorporating some (neo)-Platonic thinking in that the form of the human desire is sublimed in the idea of divine desire. For Augustine, contrary to Gregory, prayer ideally results in clarification and insight that lies beyond the darkness of contemporary life.[219] Although God can never be fully grasped in words –it is better to hunger for him– the ordered, harmonious, and clear vision of God coheres with Augustine's idea of the Trinity.

Thirdly, Coakley rereads Dionysius the Areopagite, especially *Divine Names,* and takes over his idea of divine *ekstasis,* that is, God's outstretching love for creation. Dionysius discusses the relation between *eros* (erotic desire, physical yearning) and *agape* (ideal loving desire). Although Dionysius does not take this step, Coakley, holds that the profoundly and

---

215 Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 310.
216 Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 286.
217 Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 278, 311.
218 Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 312.
219 Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 292.

deeply purged *eros* is required to participate in divine desire. The reason she finds nevertheless in the Dionysius's move to ascribe *ekstasis,* which belongs to erotic yearning, pre-eminently to God.[220] Dionysius describes God's love for creation, which is ultimately shown in the incarnation and abiding in the flows-and-returns of the Spirit, in circular metaphors.[221] As such, human yearning is rooted in divine yearning and also here there is an ontology of trinitarian desire.

### 3.3.3 Open Invitation

Let me again conclude this assessment of the current notion of desire with an evaluation of the role of desire in receiving the sacramental gift and see how Coakley's trinitarian ontology of desire transforms the notion of desire Smith proposed.

For Coakley, human desire has its source and goal in the Triune God. This desire is not a form of direct imitation of the Trinity, Coakley warns, but rather the right alignment of human, sexual desire with divine desire.[222] Although human sexuality reminds of the human rootedness in God as the reading of the patristics demonstrates –human beings are created in God's image– the same condition as embodied, created beings denotes the ontological difference between God and human beings.[223] Divine desire both as source and as goal, as well as the Spirit-led incorporation in the life of the Trinity is a love *across* difference, but will *never eradicate* the ontological difference between Creator and creatures. This is a desire that is more than orientation; it is participation. To take it further, it is more than an orientation to something beyond; it is a participation in someone ontologically different, but not out of reach. In secular terminology, this notion of desire connects immanence and transcendence in an intrinsic way, without eradicating the difference between the two. The combination of the so-called stretching out of immanence with the created and embodied structures is possible with this notion of desire.

The crucial role Smith ascribed to the body and the senses is confirmed and transformed after an analysis of Coakley's contribution. Key is the act of contemplative or charismatic prayer in the opening of the self for an ecstatic encounter. This draws attention

---

[220] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 314.
[221] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 315.
[222] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 309.
[223] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 309.

to Eucharistic prayers in which the Holy Spirit is invited. Praying human beings open their hearts for the Holy Spirit who will lead to the life of the Triune God. In this way, hearts can really be lifted up, desires can be transformed, and the open, ecstatic, embodied longing is transformed from orienting to participating. This is a kind of fulfilment that does not resolve in its own death, but due to the overflowing abundance of God's love it continues to live.

One should not forget, however, that even within this stretching out of immanence, heaven is not yet on earth. Even though fulfilment of desire is already possible, this is still not as fulfilled as it will be on the new earth. Although human desire is part of being well created in God's image, there is still, unfortunately, the fact that sinful human beings live in a fallen world. Living a life in a world that is "subjected to frustration" (Rom. 8:20) remains difficult. One can desire to do good, but still not do it (cf. Rom. 7:18). This requires the ongoing purgation and transformation of desires by the Spirit, and it draws attention to the possible unfulfillment of desire. In this way, a tension remains. The rootedness of human desire in divine desire prevents a misunderstanding of the capacity to receive the Eucharistic gift as something humans would have reached by themselves in a semi-Pelagian manner.[224] If the sacramental gift is received, it is the graceful work of the Holy Spirit.

## 3.4 Concluding Thoughts: A Transformation (of the Notion) of Desire

In this chapter, I attempted to articulate a concept of desire that is most probably capable of receiving the Eucharistic gift. I discussed Smith's phenomenological notion of desire with the three key characteristics of intentionality (I am loving), teleology (I am aiming), and bodily formation. The idea that desire and the interpretive repertoire of experience coexist in the same between-space is crucial in the connection between desire and experience. When desire is rightly aimed this enriches the experience, and when desire is wrongly aimed has negative consequences for the experience.

In an evaluation of his notion, it was detected that in order to receive the Eucharistic gift, not only a transformation of desire is necessary, but also transformation of the *notion* of desire, that is the methodology to approach desire. The reason was that due to the confinement to an immanent frame that is maybe stretched as far as possible, and related to God as far as possible, but seems not enough for a fullness experience of the Eucharist. Smith's

---

[224] A serious danger Smith observes in Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 151.

phenomenological analysis was therefore not only appreciated, but also critically evaluated, and transformed through Coakley's ontological approach. This does, however, not mean that the phenomenological insights are rendered invalid, they are transformed. The main difference between the methodologies concerns the relation between God and an immanent frame. Whereas Smith with his phenomenological approach remains within immanent structures also with his theological assessments, Coakley with her ontological approach combines ethics and metaphysics and connects "immanence" and "transcendence" –rather, creation and God– without eradicating the ontological difference.

Coakley's approach results in profound Trinitarian speech of God in relation to desire. The Triune God desires in himself. This desire is both the source and the goal of human desire. The right orientation of desire, transformed by the Spirit, is not only aimed at God, but is pulled into the life of the Trinity by the Spirit who simultaneously incorporates divine desire in the human heart. In this way, the right orientation can also involve participation. In prayer, human beings can open themselves and wait for the interruptive transformation of the Spirit, who prepares to receive the Other.

This makes that the possibility of the reception of the Eucharistic gift –the presence of Christ– is not anymore a possibility of the not yet and the beyond of which the limits can be experienced, but a possibility already. This brings to the next chapter, in which I examine how this transformed notion of desire enriches the Eucharistic experience.

# 4. Sursum Corda

*Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven*
(Lamentations 3:40-41, NIV)

In this chapter, I examine how a trinitarian notion of desire invites to celebrate the Eucharist in a way in which not lack but fullness is characteristic for one's experience. In §4.1, I discuss two aspects of the practice of the Eucharist that are analogous with the theological notion of desire. These are the *epiclesis* (§4.1.1)*,* the prayer for the Spirit who prepares and transforms the human heart in order to receive the gift of the Eucharist; and the *sursum corda* (§4.1.2)*,* the admonition to lift up the human heart where the congregation is called to stretch out and reach higher. In §4.2, I continue with the *telos* the Eucharist carries. I provide a threefold answer to the question what the Eucharistic gift entails, namely the body of Christ as the material elements of bread and wine (§4.2.1), the remembrance of Christ's death (§4.2.2), and the community of believers (§4.2.3). In §4.3, I conclude this examination with a summary and discussion whether the gift is accepted and whether experience is enriched.

## 4.1 Preparation: Ready to Receive?

The Eucharist is not simply an embodied practice par excellence in that the three processes of imagination, habituation, and narration are recognisable. It is a sacrament.[225] The argument of this thesis especially illuminates the prayer for the Holy Spirit in this regard. The Spirit is particularly invited during the preparation in the epiclesis. The *epiclesis* (§4.1.1) is the prayer in which God the Father is called to pour out the Holy Spirit who transforms in and through the sacrament. I think it is quite revealing that this prayer for the Spirit often precedes the admonition to the congregation to lift up their hearts, the *sursum corda* (§4.1.2).[226] Here an analogy between the *ordo* of the Eucharist and the notion of desire as discussed in chapter 3 can be observed: the Spirit prepares the human heart to be lifted up to God. He transforms

---

[225] Although this has different meanings in different traditions, there is an ecumenical agreement. See World Council of Churches, "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" in *Faith and Order Paper* no. 111 (Lima: 1982), 10.

[226] This, of course, differs per denomination, but in general there is a prayer for the Spirit before the *sursum corda,* whether directly in the Eucharistic part of the liturgy, or even before that, related to the reading of Scripture. Paul Oskamp, N.A Schuman, and Marcel Barnard. *De Weg Van De Liturgie : Tradities, Achtergronden, Praktijk.* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 221, 232, 238.

the human desire by aiming it to Christ. Human beings can respond lovingly with "we lift them up to the Lord."

### 4.1.1 Epiclesis: Transformation by the Spirit

The prayer for the Spirit is crucial in receiving the Eucharistic gift. The acknowledgement of the priority of the Spirit's work in the formation of desire and in experiencing God (cf. §3.3.1) also means an acknowledgment of the priority of his work in experiencing the Eucharistic gift. Prayer is a way to open oneself and await the Spirit. This is not a form of self-actualisation, but an invitation through the Spirit for the Spirit in the one who prays, here the gathered community. It prepares for the radical attention to the other (cf. §3.3.1). This means that cross-pressure which is characteristic for secular experience (cf. §1.3.1), being pulled by "echoes of transcendence," might be a secular way of saying that the Spirit is working in one's heart. The openness that results from this cross-pressure is not only related to the created structure of desire (cf. §2.2.4.1) that is restless for its fulfilment (cf. §3.3.2), but also worked in through the Spirit. The Spirit transforms desire and makes it capable of receiving Christ. The Spirit makes Christ present which can be experienced in the bread and wine (§4.2.1), the words on Christ's life and death (§4.2.2), and in the community of believers (§4.2.3).

What was lacking, or rather who was missing in Lacoste's analysis of Eucharistic experience, was the Spirit. What is more, his idea of God as the Absolute seems not to be Trinitarian at all. When God is out of the picture, deemed irrelevant in his absolvedness from everyday life, and when there is no mentioning of the work of the Spirit in relation to the Eucharist and neither in relation to desire, there is indeed not much hope for a fullness experience of the Eucharistic gift. With the prayer for the Spirit, the experience of the Eucharist as mystery (cf. §2.1.2) –the lack of cognitive understanding; that which I cannot grasp– also emerges in a new light. An invitation of the Spirit does not mean that everything is cognitively understood. It might even result in even less understanding, a knowing in incomprehensibility (cf. §3.3.1). This "noetic darkness" does not need to be a reason for frustration, but it can be a form of deeper knowledge in which one can acquiesce. The Spirit

leads to Christ and unites with Christ. In Christ and through Christ human beings enter into the life of the Trinity.[227]

Is the argument of this thesis then not too easy? The problem is the absence or immanent reduction of the Spirit within a secular frame resulting in a liminal experience, and the solution is to let the Spirit transform that frame with his own presence, resulting in a full experience? This would indeed be too easy if there were no clues within the secular frame to do so. The most crucial clue is the human structure of desire, which as existential structure of the human being occupies a large place in Lacoste's phenomenological approach. On the level of experience, cross-pressure, as well as the search for fullness in everyday life as observed by Taylor come to the surface. In this chapter, I strive to demonstrate that these secular experiences do not necessarily need to result in a frustrating Eucharistic experience characterised by liminality, lack, and openness. Faith is situated in a particular culture, here a secular culture, and that is also the field where the Spirit works. The search for a rich Eucharistic experience in the now coheres with the search for fullness in this life. The experience of cross-pressure provides entry points to challenge the immanent frame. Both these experiences are connected with the existential of desire. This shows something of being created in the image of God who is love and promises his Spirit to incorporate that love in the human heart, the Spirit can with joyful expectation be awaited to do so, especially in the Eucharist.

### 4.1.2 Sursum Corda: Time to Change

After the *epiclesis*, the *sursum corda* follows, the admonition to the congregation to lift up their hearts. Here desire is redirected. The Spirit has been prayed to prepare, now human beings can lovingly respond by aiming their hearts to heaven, where Christ is. The call to lift *up* the heart, implies that something higher, something beyond is aimed at.

In the lifting up of hearts, the Spirit is already making participants experience things that will be fully experienced in the time to come, the *eschaton*. One can call this an experience of eternity-in-time, as eschatological tension between already and not yet, or as foretaste.[228]

---

[227] Cf. Laura Smit, "The Depth Behind Things," in *Radical Orthodoxy : A New Theology*, eds John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward. Routledge Radical Orthodoxy. (London: Routledge, 1999), 219.

[228] Cf. Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology : The Church As Worshiping Community*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 79.

In my discussion of the secular eucharistic experience of the bittersweet foretaste (§2.2.3), I sketched the tension between sweetness and bitterness; the joyful expectation that something abundantly good will come, and the painful affirmation that it is not here and now. Although the already does not go unmentioned by Lacoste, it remains underrated in his analysis of Eucharistic experience. He even claims that it is idolatrous to claim that an already can be experienced.[229] If God is perceived as Absolute (cf. §2.2.2), and materialising God is a form of idolatry (cf. §3.2.2), this would indeed be the case. But if God is perceived in a trinitarian way, materialising God can be avoided through a pneumatology in which the work of the Spirit is not materialised or immanentized, but also not unrelated to the material world either (see §4.2.1). If that is accompanied by a Christology in which the events of the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension play with the construct of the division between the natural and supernatural realm, the road is paved for an already. The kingdom that is yet to come, has been revealed and accomplished in Christ, and is already anticipated in the Eucharistic celebration. In formal terms, in the Eucharist in the present, the Spirit actualizes the past through remembrance (*anamnesis*) and anticipates the future (*prolepsis*). The foretaste of the kingdom in the Eucharist envisions the celestial banquet of the lamb, the healing of a broken creation, union with Christ, and reconciliation between God and humanity. And, to pick up the language of §2.2.2, it promises face-to-face communion, that can be called a presence that is solely present, in that it will not be alternated for absence anymore.

The goal of the Spirit transforming desire in and through the Eucharist by preparing human beings to lift up their hearts, is neither having an experience of a not yet with a low regard of an already, as if Christ's presence is out of reach. Nor is the goal having an experience of an already without a not yet, as if sin currently does not affect this world that waits to be renewed. The tension is intrinsic in the experience of the Eucharist and does not need to be resolved in order to experience fullness. The tension is, however, not a reason for frustration and confusion based on an open, restless, and unfulfilled desire due to the absolvedness of God, but rather a dynamics of promise and fulfilment based on a connection with the Triune God in a desire that can simultaneously be fulfilled and continue to exist, waiting for even fuller fulfilment.

---

[229] Cf. Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger*, 38-39.

## 4.2 Celebration: The Body of Christ

As I explained with the help of Smith's philosophical anthropology, practices carry a *telos*, an implicit grasp of reality and vision of human flourishing (cf. §1.1, §3.1).[230] The *telos* the Eucharist carries, is multi-layered and very rich. It is best described as the body of Christ, and experienced as communion with Christ. In this part, I discuss three layers of the *telos* of the body of Christ with conversation partners from different traditions. I do so in relation to desire, as the place to receive the Eucharistic gift, and to experience, of which I am searching for an enrichment within a secular lifeworld. In §4.2.1, I discuss the bread and wine as material elements in conversation with Alexander Schmemann, a Russian-American Eastern Orthodox theologian who against the background of secularism opts for the sacramentality of creation in seeing the creation as epiphany for God. In §4.2.2, I discuss the countercultural remembrance of Christ's death in conversation with Michael Welker, a German reformed theologian with an ecumenical touch, who discusses the Eucharist from a biblical basis. In §4.2.3, I discuss the community of believers in conversation with the Singaporean Pentecostal theologian Simon Chan, who advocates against instrumental or sociological ecclesiologies that he perceives as indebted to secular thought and instead proposes a theological perception of the church as body of Christ. I do not deny the problematic relations between the theologies of these authors, as well as the need for further reflection on their relationship. My own approach of the Eucharist is primarily rooted in the Dutch reformed tradition. My emphasis on the Spirit has Calvinistic roots. At the same time, I do not want to limit my theological reflection to one tradition, because all the saints are necessary in order to understand something of the depth of Christ's love (cf. Eph. 3:18).

### 4.2.1 Experience Matters: The Sacramental Sense of Creation

I start this discussion of the celebration of the body of Christ with the material elements of bread and wine, because these elements best capture the secular imagination. In this way, I hope to connect with the secular social imaginaries of an immanent frame, but also to transform it. In this section, I argue that the Spirit confirms the ontological relation between God and creation that not only transforms the imaginary of an immanent frame, but also

---

[230] Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 51.

constitutes the possibility of fullness in everyday life. By granting a sacrament that involves the body, God shows that human experience matters for him.

The Spirit confirms the ontological relation between matter and God, or better formulated, creation and Creator and hence breaks the secular opposition of the two. This means that materiality and God are not opposites of each other, or unrelated in a kind of absolved or separated sense. If the construct of an immanent frame of an enclosed, self-sufficient, and naturalistic universe where meaning is sought without reference to a separated transcendent realm (cf. §1.2.2), would be accurate, then the Eucharist can indeed only be experienced in a liminal manner. If there is no intrinsic relation between the means of communication and the message –that is, if there is no relation between bread and wine, and communion with Christ– then there is no good hope for the reception of the message. The result of this opposition became clear in Lacoste's idea that the visible elements might even distract from the Eucharistic gift (see §2.1.2).[231]

If the materiality of the elements of bread and wine were contingent or even problematically distracting, then there was no need for the sacrament of the Eucharist at all. If the Eucharist is only about Christ's real presence and remembering his death (see §4.2.2), and communion with God and each other (see §4.2.3), then why a meal? Christ can be present and remembered in the Word through the reading of Scripture. Christ can also be present in the gathered community (cf. Math. 18:20). And these things do not include matter in the way the Eucharist does, and still the Eucharist is a given.[232] This implies that the Eucharist envisions that materiality and spirituality are not opposites, but connected, and that God works through matter. In other words, the Eucharist opposes a separation between a transcendent and immanent realm and substitutes it by a relationship between the two.

Some theologians would in the search for a proper formulation of the relationship between spirit and matter go as far as to deny the distinction between the two. The spiritual is then subsumed in the material, and the material is filled with the spiritual. I think this is problematic. That secular Christians deal problematically with these categories, does not mean that the categories themselves should be eliminated. The solution should not be sought

---

[231] Cf. Schrijvers, *Of Being and Danger,* 27.
[232] I treat the Eucharist as a given, both in the experiential sense as something that appears to you (as Lacoste does) and in the theological sense that Christ has instituted it and it has been transmitted through tradition.

in eradicating the distinction between Creator and creation, which is rather idolatrous in my opinion, and is most probably a form of immanentizing the spiritual and hence not a solution. It should be sought in reemphasizing the connection between Creator and creation.

For Alexander Schmemann the reemphasizing of the essential connection between Creator and creation involves the revaluation of the ontological sacramentality of creation.[233] Schmemann argues that the world should not be seen in terms of self-sufficient autonomy, but as an epiphany, that is a manifestation of God's power and love.[234] God did not need to create the world, but out of his overflowing and abundant love he created it. This means both that there is an essential relationship between God and the world, and that the creation simply in being there is a means both in knowledge of God and in communion with Him.[235]

Schmemann's theology is fruitful in its emphasis that it is possible and crucial to perceive the world not as mere nature separated from the spiritual, but as God's gift of love intended to be a space of communion between Creator and creation. I want to add that regarding the relationship between the spiritual and material, the core events of Christ's life, namely the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension, also play with these categories, not only denoting a relationship between the two, but also challenging the distinction. The resurrected body of Jesus Christ shows that materiality is not confined to our present experience.[236] The pouring out of the Spirit "on all flesh" (Joel 2: 28, Acts 2:17) should also not be forgotten here, as well as the Spirit's role in the creation (Gen. 1:2, 2:7). For the Eucharist, the consequence is that God is not beyond matter, beyond this time, beyond this world, all of which would render the acceptance of the Eucharist gift as good as impossible.

As relationships involve a kind of reciprocity, the bread and wine draw attention to the fact that the Eucharist is not celebrated with weed and grapes that are pure creation gifts –as if the relationship between God and humanity in creation is a single direction– but that bread and wine are cultivated gifts. After a thankful reception of God's gifts, human beings can return their love. The relationship between God and human beings is essential, the love God

---

[233] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World : Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 134.
[234] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World,* 124.
[235] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World,* 120.
[236] Cf. Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 15.

grants can however be refused by human beings –this is where sin enters the scene.[237] Human beings cultivated weed and grapes into basic means of nourishment and a festive drink, and these elements that are important for ordinary, everyday life are now hallowed as loving response to God.[238] The daily activity of eating and drinking has a spiritual dimension. Smith formulates this beautifully when he says that the fact that Jesus institutes fruits of creation *and* cultivation as means of God's grace communicates a "hallowing of the everyday, a sanctification of the domestic."[239] As I explained in §1.3.2, in a secular age ordinary life has become the place to search for spiritual meaning, and also the place where fullness is sought. The formational effect of the Eucharist not only imagines the material world as sacramentally related with a loving Triune God, but also that fullness is possible in that ordinary life, lived in the here and now.

Let me conclude this section with a reflection on the nexus of creation, the Spirit, and human desire that are intrinsically connected in a way that affects the experience of the Eucharist. As I explained in §3.3.2, human beings are created in God's image. God has an overflowing and outstretching love for creation. As the metaphors of hunger and thirst denote, desire is intrinsic in all faculties of the human being, including the body. For human longing this means that purged and pure physical yearning is indispensable in the participation in divine desire. In the practice of the Eucharist, this is not only acknowledged, but also acted upon. In §1.1, I discussed the essential role of the body in experiencing. Smith emphasized this with the term "incarnate significance," with which he underlines that meaning making happens in and through the body.[240] The crucial role of the senses in the Eucharist –ears that hear, eyes that see, lips that touch, nose that smells, tongue that tastes– is consequently indispensable in receiving the Eucharistic gift, and so in being in communion with Christ, and so in participating in the life of the Triune God. The Spirit leads to Christ, and with bread and wine, he takes our bodies all the way there. In this way, the Eucharist counters the process that Charles Taylor coins "excarnation," the process in which the mind and the body are

---

[237] This also concerns the *sursum corda.* According to Alexander Schmemann, the fact that the *sursum corda* is an admonition means that participant scan choose not to lift up their hearts and put their treasure in something else than God. Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist : Sacrament of the Kingdom*, transl. Paul Kachur. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 169.

[238] Cf. Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 68.

[239] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 184.

[240] Cf. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 50.

distinguished and the body becomes less important in meaning making and experiencing the world (see §1.2.1).[241] The combination of the ideas that Christ has instituted a sacrament that reveals the intrinsic relationship between creation and God and the hallowing of ordinary life, as well as the appeal to the body, the primary locus of experience, demonstrates that God takes human experience very seriously. Human experience matters for God, is a proper conclusion. "Taste and see that the Lord is good (…) for those who fear him lack nothing" (Ps. 34:8-9).

### 4.2.2 The Gift of Life, the Gift of Love

The Spirit leads to the second layer of the Eucharistic *telos*, namely Christ himself as Giver and Gift.[242] That is, Christ's death is remembered while he is present as the living and ascended one. Many things can be said about the mysterious combination of remembering and proclaiming Christ's death and his presence as the resurrected and ascended one. In this section, I will confine the argument to the countercultural idea that the proclamation of Christ's death on the cross reminds the participants that, even though human beings sinfully declined God's gift of life and love in the incarnation of Christ by killing him, God still wants to have communion with his creation. Here human depravity and God's abundant love meet. This means that a celebration of the Eucharist that is truly rich, must include the dark core of Jesus's death on the cross.

It is with reason that the bread is *broken* and that the wine is *shed*. The same happened with God's gift of self in the incarnation, a gift of life and a gift of love, is not recognized and not accepted. Christ is murdered on the cross. Humanity shuts God out in the most thorough sense.[243] In the celebration of the Eucharist, there is a memory of betrayal, suffering, and death. There is a narration about powerlessness, loneliness, and shame. In a discussion of the

---

[241] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 554.

[242] There is an ecumenical agreement of faith that Christ is indeed both the Giver and the Gift. There is, however, ongoing doctrinal discussion about the precise manner of Christ's self-communication. For the purposes of this thesis, I do not elaborate on the precise nature of these doctrinal discussions, but aspects related to the discussion inevitably occur throughout this section. Cf. Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?*, 93. The language of gift provides an intriguing connection between phenomenological analyses of the Eucharist and theological language on grace, on which I will not elaborate right now. See especially Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given.*

[243] Cf. Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 107.

what it means that in eating and drinking Christ's death is remembered, Michael Welker explains that the joyful and reconciling nature of the Eucharist

> does not trivialize or explain away the death of Christ. On the contrary, it uncovers a horrible event: on the cross, the failure of an entire world becomes manifest. Religion, law, politics, and public opinion – but also neighbors, friends, and disciples – turn against the one who proclaimed in word and deed God's presence, God's righteousness, and God's love. In part they turn against him with evil intent; in part they turn helplessly away. All this is proclaimed "with the Lord's death."[244]

According to Welker, the proclamation of Christ's death reminds the participants that these social institutions that are meant for the common good can collaborate in enlarging distance to God, here in the most radical way.[245] At the same time, the wide variety of people involved, as well as the idea of the failure of the entire world, makes that people cannot refer to these institutions as unpersonal entities and exclude themselves when Christ's death is proclaimed.[246] Welker's explanation of the collective nature of Christ's crucifixion is consonant with Smith's analysis of cultural liturgies in that mis-form, rather than form.[247] Both include the communal and the personal dimension. In the proclamation of Christ's death, a celebration of the Eucharist is thoroughly counter-cultural. E.g. the imaginary of exclusive humanism, human beings can autonomously reach happiness or flourishing in this life (see §1.3.1), is radically criticized.

Without diving too deep in soteriological issues here, the death of Christ shows the necessity of the purgation and transformation of human desire. Not only one's personal desire, but also communal desire. At the same time, Christ's death on the cross was also Christ's own loving and self-giving sacrifice that would restore the damaged relationship between God and creation. Overcome by the resurrection, Christ's death makes the communion with God, the participation in the life of the Trinity, possible again.

---

[244] Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 106.
[245] Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 106.
[246] Cf. Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 106.
[247] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 82.

In this way, remembering Christ's death is essential in all its seriousness and depth in celebrating the meal of reconciliation, communion, and joy.[248] If one is granted a fullness experience in the Eucharist, it is due to the emptiness that Christ went through in his suffering, and death on the cross. The primary concern of participants should be remembering Christ's death and being thankful for that. And, I would say, in that one also experiences richness, maybe with a tart flavour, but a richness that concerns life and death.

### 4.2.3 Incorporation and Community

The third layer of meaning of the body of Christ concerns the gathered community of believers. Individuals become members through the incorporation of baptism, and that community is by the Holy Spirit incorporated in the head Christ. The last step to be taken is how a seemingly single person-focused notion of desire works in relation to a practice that is inherently and unmistakably communal in character, within a culture that prefers autonomy and self-actualisation above community and sharing together.[249] The focus on the church as the body of Christ, which I explain with the help of Simon Chan, transforms the notion of initiation into incorporation, and experience of the Eucharist as co-affection to an experience of communion (related to §2.2.4).

For the notion of desire as I developed it in chapter 3, this means that I need to highlight the relation between community and the structure of desire. Up to now, I have written about human desire in a rather single person-centred way. The attentive reader, however, has noted that the formation of desire is not an individual process at all, but a communal process. Moreover, the fact that desire has an ecstatic structure means that it is focused on something other than itself. This means that the human structure of desire demonstrates that human beings are meant for relationship, for community, for communion. With regard to the Eucharist, communion with the triune God is not a communion that can be celebrated individually. Even if a person's individual desire is rightly aimed, the Eucharistic gift can still not be received, because a community is necessary for the reception –as I explain below. Moreover, the Eucharist is not only about reconciliation between an individual and God, but also reconciliation among human beings.[250]

---

[248] Cf. Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion*, 104.
[249] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age,* 554.
[250] Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion,* 31, 36, 87.

In response to sociological rather than theological ecclesiologies, Simon Chan pleas for an ecclesiology that understands the church as body of Christ not only metaphorically, but also ontologically in the sense of *totus Christus*.[251] With the church in the sense of *totus Christus,* Chan means that Christ in his totality is the union of the head and the body of the church. The church –as in the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of which the local community is a part– should be both identified and distinguished from Christ.[252] The Spirit unites head and body through incorporation.[253] Through communion with Christ, participation with the Triune God is possible. Besides the union between Christ and the church, there is another level of incorporation. This concerns the incorporation of a person in the church through baptism. In this way, individuals are transformed into *members* of the church. Chan argues that the church ontologically –rather than sociologically– "manifests, creates, and fulfils herself as the Body of Christ" through worship, especially through the Eucharist.[254] For Chan, the Eucharist is the sacrament through which the church is made Christ's body. The celebration of the Eucharist, and also salvation, is never only just about the personal relationship with Christ, but always embedded in the community.[255]

The church as the body of Christ draws attention to two possible enrichments in relation to Eucharistic experience. Firstly, the rather cognitive and elite notion of initiation as used by Lacoste is too thin and should be transformed into a double notion of incorporation.[256] I do not deny the relevance and need of creedal initiation, but incorporation in the community of the church through baptism is more holistic and less individualistic. It also draws attention to the fact that the amount of cognitive knowledge is not the determinative factor in Eucharistic experience. I have argued that desire is the place where the Eucharistic gift is

---

[251] Although I will not elaborate on the precise theological implications of Chan's argument of the church as ontological body of Christ I want to highlight a few aspects of his argument. For Chan the church as body of Christ also implies the ontological priority of the church before creation. A strong point in that, is that it underlines the loving relationship between God and humanity and the intrinsic relation between God, through the body of Christ and the incorporation through the Spirit, with the church. A questionable point is whether Chan makes creation instrumental, a problem he himself perceives in ecclesiologies. This would be problematic in relation to my argument in §4.2.1.

[252] Chan, *Liturgical Theology,* 88.

[253] Chan's use of the term "incorporation" does not concern the life of the Trinity, as Coakley's use did, but Christ. Chan, *Liturgical Theology,* 71.

[254] Chan, *Liturgical Theology,* 46.

[255] Chan, *Liturgical Theology,* 72.

[256] Cf. Lacoste, *L'Intuition Sacramentelle*, 517.

received –this includes the cognitive faculty, but not in an exhaustive manner.[257] This means that the determinative factor in Eucharistic experience is love. And not primarily human, responding love, but God's overflowing love planted in the human heart through the Spirit. The incorporation in the community of the church is taken further with the incorporation of the ecclesial body of Christ with the head himself. This means, secondly, that co-affection is not only an individual experience of experiencing a practice with other people, but that reconciliation with the head, Jesus Christ, and through him with the Triune God, as well as reconciliation with the other members, which is an experience of communion.

## 4.3 Concluding Thoughts: Acceptance and Enrichment?

In the search for enriched experience of the Eucharist in a secular age, this thesis took the secular search for fullness in contemporary ordinary life very seriously. There is, so to speak, a desire for an "already." In chapter 2, however, I analysed that this desire is frustrated, because the gift of the Eucharist was mainly perceived in terms of the "not yet," of being beyond the conditions of the immanent world, resulting in a confusing or even frustrating liminal experience. In this chapter I argued that the Eucharist is not about a boundary experience with the transcendent, but an encounter with the living Christ through the Spirit. It is not about an absolute entity that cannot be sensibly experienced because it is above or beyond this world, but it concerns communion with the Triune God made possible through Christ and made present through the Spirit. Desire has an ecstatic structure and that –in the order of *epiclesis*, being transformed by the Spirit, and *sursum corda*, lifting up the heart– draws itself to what it longs for. In this way, desire for God is not only an orientation but a participation. It becomes fulfilled, but that does not result in its death. Fulfilment of desire for God nourishes the desire, it lives further, and waits for a fuller fulfilment in a time to come.

The gift of the Eucharist, the body of Christ, can already be received in a community of members with transformed desires aimed at Christ. Through the Spirit, communion with each other, union with Christ, and participation in the life of the Trinity can already be tasted in a threefold way. Firstly, through the created and cultivated gifts of bread and wine. The immanent frame is opened up by the Spirit who confirms the relation between Creator and creation. This relationship is meant for reciprocity: after God's graceful gift, human beings can

---

[257] Cf. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 346.

thankfully return their love. In that Christ instituted a sacrament that involves all the senses one can see that human experience matters for God. Secondly, through the remembrance of Christ's death that both counterculturally demonstrates the human rejection of love and life, and on the other hand underlines God's love. Thirdly, communion with Christ can only be experienced in the body of the church. Individuals become members of the body through baptism, and that body becomes incorporated in Christ through the Spirit. The experience of co-affection is transformed in an experience of communion.

# Conclusion

*I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.* (Psalm 27:13-14 NIV)

In this thesis, I aimed to answer the question: How can a theological notion of desire enrich the experience of the Eucharist against the background of experience formation in a secular age? In the course of four chapters, I answered this question.

In chapter 1, I explored how experience is formed in a secular age. With the help of James K.A. Smith's philosophical anthropology rooted in phenomenology, I argued that experience is shaped through embodied practices through processes of habituation, imagination, and narration. Through embodied practices implicit grasps of reality are inscribed in the interpretive repertoire of experience that makes experience possible and set the limits for it. Secular implicit grasps of reality, or social imaginaries, are also inscribed in the experience system. I described these secular social imaginaries with the help of the cultural philosopher Charles Taylor's narrative of the development of secularisation. I highlighted the sense of an invulnerable, autonomous self, and an immanent frame that distinguishes an immanent and transcendent realm, and places God outside that frame. On the level of experience this results in an experience of cross-pressure, being tossed between echoes of transcendence and the drive towards further immanentization. This was related to the search for fullness is situated in the ordinary, daily life, that is often frustrated due to the flatness of the immanent frame.

In chapter 2, I explored the experience of the Eucharist to the background of this secular experience formation. I analysed Jean-Yves Lacoste's essay on the sacramental intuition, in which he, starting within an immanent frame but with an affectable sense of self, gives a French phenomenological reflection on sacramental experience. In taking the sacrament seriously as sacrament and not as mere ritual, Lacoste's essay offered the possibility to provide a reflection on what can be called a maximalisation of secular Eucharistic experience. Lacoste works with a concept of God as the Absolute, placing him outside the immanent frame. With that there is still an intuition; the experience of cross-pressure is also prevalent in Lacoste's description of Eucharistic experience. I characterised this experience

with the terms liminality, lack, and openness. Liminality, due to the restrictions of the conditions of the immanent frame that made it not unthinkable but highly improbable to receive the Eucharistic gift. Lack, due to being affected by a presence of absence and a feeling of not feeling. Openness, due to the open and ecstatic structure of the existential of desire that according to Lacoste is the place to receive the Eucharistic gift. In Lacoste's perspective, this desire remains unfulfilled and therefore restlessly open, resulting in an experience of frustration.

In chapter 3, I explored how this structure of desire can be capable of receiving the Eucharistic gift and hence enrich the experience of the Eucharist in a secular age. My exploration did not only result in a transformation of desire, but also in the transformation of the methodology with which the notion of desire is analysed and formulated. I elaborated on Lacoste's existentialist and phenomenological notion of desire with James K.A. Smith's philosophical anthropological notion that shares crucial methodological roots. The basic analysis of desire as ecstatic human structure with a *telos* that is formed through embodied practices brought the notion further. However, the pitfalls of this approach, like naturalising the work of the Spirit and the indirectness of the *telos* of human desire, appeared to be related to the methodology being indebted to the immanent frame and the place of God. This resulted in a methodological transformation. This does not mean that the aforementioned phenomenological insights are rendered invalid, but rather that they are taken up and taken further. Here I continued with an ontological approach as presented by Sarah Coakley that critically and creatively engages with secular philosophy and includes metaphysics. This resulted in a theological notion of desire with the triune loving God both as source and goal of desire, as well as the key role of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of desire as well as in experiencing God. This shows that the secular experience of cross-pressure is not contingent, but related to the in created structure of desire and the Spirits working on it. Important in this is the prayer for the Spirit, which is an active opening one's heart for God and waiting for the Spirit to fill it with God's love.

In chapter 4, I explored the potential enrichment of experience of the Eucharist with the help of the transformed notion of desire. In this I acknowledged the priority of the Spirit in experiencing the Eucharistic gift, which is the presence of Christ. I observed an analogy in the notion of desire with the *ordo* of the Eucharist. After a prayer for the Spirit, human hearts

are lifted up which means that desires are transformed and rightly aimed at Christ. The multilayered *telos* of the Eucharist is the body of Christ, which means that by practicing the Eucharist, one's imagination, desire, and interpretive repertoire of experiences are formed accordingly. I discussed three layers of this *telos* in an ecumenical conversation with theologians from the Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal tradition. Firstly, through the material bread and wine the Spirit envisions the ontological relation between Creator and creation. In this way, not only the imaginary of an immanent frame is transformed, but also the possibility of fullness in everyday life is constituted. By granting a sacrament that involves the body, God shows that human experience matters. Secondly, the proclamation and remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of the crucified Christ, the Giver and the Gift, who in the Spirit is present as resurrected and ascended one reminds the participants that, even despite sinful depravity God still wants to have communion with his creation. This means that a celebration of the Eucharist that is truly rich, must include the dark core of Jesus's death. Thirdly, the gathered community of members of the church as body of Christ emphasizes that the Gift can only be received in a community, because the Spirit incorporates the community of members in Christ, not the individuals individually. This transforms the notion of initiation into incorporation, and experience of the Eucharist as co-affection to an experience of communion. When the Spirit transforms desire and aims it at Christ, and makes Christ present in these three ways, there is still a tension of an already and not yet in the Eucharistic experience. This is, however, not a reason for frustration and confusion based on an open, restless, and unfulfilled desire due to the absolvedness of God, but rather a dynamics of promise and fulfilment based on a connection with the Triune God in a desire that can simultaneously be fulfilled and continue to exist, waiting for even fuller fulfilment. And in the meantime there is the experience of communion through creation, in the church, and with God.

In short, a theological notion of desire that acknowledges the priority of the Spirit in transforming both desire and experience has the possibility to enrich the Eucharistic experience from a frustrating boundary experience based on an open, restless desire due to the internalisation of a secular immanent frame and concept of an absolved God, into an experience of communion with the body of Christ, through confirming the relation between

the ontologically different God with creation and hence the material elements, based on a desire that is already pulled in God's presence and simultaneously waits for richer fulfilment.

An interesting follow-up for this thesis would include fieldwork in which the nexus between experience of the Eucharist and desire is qualitatively researched in conversation with participants who live in a secular culture. Preferably, this would take place in focus groups. Focus groups are small research communities that both aim to provide research results, and aim to deepen the topic for the participants themselves. In the research process, it is attempted to benefit from the communal nature in semi-structured group conversations. If a deepening of the topic for the participants indeed takes place, this would cohere with the aims of the research, namely enrichment of the experience. In this way, the research can be truly heuristic in nature, academy and church meet, and the research manifests a recommendation for life.

# Bibliography

Augustine, Daniela C. *The Spirit and the Common Good : Shared Flourishing in the Image of God.* Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019.

Ballan, Joseph, Bruce Ellis Benson, Jeffrey Bloechl, Clayton Crockett, Joshua Davis, Christina M. Gschwandtner, Jeffrey Hanson, et al. *Words of Life : New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology.* Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2022.

Bloechl, Jeffrey. "The Life and Things of Faith. A Partial Reading of Jean-Yves Lacoste." *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 76, no. 2/3 (2020): 689–704.

Bloechl, Jeffrey, John D. Caputo, Kristine A. Culp, Kevin Hart, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Renee McKenzie, Michael Purcell, Michael J. Scanlon, James K. A. Smith, and Barbara Wall. *The Experience of God : A Postmodern Response*. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2022.

Boersma, Hans, and Matthew Levering, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology.* Oxford Handbooks Online. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Boeve, Lieven, and John C. Ries eds. *The Presence of Transcendence : Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age.* Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 42. Leuven: Peeters, 2001.

Bom, Klaas. "Directed by Desire: An Exploration Based on the Structures of the Desire for God." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 2 (2009): 135–148.

——— "Sarah Coakley en de rol van gevoelens in de systematische theologie" in *Kerk en Theologie* 65 (2014): 218-232.

Bourgault, Sophie, Antonio Calcagno, John Caruana, Diane Enns, Christina M. Gschwandtner, Marguerite La Caze, Alphonso Lingis, et al. *Thinking About Love : Essays in Contemporary Continental Philosophy*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021.

Bruce, Steve. *Secularization : In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Chan, Simon. *Liturgical Theology : The Church As Worshiping Community*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

Černý, Jan. "A Too-Future Eschatology? The Limits of the Phenomenology of Liturgy in Jean-Yves Lacoste" *Open Theology* 5, no. 1 (2019): 386-402.

Coakley, Sarah. "Pleasure Principles. Toward a Contemporary Theology of Desire" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin,* 33/2 (2005).

———. *Faith, Rationality and the Passions. Directions in Modern Theology*. Chicester: Wiley, 2012.

———. *God, Sexuality, and the Self : An Essay 'on the Trinity'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Dalferth, Ingolf U. *Transcendence and the Secular World : Life in Orientation to Ultimate Presence.* Translated by Jo Bennett. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018.

Dastur, Françoise. *Questions of Phenomenology: Language, Alterity, Temporality, Finitude*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Dixon, Thomas. "Theology, Anti-Theology and Atheology: From Christian Passions to Secular Emotions." *Modern Theology* 15, no. 3 (1999): 297–330.

———. *From Passions to Emotions : The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Falque, Emmanuel. *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*. Translated by Georges Hughes. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

Franklin, J. A. *Charles Taylor and Anglican Theology : Aesthetic Ecclesiology*. Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Ferguson, Everett. *Eucharist and Ecclesiology : Essays in Honor of Dr. Everett Ferguson*. Edited by Wendell Willis. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017.

Gavrilyuk, Paul L. and Sarah Coakley. *The Spiritual Senses : Perceiving God in Western Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Gordon, Peter E. "The Place of the Sacred in the Absence of God: Charles Taylor's 'a Secular Age.'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 4 (2008): 647–73

Gorringe, Timothy. *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses.* London: SCM Press, 2001.

Green, Chris E. W. "Prayer as Trinitarian and Transformative Event in Sarah Coakley's God, Sexuality, and the Self." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 26, no. 1 (2017): 16–22.

Gschwandtner, Christina M. "What Is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part I): The Study of Religious Phenomena." *Philosophy Compass* 14, no. 2 (2019): e12566.

———. "What Is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II): The Phenomenology of Religious Experience." *Philosophy Compass* 14, no. 2 (2019): e12567.

———. "Mystery Manifested: Toward a Phenomenology of the Eucharist in Its Liturgical Context." *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 315.

———. *Welcoming Finitude : Toward a Phenomenology of Orthodox Liturgy.* Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.

———. *Postmodern Apologetics? : Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy.* Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2022.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and Romand Coles, "'Long Live the Weeds and the Wilderness Yet' : Reflections on a Secular Age." *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 349-362.

Heidegger, Martin. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1927, 2005.

———. *Sein und Zeit*. 19th edition. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1927, 2006.

Henriksen, Jan-Olav. "Embodied, Relational, Desiring, Vulnerable— Reconsidering Imago Dei," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 62, no. 3 (2020): 267-294.

———. *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene : Reconsidering Human Agency and Its Limits.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

Houtman, Dick, and Birgit Meyer, eds. *Things : Religion and the Question of Materiality*. The Future of the Religious Past. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* : *Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie.* Volume 1 and 2. Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1912-1929, 1976.

Janicaud, Dominique. *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn" : The French Debate*. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

Jensen, Alexander S. *Theological Hermeneutics*. SCM Core Texts. London: SCM Press, 2007.

Kearney, Richard, and Brian Treanor, eds. *Carnal Hermeneutics*. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

Lacoste, Jean-Yves. *Experience and the Absolute : Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.

———. *Être en danger.* Paris: Cerf, 2011.

———. *L'intuition sacramentelle. Et autres essais.* Paris: Ad Solem, 2015.

———. "Response to Gschwandtner, Hart, Schrijvers and Hackett." *Modern Theology* 31, no. 4 (2015): 676–83.

Marion, Jean-Luc. *God Without Being.* Translated by Thomas A. Carlson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

———. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness.* Translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

———. *Believing in Order to See.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Milbank, John, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward. *Radical Orthodoxy : A New Theology*. Routledge Radical Orthodoxy. London: Routledge, 1999.

Oskamp, Paul, N.A Schuman, and Marcel Barnard. *De Weg Van De Liturgie : Tradities, Achtergronden, Praktijk.* Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001.

Paul, Herman. *De Slag Om Het Hart : Over Secularisatie Van Verlangen.* Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2017.

———. *Secularisatie : Een Kleine Geschiedenis van een Groot Verhaal.* Amsterdam: University Press, 2017.

———. *Shoppen in Advent : Een Kleine Theorie Van Secularisatie*. Utrecht: Kok Boekencentrum Uitgevers, 2020.

Rivera, Joseph. *Phenomenology and the Horizon of Experience : Spiritual Themes in Henry, Marion, and Lacoste*. Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies. London: Routledge, 2021.

Schrijvers, Joeri. *An Introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

———. *Of Being in Danger: Jean-Yves Lacoste.* Academia Online, 2011.

Schmemann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World : Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973.

———. *The Eucharist : Sacrament of the Kingdom.* Translated by Paul Kachur. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987.

Shults, LeRon and Jan-Olav Henriksen eds. *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology.* Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.

Slob, Wouter. "Verlangen naar wat ons wordt aangereikt." *Kerk en Theologie* 67 (2016): 21-34

Smith, James K. A. "Liberating Religion from Theology: Marion and Heidegger on the Possibility of a Phenomenology of Religion." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 46, no. 1 (1999): 17–33.

———. *Desiring the Kingdom : Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Cultural Liturgies, volume 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

———. *Imagining the Kingdom : How Worship Works*. Cultural Liturgies, volume 2. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

———. *How (Not) to Be Secular : Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.

———. *You Are What You Love : The Spiritual Power of Habit.* Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2016.

Smith, James K. A, and James H Olthuis eds. *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition : Creation, Covenant, and Participation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Spinks, Bryan D. *Do this in Remembrance of Me : The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day.* London: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2014.

Stephenson, Christopher A. "Sarah Coakley's Théologie Totale: Starting with the Holy Spirit and/or Starting with Pneumatology?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 26, no. 1 (2017): 1–9.

Thatcher, Adrian, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender.* Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

———. *A Secular Age*. 7th edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022.

Vander Zee, Leonard J. "The Loss and Renewal of Calvin's Eucharistic Theology in Reformed Churches." *Calvin Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (2020): 67–94.

Wannenwetsch, Bernd. *Verlangen : Een Theologische Peiling.* Edited by Esther Jonker and Herman Paul. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2014.

Wardley, Kenneth Jason. *Praying to a French God: The Theology of Jean-Yves Lacoste.* London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.

Warner, Michael, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig J. Calhoun. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Welker, Michael, *What Happens in Holy Communion?* Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Winquist, Charles E. *Desiring Theology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Whatmore, Richard, and B. W. Young, eds. *A Companion to Intellectual History. Blackwell Companions to History.* Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper no. 111. Lima: 1982.

Zahavi, Dan ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology*. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Zemmin, Florian, Colin Jager, and Guido M. M. Vanheeswijck, eds. *Working with a Secular Age : Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Charles Taylor's Master Narrative*. Religion and Its Others : Studies in Religion, Nonreligion, and Secularity, Volume 3. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016.

# DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

> *See explanation at the end of this document.*

## 1. General information

NAME OF STUDENT: C.A.J. (Lydia) de Kok-Meeuse (student number: 1600907)

NAMES OF THESIS SUPERVISORS: dr. Klaas L. Bom (supervisor), prof. dr. A. Huijgen (assessor)

DATE: June 13, 2023

VERSION: Complete thesis version 2

## 2. General information about research and subject of the thesis

(PROVISIONAL) TITLE OF THE RESEARCH / THESIS: Sursum Corda: An exploration how desire for God enriches the experience of the Eucharist in a secular age

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND METHOD(S): Literature research. In this master thesis, I explore how a theological notion of desire has the potential to enrich the experience of the Eucharist for participants in a secular age.

TYPE OF RESEARCH DATA TO BE COLLECTED: Literature

PERIOD IN WHICH THE DATA WILL BE COLLECTED: February 2023-June 2023

## 3. Technical aspects of the data storage

HARD- & SOFTWARE: own laptop device

FILE FORMATS: docx, pdf, epub

SIZE OF THE DATA (ESTIMATELY IN MB/GB/TB): 850 MB

STORAGE OF DATA DURING CONDUCTION OF THE RESEARCH:  own laptop device, back-up Onedrive

STORAGE OF DATA AFTER COMPLETION THE RESEARCH: own laptop device

## 4. Responsibilities

MANAGEMENT OF THE DATA DURING CONDUCTION OF THE RESEARCH: student

MANAGEMENT OF THE DATA AFTER COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH: student

## 5. Legal and ethical aspects

OWNER OF THE DATA: not applicable

IS THE DATA PRIVACY SENSITIVE?: ~~YES /~~ NO

IF YES: HOW WILL YOU ARRANGE SAFE STORAGE AND CONSENT OF THE PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN YOUR RESEARCH?

## 6. Other aspects

=========================================================================

*(The following has to be filled in by the thesis supervisor:)*

☒ Approved

☐ Not approved, because:  _____

_____

_____

Name  _____ *Klaas Bom* _____

Signature:  _____ *[signature]* _____

Date:  _____ *14 juni 2023* _____

=========================================================================

3

EXPLANATION

*Ad 1 General*

Fill in the date on which you completed the data management plan and indicate which version, e.g. 1.0. During the research the research methods might be altered or unforeseen issues with regard to privacy sensitive data might arise. In that case you will need to update the corresponding paragraphs of the data management plan and the date and version number accordingly.

For a complete data management plan, you are required to fill in all the fields, even if that be with the term 'not applicable'.

*Ad 2. General information on the research project and the subject of the thesis*

Describe briefly your research and what research methods will be used.

Describe the type of research data, like written sources (archives, literature), transcriptions, interviews (video or audio tapes), reports, surveys, (enquete resultaten), pictures.

You have also to mention the use of raw or secondary data.

*Ad 3. Technical aspects*

Will specific hardware be used besides a pc/laptop? Will you use specific software for data analysis? File formats can be: DOCX, TXT, XLSX, PDF, WAV, JPG.

The size of the files can be given in megabyte, gigabyte or terabyte. You can fill in an estimate size, since at the start of the research your exact data file size will not yet be known.

Save the data during your research at a good and safe storage. Privacy sensitive data can safely be stored on the Home-Directory of the VU. De H:disk is usually the most safe data storage location. Do not save privacy sensitive data in the cloud! Cloud services can only be used for saving standard data like scientific articles in PDF. Do not use USB-storage or your personal device for saving (privacy sensitive) data either. These might be stolen, get lost or get damaged.

Please note the importance of regularly saving the versions of your master thesis in a safe storage.

After the research has been completed, the data used may be published as part of your master thesis, in an appendix. That holds mainly for small data collections which do not contain privacy sensitive infomation. (Anonymized) Data can be stored in separate files along with the thesis in the PThU library. Files with privacy sensitive data can be archived in a data storage specifically for that purpose, ArchStor/DarkStor, a facility of the VU. Arrangements can be made via the PThU library.

*Ad 4. Responsibilities*

For the sake of the academic integrity it is important to describe in what manner the data will be safely saved and managed That is also important for the verifiability of the data. You can find the Dutch Conduct Code Academic Integrity here: www.pthu.nl/Onderzoek-PThU/Academic_Integrity/

Describe who will manage the data during the research. In most cases this will be the student. If your thesis supervisor also can access the data, you must mention that. After completion of the research the management of the data should be transferred to the PThU library.

If you interview persons in the research, inform them how the (privacy sensitive) data will be managed and by whom.

*Ad 5. Legal and ethical aspects*

Indicate who is (co-) owner of the data.

If you collect privacy sensitive data in the research process, it is necessary to very carefully manage the data once collected. Think about personal information like name, address, age, but also the Dutch

Service Number (BSN), gender or religious beliefs. That must be done properly and safely. (See also Ad 3.) Make sure no data leaks occur. Inform the interviewees (or otherconcerned persons) how the data will be used. Ask them to fill in and sign an 'Informed consent form'. With that form they grant permission(consent) for collecting, storing and using the research data. Inform them that the collected data will be used only for your research.

Anonymize the data as extensively as possible.

*Ad 6. Other aspects*

Any aspects not covered by the other questions can be filled in here.

You can always consult your thesis supervisors about questions which are unclear or if you have doubts about theproper manner to collect and/or, store data. The staff members of the library can also offer advice.

PThU, Amsterdam/Groningen
(form version: 20190703)