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DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER



by
Bill Allen

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

An Abstract of a Project/Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School
Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

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ABSTRACT

For many people today, the Lord's Supper is the most important and significant act of the Sunday assembly when the church gathers to worship. Many of those who consider it significant, however, have little or no knowledge of its rich biblical and historical background, while even fewer have given thought to its theological foundation. There is a great need today for renewal in the area of corporate Christian worship and particularly in the church's participation in the Lord's Supper.

The purpose of this project/thesis is to help a study group composed of seventeen members of the Woodland West Church of Christ discover the great biblical, historical, and theological foundations for the Lord's Supper. These participants would then develop a theology of the Lord's Supper based on the experience of this study.

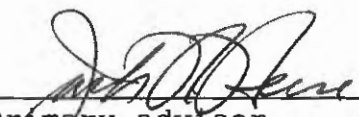
The group participated in four study sessions in October, 1991. In session one the biblical background of the Lord's Supper was discussed, and session two was a study of the historical background. Session three was a discussion of the significant theological themes based on the first two studies, and in session four the group wrote

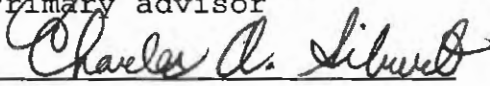
its theology of the Lord's Supper.

The statement of theology asserts that the Lord's Supper is the focal point of the church's Sunday worship and emphasizes the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Lord's Supper. It affirms that each person should actively participate in this symbolic act each Sunday and that in doing so the worshiper re-experiences the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This theology states that the Lord's Supper is a confession and proclamation that Jesus is the living Lord and Savior and that its observance expresses the Christian's joy and hope in anticipation of His return.

According to the responses, the project was a great experience for the participants. It is hoped that this study will continue to enhance the corporate worship of the Woodland West church and that it will encourage others to consider the rich background of the Lord's Supper and to change their practices to enhance their Service of the Table.

Abstract approved:


Primary advisor


Secondary advisor


Date

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Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Ministry

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Bill Allen

May, 1992

This project/thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Reader

To Joyce, whose love and support through the Doctor of Ministry Program and especially this project/thesis, is as responsible as I am for any good that comes from them;

And to Amy and Amanda, who bring joy to our lives, smiles to our faces, and songs to our hearts.

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I wish to acknowledge the help and support of my family, without which I would be nothing. I wish to acknowledge appreciation and respect for the elders of the Woodland West Church of Christ. Their willingness to grant time off for classes and study time and their support through encouragement and participation made it possible for a young preacher to become a little better equipped to minister. I wish to acknowledge those from this congregation who supported this work financially. In troubled times, helped me pay for an education that is far from cheap. Thank you. I wish to acknowledge the very capable staff of this church, who encouraged me, helped me, and covered for me, enabling me to complete this program. I wish to acknowledge all those at this church who willingly and enthusiastically participated in this work and offered great moral support during a very challenging program. Cards, conversations, and prayers were offered for me, and they kept me going. And finally I wish to acknowledge those who work with the ACU Doctor of Ministry program, and especially Charles and Judy Siburt, who truly and effectively minister to ministers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION 1
	Ministry Context 2
	Problem and Purpose 7
	Justification of the Study 12
	Definition of Terms 14
	Limitations of the Study 17
	Organization of the Thesis 20
II.	THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT 22
	Survey of the Literature 22
	Worship 22
	Lord's Supper 41
	Biblical Background and Foundation 60
	The Significance of Meals 60
	Passover and Jewish Backgrounds 64
	The New Testament Background 71
	Historical Background and Foundation 75
	The Ancient Church 79
	The Middle Ages 85
	Reformation to the Present 88
	Theological Background and Foundation 94
	A Theology of the Lord's Supper 115
III.	METHODOLOGY 117
	Rationale for the Methodology 117
	Methodology 119
	Session 1: Biblical Backgrounds 121
	Session 2: Historical Backgrounds 123
	Session 3: Theological Perspectives 125
	Session 4: A Theology of the Lord's Supper 127
IV.	RESULTS 130
	Results of the Study Group Process 130
	Synthesis with Survey of Literature 134
	Effect on Problem and Purpose 137

	Statement of Theology of the Lord's Supper	139
V.	IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION	141
	Implications	141
	Conclusion	145
APPENDIX		
A.	PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION SHEET	147
B.	LESSON OUTLINES	148
	Lesson 1: Biblical Backgrounds	148
	Lesson 2: Historical Backgrounds	150
	Lesson 3: Theological Perspectives	152
	Lesson 4: A Theology of the Lord's Supper	153
C.	PROJECT EVALUATION FORM	154
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	156

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

It is Sunday morning, a little before 11:00. The Woodland West Church of Christ has gathered to worship. Some hymns have been sung, and the congregation has been led in prayer. A man now stands at the microphone, sharing some thoughts on what is about to take place, possibly reading from 1 Corinthians 11, or Matthew 16, or some other passage of Scripture. The song leader follows him and leads an appropriate hymn such as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." Ten men then come to the front, one leads a prayer, and the bread is passed to the congregation. The men return, another leads in prayer, and the grape juice is distributed to the church.

What has just taken place is the most significant act of worship each participant will engage in throughout the entire week.

William Barclay states, "Without question and without debate, the Lord's Supper is the central action in Christian worship."¹ J. R. P. Sclater similarly states that the

¹William Barclay, The Lord's Supper (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), 16.

Lord's Supper "is the central act of worship of the Christian Church," calling it "the Founder's feast of the Christian Church."² Nothing the church does in its corporate, deliberate worship expresses that worship as adequately and forcefully as the communion.

When we consider the Eucharist, we are at the very heart of the Gospel and of the life which it creates in the Church. I would go even further and say we are, secretly, at the place and time which have a decisive effect on the life of the world since, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Supper exemplifies, renews and renders effective the place and the time where the fate and salvation of [humanity] are enacted. That is why the Supper is a kind of crucible in which all the elements which constitute the Gospel are combined.³

This project examines the Biblical, historical, and theological perspectives of the Lord's Supper in the context of a task force of eighteen people from within the local church, and through that study develops a theology of the Lord's Supper.

Ministry Context

The Woodland West Church of Christ is a thirty-two year old congregation which meets in Arlington, Texas. It began on Sunday, October 11, 1959, when twelve families met in the Pantego Public School Building as the Pantego Church of Christ. In 1961 the church selected its first elders and

²J. R. P. Sclater, The Public Worship of God (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 140, 147.

³Jean-Jacques von Allmen, The Lord's Supper (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 9.

built a building on Milby Road.

Dalton Graves became the first full-time minister of the church in 1965. Having grown to about 200 members, the church moved to its present location on October 1, 1967, changing its name to Woodland West Church of Christ.

Bill Minick later replaced Dalton Graves and served about fourteen years as preacher. In June 1981 the church merged with the Arlington Church of Christ. Their property was sold and about seventy-five Christians joined the Woodland West family. The merger has proven to be quite successful.

I began my ministry as preacher here in July 1985. Currently the church has six elders, one of whom is full time on staff. A youth minister, a full-time secretary, and a part-time custodian complete the staff. The church is the primary support for David Caskey's mission work in the Bahamas and is extensively involved in World Bible School and Christ Prison Fellowship.

Numerically, the church peaked in 1981 with an average Sunday morning attendance of 463. The congregation then steadily declined until 1985 and has been at approximately 350 since then.

Robert Dale says churches have a life cycle that begins with a dream, grows to effective ministry, and finally sees conflict, decline, and dropout.⁴ Work done in the fall of

⁴Robert D. Dale, To Dream Again (Nashville: Broadman

1990 on a congregational level and also with a task force of fourteen members helped assess the Woodland West church using several criteria, including Dale's life cycle curve. The task force felt that the church was on the right hand (decline) side of the curve, between the "Nostalgia" and "Questioning" stages. Very effective ministry is still being accomplished, but task force members agreed that if the church's dream is not renewed or replaced with a new dream, decline will result.

This group used an exercise developed by Mark Love, formerly of the Park Row Church of Christ in Arlington, that builds on Avery Dulles' Models of the Church.⁵ No one in the group considered "Mystical Communion" to be the model that best describes the Woodland West church, and it finished last of the four possible choices. "Institution" and "Herald" were at the top of the list for most people, followed by "Servant." This study revealed that a critical part of renewing the dream is the need for renewal and enhancement of public worship. More will be said of this need below in the "Problem and Purpose" section of this thesis. The exercise also pointed to the need to cultivate a "servant" model within the Woodland West church. This area is beginning to show improvement because of the

Press, 1981), 17.

⁵Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

church's active involvement with the local Women's Shelter as well as with a city-wide benevolent ministry.

James Hopewell has developed an instrument called the "World View Test" that "provides a quantitative assessment of the general belief orientation of a congregation."⁶ Ten of the twelve task force members who took this test are in the Canonic field, with the other two barely in the Empiric field. These results are similar to those of the Southern Baptist church in Hopewell's studies, as well as the Church of God.⁷ The Bible, Hopewell says of those with the Canonic view, is "completely reliable and authoritative."⁸

A Congregation Profile Inventory (CPI) was completed by 110 members in the fall of 1990. This instrument is a revised version of the Parish Profile Inventory,⁹ and proved to be a very effective assessment tool. The CPI results showed that people were generally satisfied with the church's education programs, facilities, and fellowship opportunities. The results indicated that this church is

⁶James F. Hopewell, Congregation: Stories and Structures (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 95, 203-211.

⁷Ibid., 96-97.

⁸Ibid., 79.

⁹Parish Profile Inventory (PPI), Hartford Seminary, Center for Social and Religious Research. The PPI is also found in and referred to throughout Handbook for Congregational Studies, edited by Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).

not much interested in social activism and causes, but, as was mentioned earlier, this situation seems to be changing. Some other concerns raised in the CPI will be discussed in the next section.

Some demographic information was obtained through the city of Arlington based on the 1990 Census. Arlington has a population of approximately 260,000. The census block in which the Woodland West church is located has a population of 4,613, most of those living in homes, some in apartments. Over 20,000 live in the surrounding census blocks. Even though the area is established and not considered the growing, suburban fringe, it is a stable area with a good outlook. People in Arlington drive all over town, past other churches, to get to their church.

The Woodland West church certainly represents the individualistic western culture.¹⁰ It is definitely a Church of Christ, with all the history and values that come with that, though it is not a "hard-line" or "right-wing" church.¹¹ It has a strong belief in Jesus as Lord, in the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, and in

¹⁰See Robert N. Bellah, et al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

¹¹See especially C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ (Abilene: ACU Press, 1988); and C. Leonard Allen, The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World (Abilene: ACU Press, 1990), for in depth studies of the heritage of Churches of Christ.

the call of the church to continue Christ's ministry here on earth.¹²

Problem and Purpose

The need for worship renewal, particularly relating to the Lord's Supper, is apparent in the broadest sense of the religious world at large, within the fellowship of the Churches of Christ, and within the Woodland West church itself.

Robert E. Webber graphically states, "There is a cancer at the heart of many churches - the failure to understand and practice public worship."¹³ Ralph Martin writes,

The situation is a perplexing one. It suggests a deep-seated conviction that the worship of God is indeed a vital part of the church's life and witness. And equally it reflects a wistful yearning that contemporary worship could be vastly improved and given a more satisfying rationale.¹⁴

Another respected author, William Willimon, acknowledges the importance of Sunday corporate worship in his definition of a Christian:

A Christian is someone who has heard the call of Jesus to "follow me." In obedience to Jesus' invitation, Christians now gather with others who have heard the

¹²Ministry, like preaching, should be seen as incarnational. "Our preaching, commissioned by the resurrection, is a continuation of the preaching of Jesus Christ." (David Buttrick, Homiletic: Moves and Structures, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, 449.)

¹³Robert E. Webber, Worship Old and New (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1982), 20.

¹⁴Ralph P. Martin, The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 1.

same invitation in order to listen to Jesus, to speak to him, to eat and drink in his presence, and to celebrate his work in the world. Then we scatter. Having been refreshed and re-created on Sunday, we are now able to live as his disciples in ways that show forth the Good News to others. We are Sunday people.¹⁵

Willimon also states, "The Lord's Supper is the communal, corporate act of the church par excellence," and that "a full service of Word and Table is the normal Sunday morning activity for Christians. The recovery of the Lord's Supper as a frequently celebrated Sunday event is imperative."¹⁶

The Churches of Christ share this need for renewal and recovery of Sunday worship and the Eucharist. The late Raymond Kelcy wrote:

However, there are also many devoutly religious people who do not attach much importance to the Lord's Supper and to whom it is not very meaningful. They do not object to the memorial feast and they do not object to its being partaken of on occasions, but it does not occupy a very important place in their thinking. To them it is a practice in which a Christian may or may not participate.¹⁷

This same thought is addressed in an article in Restoration Quarterly, in which the author states that "many Christians have a blind spot concerning the way in which we practice (or present) the Lord's supper. This is particularly odd

¹⁵William H. Willimon, With Glad and Generous Hearts: A Personal Look at Sunday Worship (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1986), 18.

¹⁶William H. Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread: How Worship Has Changed Over the Years (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1980), 125.

¹⁷Raymond C. Kelcy, "The Importance of The Lord's Supper," Firm Foundation 100, no. 28 (12 July 1983): 4.

since the Lord's supper is the only distinctive thing about Christian worship."¹⁸

After discussing the problems the church at Corinth was experiencing in their observances of the Lord's Supper, Allan McNicol says that many Churches of Christ share the same crisis. "We do not discern the body when the words and actions at the table bear faint resemblance to the ancient rite. We must foster respect for the apostolic tradition about the Supper and be prepared to correct our practices."¹⁹

Perhaps the most obvious indication that our movement has suffered from a dearth of study on the Lord's Supper is found in Bill Banowski's The Mirror of a Movement, which studies messages at the Abilene Christian College Lectureships. He calls the Lord's Supper "the crowning summit of Christian worship," and says, "Considering the Lord's Supper as the moment of special primacy in the worship period, the Abilene speakers were strangely quiet about its meaning and function." Banowski cites "only one speech . . . designed to deal primarily with the Lord's Supper."²⁰

¹⁸Bonnie Bowman Thurston, "'Do This': A Study on the Institution of the Lord's Supper," Restoration Quarterly 30, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1988): 207.

¹⁹Allan McNicol, "The Lord's Supper As Hermeneutical Clue: A Proposal on Theological Method for Churches of Christ," Christian Studies 11, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 48.

²⁰William S. Banowski, The Mirror of a Movement:

The Woodland West church certainly shares this concern for worship and the Lord's Supper. The task force group mentioned above, in doing their work in the fall of 1990, felt the most important aspect of church life and identity was worship. The Congregation Profile Inventory expressed that judgment in a couple of ways. In the "Tasks of the Preacher" section, "planning and leading sensitive worship" was given a high priority by 84% of the respondents, including 62% who gave it very high priority. Concerning "Tasks of the Church," "helping members develop a deeper relationship with God" was seen as the number one task needing to be strengthened.

The Models exercise mentioned above gave another indication of this concern, as the "Mystical Communion" model was last of four possible models of this church.

The task force group also worked through Kennon Callahan's strategic planning exercises.²¹ The group overwhelmingly chose "Corporate, Dynamic Worship" as its top priority. Everything else--Callahan's eleven other "keys"--was seen as secondary to worship. The work of this task force ultimately resulted in a Mission Statement, which included this section:

Churches of Christ as Seen Through the Abilene Christian College Lectureship (Dallas: Christian Publication Company, 1965), 250-251.

²¹Kennon L. Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: The Planning Workbook (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

The Woodland West Church of Christ is: . . . a worshipping church. As with Moses at the burning bush, Isaiah before the throne of God, and Thomas in the presence of the resurrected Lord, the majesty of God forces us to our knees in humble adoration and praise. At no time is the Church more the Church than when it gathers together to worship God.

Our people do not know the biblical, historical, and theological contexts for worship in general and particularly the Lord's Supper. Few have spent time in substantive reflection on what worship is and what it means to enter into the presence of God. Clearly, the people of this church are starving for opportunities to worship God in effective, meaningful assemblies. Many have expressed from time to time their longing for more meaningful observance of the sacred feast. One elder recently expressed his great interest in this being the subject of this study.

The purpose of this project/thesis is to help the study group participants discover the great biblical, historical, and theological foundations for the Lord's Supper, and thus to develop a theology for its observance.²² In doing so the church will not only enhance its participation in this distinctively Christian act but will also be given a foundation from which to build a theology for worship, thus enabling it to be better prepared for entrance into the very

²²Compare these stated purposes: "The main purpose of the book is to examine the biblical roots, the historical development, and the theological meaning of worship." (Webber, Worship Old and New, 9.) "This is the purpose of this book: to recall where we have been in Christian worship so that we might see better where we ought to be going" (Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 7).

throne room of God.

Justification of the Study

To a certain extent this study is justified by the problem stated in the previous section. This section will seek to answer the question, "Does this study resolve the issues and answer the concerns raised above?"

The approach and method of this study fits well with what others have done. This has already been demonstrated in the comparison of purposes above.²³ One author affirms this approach when he writes, "The sources of congregational remembering are the Bible and tradition."²⁴ He emphasizes the importance of this act by saying it is essential if the church is to maintain its Christian identity: "A congregation's memory must reach back to find its roots in the biblical communities of faith or it will lose touch with those traditions that make the church Christian and not just one of many volunteer associations in society."²⁵

Similar studies that have sought to deal with these same issues have been successfully completed. There are many dissertations and theses that have considered the general subject of worship and particularly the Lord's

²³Ibid.

²⁴Bruce C. Birch, "Memory in Congregational Life," in Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform, ed. C. Ellis Nelson (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 31.

²⁵Ibid.

Supper.²⁶ Though they have their differences, these studies affirm the importance of the Lord's Supper, and some used small group studies similar to this project.²⁷

Robert Webber makes a strong case for the usefulness and necessity of such a study. In seeking worship renewal, he says, "Gimmicks and so-called innovative approaches to worship become threadbare all too quickly."²⁸ Other writers have sarcastically attacked such feeble attempts, as does Raymond Kelcy's article, "Dimming Lights and Singing During Communion."²⁹ There are no shortcuts in authentic worship renewal. Webber acknowledges the difficulty of the "remedy" for the "cancer" referred to earlier.

It is not an easy one and may therefore be shunned by those who are caught up in the instant gratification cult of our modern age. The remedy consists of

²⁶These include Robert J. Galston, "Coming Home for Supper: Toward a Protestant Rediscovery of the Eucharist" (D.Min. thesis, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 1986); Fladger Levon Hucks, "Increasing the Understanding and Appreciation of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in Bailey Memorial, a Small United Methodist Church Located in a Small Southern Textile Mill Town (South Carolina)" (D.Min. thesis, Drew University, 1982); F. Paul DeHoff, "Toward an Understanding of the Eucharist" (D.Min. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981); and William Ray Ellis, "The Lord's Supper: A Study in Origin and Interpretation" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956).

²⁷An example of a thesis on the more general subject of worship is Terry Cartwright, "Developing a Theology of Worship for the Lakewood Church" (D.Min. thesis, Abilene Christian University, 1991).

²⁸Webber, 13-14.

²⁹Raymond C. Kelcy, "Dimming Lights and Singing During Communion," Firm Foundation 93, no. 17 (27 April 1976): 4.

repentance, a metanoia, a turning away from all shallow and uninformed approaches to worship. It means we must renew our understanding and practice of worship.³⁰

Definition of Terms

An important term in need of some clarification is "theology." Mark Ellingsen defines theology and describes the critical importance of the theological task:

As much as any time in history it is important that Christians understand their faith: theology is indispensable for all Christians. Theology is thought about God, specifically, reflection on Scripture and doctrines. These doctrines are the principles or rules which, because they are correct expositions of Scripture, govern the Christian community. The theological task, that of gaining a proper understanding of the biblically-based doctrines, must be a high priority for Christians in our contemporary situation. These doctrines help us get our bearings, to know who we are. This is particularly important now in a society that is losing its way.³¹

Those in the Restoration heritage have had "an allergy to theology."³² Preaching that is excluded from theology results in a lack of substance, a lack of coherence, a loss of authority, and a loss of relevance.³³ To a certain extent these negative attributes characterize the observance

³⁰Webber, 20.

³¹Mark Ellingsen, Doctrine and Word: Theology in the Pulpit (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 1.

³²Thomas H. Olbricht, "Biblical Theology and the Restoration Movement," Mission Journal (April 1980): 4, though he accurately acknowledges that this attitude has slowly begun to change over the last fifty or so years (7-9).

³³Richard Lischer, A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 14-17.

of the Lord's Supper in many Churches of Christ because of a similar aversion to theology and the theological study of the Supper. Leonard Allen speaks of an "implicit, sometimes explicit assumption that we have no theological or hermeneutical tradition."³⁴ Another author calls for the development of a "much greater literary and historical sensitivity than the restorationist hermeneutic tradition has thus far demonstrated."³⁵

The term "Lord's Supper" refers to the part of the assembly when the church eats the bread and drinks the fruit of the vine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. "Paul uses the phrase Lord's Supper in a technical way in 1 Corinthians 11:20."³⁶ Its use is based on the institution at the Last Supper and the early church's practice of "breaking of bread."

Two words used in referring to the Lord's Supper are "eucharist" and "communion." The latter term is used in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and is a translation of the Greek koinonia. It has to do with "the fellowship which arises in the Lord's Supper." The term implies that "those who partake of the Lord's Supper are Christ's companions" and

³⁴C. Leonard Allen, "J. S. Lamar and Theological Method in the Restoration Movement" TMs [photocopy], (Abilene: Abilene Christian University, unpublished paper): 15.

³⁵Russ Dudrey, "Restorationist Hermeneutics Among the Churches of Christ: Why are We at an Impasse?" Restoration Quarterly 30, no. 1 (1988): 37.

³⁶Webber, 131.

share fellowship with the person of Christ as well as with each other.³⁷ The communion is "a sacred moment . . . when the transcendent God who sent His Son into the world so that human beings may be saved meets with them."³⁸

The term "eucharist" means "thanksgiving" and is used in Luke 22:17; Mark 14:23; Matthew 26:27; and 1 Corinthians 11:24. It is a transliteration of the Greek eucharistia and, during the second century, "became the general name for the whole service of the Lord's Supper."³⁹ Hans Conzelmann attributes its use to Jewish practices and calls it a "synonym in Greek speaking Judaism" to eulogeo, "blessing."⁴⁰

Eucharist, Lord's Supper, and communion are used interchangeably in this paper, though it is acknowledged that each term is unique. Eucharist draws the individual into closer union with the Christian heritage of the last nineteen hundred years; Lord's Supper calls one back to the

³⁷Friedrich Hauck, "koinonos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 3:805-806.

³⁸Webber, 145.

³⁹Hans-Helmut Esser, "Thank," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 3:819.

⁴⁰Hans Conzelmann, "eucharisteeo," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 9:411-412. "It is pure chance whether one or the other term is selected in translation, as their presence alongside one another in Mark demonstrates. One cannot as yet speak of a technical use."

scene with Jesus and the apostles, as well as with the early church; communion speaks to that wonderful fellowship shared between the participants and their Lord.

The Lord's Supper and baptism are sometimes referred to as "sacraments." This term, "in its technical theological sense, . . . belongs to the period of the elaboration of doctrine much later than the New Testament."⁴¹ It is a translation of the Greek mysterion and the Latin sacramentum. The traditional definition is "an outward sign of an inward grace." While acknowledging that there is a "variety of sacramental theologies," one author affirms the value of the sacraments, "since they not only speak God's Word but also re-enact it in our midst." He says that they "have a unique capacity to make memory present in our midst in ways that renew and empower the congregation for its mission in the world."⁴²

Other terms especially crucial to this study-- "worship," "liturgy," and anamnesis--will be defined and examined in the next chapter.

Limitations of the Study

This project takes a task force of eighteen people through a study of the biblical, historical, and theological

⁴¹R. J. Coates, "Sacraments," New Bible Dictionary, ed. J. D. Douglas (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1982), 1044. See also G. Bornkamm, "mustarion," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 4:826-827.

⁴²Birch, 33.

backgrounds of the Lord's Supper, and develops a theology of the Lord's Supper based on that study. The project is limited to this group and is not done on a congregational level, though the work will have an immediate indirect impact on the church through the growth of the participants and it is hoped will be the basis for a future direct impact on the congregation as a whole.

Though it will discuss the subject of worship, developing a theology of worship is not the purpose of this project. Similarly, the project is not designed to develop strategies to enhance that worship, nor to develop strategies to enhance the observance of the Lord's Supper. This point was emphasized throughout the study sessions, and this project works on the underlying assumption and strong conviction that the place to start is not in the structure of the assembly but rather in the biblical, historical, and theological backgrounds for what the assembly, specifically the Lord's Supper, is all about.

This project does not seek to prove that such a study will effectively enhance the worshiper's experience at the Lord's table. As was mentioned above, other project/theses have successfully demonstrated the benefits of this type of study.⁴³

⁴³See especially Hucks, who used a pre-test/post-test exercise with project participants, and also Galston, who used a congregational questionnaire and "talk-back" session after four months of study and experimenting, in particular having more frequent communion services.

Though a thorough definition and study of the term "worship" is reserved for chapter 2, it is appropriate to distinguish between the corporate worship of the assembled church and the personal, daily worship of the individual or family. Ralph Martin speaks of this distinction:

We distinguish between the Christian's private and family devotional life and his or her sharing in the public worship of God as an act of corporate fellowship. In the latter sense worship is by definition a communal enterprise that is much more than the sum total of individual practices of prayer, meditation, and Scripture study.⁴⁴

This project deals primarily with "the public worship of God as an act of corporate fellowship," and specifically with the worship experience of the assembled church partaking of the Lord's Supper.

The final limitation acknowledges that developing and evaluating meaningful worship, including worship through participation in the Lord's Supper, is difficult and elusive at best. True worship cannot be taught. Worshiping God is a dynamic event that does not come about automatically because we know more. Worshiping God is a dynamic event that does not happen just because we have pushed all the right buttons. Worshiping a transcendent God is a dynamic event.

You will never find an intellectually satisfying formula for the presence. Write that down and remember it as you read all the books, by people on your side and by others. In the end the honest writers all have to lapse back for a second to the language about

⁴⁴Martin, The Worship of God, 12-13.

mystery, where they began. Some of them succeed at representing accurately their own church's teaching; they deserve awards from historical societies. Others ingeniously connect their personal philosophy to the teaching; they merit rewards from philosophical societies, though it is hard to picture a single philosopher likely to be impressed. My tone here might verge on the satirical and the anti-intellectual. I do not intend that, since I, too, respect and even regard as necessary the idea of "loving God with all the mind" and extending this to the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. But here is a case where it is necessary to expect only small returns on expensive investments.⁴⁵

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 will address the very crucial theological background and context for the study and will begin with a survey of the literature. The biblical background and foundation will explore the Jewish background of the Lord's Supper and will include discussion of the Passover question concerning the Last Supper. This section will consider the biblical texts used in this project. A brief study of the historical backgrounds will follow, and finally the theological perspectives will be discussed in some detail. This section will conclude with my theology of the Lord's Supper.

Chapter 3 will explain the rationale for the methodology employed in the project and will explain that methodology. Comments on participants and class sessions will be included. Outlines of the study sessions and other

⁴⁵Martin E. Marty, The Lord's Supper (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 72-73.

materials given to participants will be included in the appendices.

Chapter 4 will deal with the results of the project. These will be measured primarily through evaluation forms and journal excerpts completed by the participants. The process and conclusions of the study will then be compared with the literature surveyed and problem and purpose stated earlier in the thesis.

The product of the project, a theology of the Lord's Supper developed by the task force participants, will then be included. The final chapter will deal with conclusions and implications of the project, and will examine further needs and possible strategies to meet those needs.

CHAPTER II
THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Survey of the Literature

There is a wealth of material that has been written concerning the general theme of worship and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the more specific subject of the Lord's Supper. This section will attempt to survey a portion of this literature, beginning with works on the subject of worship, followed by those that deal specifically with the Lord's Supper.

Worship

Ralph Martin has offered very helpful contributions to the study of worship and its history. Worship in the Early Church begins by defining worship and states the identity of the church as a "worshipping community."¹ He then considers some of the Jewish background and through the rest of the book discusses several expressions of worship, including prayers, hymns, and baptism. Of special significance to this study are his sections on the background and significance of the Last Supper and the

¹Ralph P. Martin, Worship in the Early Church (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 9-17.

discussion of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament church, which he sees as "distinctively Pauline doctrine."²

Ralph Martin's work, The Worship of God, builds on the biblical framework and foundation of the earlier work, and "seeks to erect on the basis there laid a model of Christian worship that is . . . both theologically adequate and pastorally helpful."³ He speaks to some of the same subjects covered in the earlier work, but considers them "with a desire to help readers to think theologically about worship."⁴ The chapter devoted specifically to the Lord's Supper and some theological conclusions and applications of the Supper is especially helpful to this project.⁵

Two works by Robert Webber have been of great value in this study. Worship Old and New has been cited frequently and is a good source for the study of worship. He deals with the biblical and historical backgrounds and then gives an extensive theology of worship, including a chapter dealing specifically with the Lord's Supper.⁶ Also of value are two appendices, one an annotated bibliography and

²Ibid., 120.

³Martin, The Worship of God, ix.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 145-170.

⁶Webber, Worship Old and New, 131-147. This chapter was given as a homework assignment to the study group participants, who found the reading unfamiliar if not difficult. Some of their reaction will be given later in this thesis.

the other a three-year cycle for preaching the church year.

Webber's other work used in this study, Worship is a Verb, approaches worship from an active perspective, just as the title indicates. Among other subjects, he deals with the "horizontal" and "vertical" aspects of the Lord's Supper, a subject of some discussion among the task force participants.⁷

William Willimon's works have been an integral part of this study. Of great significance is Word, Water, Wine and Bread. While the subtitle, "How Worship Has Changed over the Years," indicates the general subject is worship, Willimon's emphasis is clearly on baptism and the Lord's Supper. Like Webber, he offers a brief but quite helpful history of Christian worship, beginning with the Jewish background and continuing to future concerns.⁸ Of great importance to Willimon is the recovery of weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. He says that "a full service of Word and Table is the normal Sunday morning activity for Christians. The recovery of the Lord's Supper as a frequently celebrated Sunday event is imperative."⁹ In

⁷Robert E. Webber, Worship is a Verb (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1985).

⁸Willimon mentions the Stone-Campbell movement in his section on "Revivalists," calling Cane Ridge "one of the most famous frontier camp meetings," and speaks with both disdain and favor regarding "the Disciples" (Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 101-102, 103).

⁹Ibid., 125.

this regard he speaks favorably of the Disciples heritage of Churches of Christ:

But their biblical emphasis did lead them to recognize the centrality of the Lord's Supper for Christian worship. Disciples therefore recovered weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper--an anomaly in a time when whatever influence which the Lord's Supper had among most American Free Church Protestants was lessening.¹⁰

Similar to some of these books on the history of worship through the centuries is the work by Oscar Hardman, A History of Christian Worship.¹¹ He gives special attention to the Eucharist and the changes that took place in its observance during the different stages of the Church's history.

Willimon's With Glad and Generous Hearts is "a larger view of the Sunday service as a whole."¹² Though it is written with the layman rather than the scholar in mind, it offers a good examination of each act of worship that takes place during the assembly. Of use to some would also be the Educational Guide prepared by John Westerhoff.

Westerhoff and Willimon also teamed up in a work dealing with the Christian's growth in the worship experience. Their book, Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle, contains a chapter on the Eucharist in which a

¹⁰Ibid., 103.

¹¹Oscar Hardman, A History of Christian Worship (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937).

¹²Willimon, With Glad and Generous Hearts, 11.

brief study of the Lord's Supper is followed by several sections dealing with the Eucharist and Catechesis.¹³ Of special significance are seven "norms" for the Eucharist by which current observances can be judged. These important concerns are given below.

The biblical and historical data remind us that the Eucharist is the normal Sunday worship activity of the church. . . .

The normal pattern for the celebration of the Eucharist is a full service of Word and Table which moves from the celebration and proclamation of the word to participation in the fourfold table action. A Sunday service of word and table is normative. . . .

The Eucharist is primarily corporate and communal worship. It is an occasion for community and communion, not a time for a personal, private meeting with God. . . .

All baptized Christians of whatever age are invited to the Lord's Table. . . .

The Eucharist reminds us that Christianity is a "materialistic" faith. The ordinary, familiar, basic stuff of everyday life - bread and wine - opens up new levels of communion with the divine in our midst. . . .

The Lord's Supper has a victorious, redemptive focus rather than a somber, funereal, penitential focus. . . .

Finally, the Eucharist is an "apostolic" event. The goal of our communion, our fellowship, our proclamation and celebration of our redemption is neither mere warmhearted togetherness nor introspective inwardness. Our goal is to find ourselves offered, blessed, and broken at the Lord's Table so that, being fed and nourished, we may be strengthened and commissioned for life in the world.¹⁴

Oscar Cullmann, in his well known work, Early Christian Worship, deals with the Lord's Supper "only to the points which come into consideration in a general review of the

¹³John H. Westerhoff, III, and William H. Willimon, Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, Inc., 1980), 28-52.

¹⁴Ibid., 35-39.

worship life of the primitive community."¹⁵ Cullmann pays special attention to baptism and the Lord's Supper in an extensive section dealing specifically with the Gospel of John.¹⁶

Other works on the general subject of worship are helpful in setting the foundation for a study such as this one on the Lord's Supper. One of those is The Public Worship of God, by J. R. P. Sclater, who agrees with many other scholars when he claims that the Lord's Supper "is the central act of worship of the Christian Church."¹⁷ Also deserving mention are works by John E. Burkhardt¹⁸ and Evelyn Underhill.¹⁹

Some books are devoted specifically to the subject of worship in the New Testament. C. F. D. Moule's work deals with the Jewish background of Christian worship as well as with the Eucharist. He says that

there appears to be sufficient evidence for believing that, from the earliest days, a sacrament such as came to be called the Holy Communion or Eucharist was celebrated, probably weekly, and usually in the context

¹⁵Oscar Cullmann, Early Christian Worship, trans. A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance (London: SCM, 1953), 14.

¹⁶Ibid., 118-119.

¹⁷J. R. P. Sclater, 140.

¹⁸John E. Burkhardt, Worship (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982).

¹⁹Evelyn Underhill, Worship (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

of a communal meal.²⁰

Moule addresses Eucharistic theory and procedure in helpful sections on the Lord's Supper.²¹

The significance of the Lord's Supper is affirmed by Gerhard Delling in his work Worship in the New Testament. He claims that "the Lord's Supper was . . . the climax of congregational celebration," and that in it Jesus' "coming was especially presented and realized. . . . The centre of salvation-history and its consummation is present in the Lord's Supper."²² Ferdinand Hahn in somewhat similar fashion cites several "essential" points in the study of the New Testament understanding of worship, acknowledging the saving activity of God, the service of people, and the work of the Spirit.²³

The Study of Liturgy, edited by Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold, covers several significant themes of liturgical studies and includes a section on the Eucharist and its observance throughout the centuries.²⁴

²⁰C. F. D. Moule, Worship in the New Testament (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), 29.

²¹Ibid., 30-46.

²²Gerhard Delling, Worship in the New Testament, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 148.

²³Ferdinand Hahn, The Worship of the Early Church, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 104-108.

²⁴The Study of Liturgy, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University

Of special interest to those in the Restoration heritage is What the Bible Says About Worship, by Lynn Hieronymus. He speaks candidly about those aspects of the nineteenth century culture that affected the Restoration movement and its worship and deals specifically with the Lord's Supper in the same way, offering praise and expressing concern.²⁵

There are many articles that have been written dealing with the general subject of worship. The first to be mentioned here are two articles that speak to the Jewish backgrounds of Christian worship.²⁶

One such article is "The Influence of Jewish Worship on Orthodox Christian Worship" by George S. Bebis. He unequivocally states, "There is no question in my mind but that there is an inner relation, a profound interdependence, between Jewish and Christian worship."²⁷ He speaks to several specific problem areas in this interconnectedness, the first of which is "the nature and

Press, 1978), 147-288.

²⁵Lynn Hieronymus, What the Bible Says About Worship (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1984), 140-153.

²⁶For a more thorough study, see W. O. E. Oesterley, The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925).

²⁷George S. Bebis, "The Influence of Jewish Worship on Orthodox Christian Worship," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 13, no. 4 (Fall 1976): 136.

structure of the eucharistic service."²⁸ He affirms the Jewish background and context of the Last Supper and thus the Lord's Supper whether or not one views the former as a Passover observance. Roger T. Beckwith shares some insight into the Jewish graces before meals, including the Passover meal.²⁹ Gordon Bahr discusses the Paschal meal and its impact on the Last Supper, concluding that Jesus' actions and words of institution of the Lord's Supper most likely occurred during the third or "dessert" part of the meal.³⁰

In a more general article Virgil Rogers discusses several important considerations when studying Old Testament worship and also gives a short bibliography and some suggestions on sources especially useful.³¹

David Martin has written an excellent article that takes the reader through the different parts of the Lord's Day assembly.³² He speaks to several significant issues, beginning with the action of God, which precludes any action

²⁸Ibid., 139-140.

²⁹Roger T. Beckwith, "The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church," The Evangelical Quarterly 56, no. 2 (1984): 76-78.

³⁰Gordon J. Bahr, "The Seder of Passover and the Eucharistic Words," Novum Testamentum 12, no. 2 (April 1970): 181-202.

³¹Virgil M. Rogers, "Some Reflections on Worship in the Old Testament," Reformed Review 30, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 190-197.

³²David Martin, "Worship," Theology 85, no. 704 (March 1982): 83-91.

on the part of the worshiper. He deals in some detail with the place of the Lord's Supper in the assembly, and states, "The essence is a giving thanks, establishing a vertical dimension, and a distribution, establishing a horizontal dimension."³³

Several articles deal with the importance, if not necessity, of our silence and meditation in worship experiences. In the article mentioned above, David Martin speaks of the "inner quiet" of prayer, allowing the mind an opportunity "to settle and achieve emptiness. . . . Prayer in this mode means to let be and to let alone."³⁴

Lawrence Madden writes that one's first response to God "is a complex mixture of awe, wonder, perhaps fear, appreciation and delight." This basking in the presence of God is then followed by "acts of praise and thanksgiving, the fundamental acts of liturgical prayer."³⁵ Madden asserts that there is a "very common disease among modern western people" which "interferes directly with their ability to participate fully in liturgy." It is the tendency "to move rather swiftly, for a variety of reasons, from stage one to stage two of response," finding it difficult to "tarry in the presence of the mystery that is

³³Ibid., 88.

³⁴Ibid., 86.

³⁵Lawrence J. Madden, "Responding to the Presence of God," Liturgy 5, no. 1 (Summer 1985): 9.

God." There is rather the strong sense of "a certain obligation to move on, to decide something, to do something."³⁶ Ronald Grimes shares this concern.

How should liturgical space be used during the week, when the eucharist is not being celebrated in it? Behind this question itself lie the assumptions of a morally minded, activist, pragmatic culture. It assumes that we should do something rather than nothing, and that such doing ought to take the form of putting something to use. The question implies a contempt for what is useless, empty and open.³⁷

Grimes makes a strong case for "empty liturgical space," saying, "Liturgy must be done in a spirit of not-doing and permeated by real, not token, silence and emptiness."³⁸

Darryl Tippens agrees, and asserts, "Sometimes I feel his presence. Sometimes I do not. But he is always there, ready to reveal himself, ready to speak, when I become still and silent and attentive."³⁹

Silence and meditation is the subject of a chapter in the book on congregational life by C. Ellis Nelson referred to earlier. Mary Elizabeth Moore speaks of "meeting in the uproar," and gives several foundational assumptions for education when meditation is at the center of congregational

³⁶Ibid., 10. Madden sees the problem as an inability to respond to symbol, the only means through which we can approach God and have communion with God.

³⁷Ronald L. Grimes, "A Meditation on Empty Liturgical Space," Liturgy 7, no. 3 (Winter 1988): 9.

³⁸Ibid., 12.

³⁹Darryl Tippens, "Finding God in the Silences," Upreach 13, no. 4 (October, November, December 1991): 18.

life.⁴⁰

John Westerhoff speaks against the liturgy being used by the worshiper as an escape. He discusses a model that charts a person going from a healthy, autonomous, ministry stage, to a healthy, dependent, cultic worship stage. Life in the world batters us, and the assembly is seen as a time to re-establish our relationship with and trust in God, the power beyond ourselves, and thus be transformed in order to minister once again to the world that awaits.⁴¹

The language used in worship is the concern of an article by David Buttrick. "Christian worship lives between memory and hope," he writes, saying that the language of worship should be "useful rather than conceited, truthful rather than elaborate," but that "ordinary language must 'stretch' to voice our awe in the presence of the Holy."⁴² Rachel Reeder voices a somewhat similar concern when she writes that liturgists should be aware of both the horizontal and vertical aspects of the worship experience.⁴³

⁴⁰Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Meeting in the Silence: Meditation as the Center of Congregational Life," Nelson, 141-165.

⁴¹John H. Westerhoff, "Liturgy: Transformation or Escape?" Liturgy 7, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 53-59.

⁴²David G. Buttrick, "The Praise of Ordinary People," Liturgy 4, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 25.

⁴³Rachel Reeder, "Our God is Close at Hand," Liturgy 7, no. 3 (Winter 1988): 5-6.

Ervin Bishop chooses to emphasize the horizontal in answering the question "What is the purpose of the assembly?"⁴⁴ He would be challenged by some, including this writer, when he asserts that the aim or purpose of the assembly is the "mutual encouragement and edification" of the worshipers,⁴⁵ though "Bishop contends that his intention was to demonstrate the strong fellowship nature of early worship without dismissing the idea of worship."⁴⁶ Concluding a section in which he speaks specifically of the Lord's Supper and its place in assemblies with this purpose, Bishop writes:

The Lord's supper, in its intended meaning, epitomizes the very character and purpose of the Christian assembly. As an expression of "communion," it portrays the spirit of fellowship and mutual concern that should characterize the assembly. As a proclamation and reminder of the saving deeds of Christ, it contributes to the central aim of the assembly, which is the edification or "building up" of the body of Christ.⁴⁷

Allan McNicol is among those who would question Bishop's

⁴⁴Ervin Bishop, "The Assembly," Restoration Quarterly 18, no. 4 (4th Quarter 1975): 219-228.

⁴⁵Ibid., 225-226.

⁴⁶Cartwright, 41-42.

⁴⁷Ibid., 228. Bishop, however, does not effectively prove that this is the central purpose of the Lord's Supper, and thus the thesis of his treatise, that the purpose of the assembly is the building up of the worshipers, is likewise called into question. Few would question that this "horizontal" aspect of the assembly and the Lord's Supper is vitally important; many, however, would disagree that this is the purpose of the assembly rather than the praise and adoration of God.

emphasis, and he has responded to Bishop's claims.⁴⁸ He asserts that in Churches of Christ both the observance of the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word have lost some of their significance. He does not deny the need for mutual edification, but affirms that the praise of God is primary.

The purpose of our assembling together is not analogous to a civic club or voluntary organization which exists to promote human collegiality. Through centering its life around Word and Ordinance the assembly is where the church shows forth the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in Christ (Eph. 1:4). Thus worship is at the heart of the life of the church. It is not to be subordinated in the interest of some vague functional goal such as collegiality or meeting social needs. It is here that the church is "the church," as it renews itself through transcendence.⁴⁹

Transcendent moments in worship is the subject of an interesting article by Meredith Underwood in which the structure of the liturgical experience is compared to the structure of the television experience.

The liturgical process is most simply expressed as an A/B/A structure. The participant moves from ordinary space/time (A), into ritual or extraordinary space/time (B) and back again. When the participant returns, things are different, something has been learned, she or he has been changed.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Allan McNicol, "Sorting Through the Confusion about Worship: An Appraisal of Two Paradigms," ICS Faculty Bulletin 8 (1987): 20-45; and "Contemporary Developments in the Church of Christ: Reflections on Worship," Leaven (Winter 1990): 30-35. See also Michael Weed, "Amusing the Saints: Edification without Transcendence," ICS Faculty Bulletin 8 (1987): 46-58.

⁴⁹McNicol, "Reflections on Worship," 33-34.

⁵⁰Meredith Underwood, "Television, Liturgy and Transcendence," Liturgy 7, no. 3 (Winter 1988): 90.

Several articles have been written that sound concerns during this time of liturgical renewal. Ephraim Radner, in an article entitled "What's Wrong with the New Liturgies," criticizes new inclusive liturgies of the Episcopal church as being reflections of middle class culture rather than calls to discipleship and the cross.

Who is forming Christians for the cross? It does not happen any longer in our prayers. We have accommodated our liturgies to a culture of self-professed inclusivity that cannot bear the scandal of Jesus' death--that is too final, too painful, too particular. Over the past 20 years, the image of the cross has been softened, the suffering attenuated, the blood diluted so that our liturgies can invite, draw in, comfort and relieve. The liturgies rarely posit the Passion as something for our lives and bodies. It is ironic that the fruit of liturgical renewal in this country, which, many believed, harked back to the early church, has produced an image of the Christian body that in many ways resembles a warm family unit from the suburbs of the 1950s.⁵¹

Radner finds the Eucharistic liturgies to have little to say of the terrible consequences of sin or the pain and death of the cross and takes to task the metaphors and images of the new liturgies, saying each one "carries no cross, and the church is beginning to agree."⁵² Radner claims, "Mainstream liturgical reform . . . has proven to be another

Underwood uses "Star Trek," as well as the Cyndi Lauper video "True Colors," in making her point, and says that for young people today, "many of their transcendent moments have been experienced in front of the tube" (91).

⁵¹Ephraim Radner, "What's Wrong With the New Liturgies," The Christian Century 105, no. 23 (3-10 August 1988): 699.

⁵²Ibid., 700-702.

form of cultural accommodation, as retrogressive in practice as is much fundamentalism." He challenges Christians to "live sacrificial lives in the service of their God," saying the conflict between Christianity and culture "demands another kind of human being than the culture can provide: a new creation."⁵³

Lawrence Hoffman voices similar concerns as he discusses the ways the assembling of Christians together shape their identity. He cites negative changes occurring over the years and says that people still "prayed together, but as strangers. They sat next to people they did not know and they left quietly without saying goodbye."⁵⁴ He says, "The worst blow was in the fifties, when people moved to the suburb." He writes that this is not just geography but an "attitude toward life," and accuses the Church of no longer being a "natural community" of brothers and sisters but a "limited liability community" where each person has specified demands and has no loyalty to the community beyond those demands.⁵⁵

We have a supreme goal before us: to plan a liturgy which celebrates the care of God for one and all and the care of each for each other. We need to transform our community of limited liability into a natural community where we are aware not only that God is

⁵³Ibid., 702.

⁵⁴Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Assembling in Worship," Worship 56, no. 2 (March 1982): 107.

⁵⁵Ibid., 107-109.

present but that we are each present to each other. And through each other, we know God.⁵⁶

In a similar way M. Francis Mannion speaks of the "crisis of culture" and specifically the cultural dynamics of "the subjectification of reality, the intimization of society, and the politicization of culture" and how each contributes to "liturgical dysfunction." He calls on the Church to retain its Christian identity while continuing to serve its community and its world.

The essential objection, then, to the politicization of the church's social mission is that it narrows the scope of this mission, robs it of the richness of vision that emerges from an organic conception of society, and effectively restricts the work of transformation to a very few. By contrast, the vision of the church's social mission embodied in the liturgy itself generates concern for the transformation of the total human city. It inspires political action according to the most profound sense of serving and preparing the way for the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. The kind of commitment that emerges is shot through with an ethos of praise, thanksgiving, and sacrifice and remains fundamentally subject to the power of Christ risen and exalted.⁵⁷

Robert Taft defends the theological nature and task of the liturgy and liturgical study. He comments on the tension between those who would favor one methodological approach over another and calls on liturgists to "resist any attempt to resolve a healthy tension between differing

⁵⁶Ibid., 109.

⁵⁷M. Francis Mannion, "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture," Worship 62, no. 2 (March 1988): 122. These concerns are similar to those raised above by Allan McNicol. Howard Stone speaks to some of these same issues as they relate to pastoral care and counseling in his book, The Word of God and Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988).

approaches by recognizing the legitimacy of only one orientation, be it pastoral or systematic or historical or whatever." Rather there should be dialogue and discussion toward the goal of intelligibility and understanding.⁵⁸

Another writer shares a somewhat similar though more specific concern, questioning the adequacy of Christian hymns in expressing Christian worship. Horace Allen sees the tension between didactic and doxological hymns as being similar to the question of the unity of word and sacrament and calls for a greater use of the Psalms as a part of the solution.⁵⁹

Jack Hayford has written an article that concerns itself with the worship of the worship leader.⁶⁰ Other articles dealing with related concerns can be found in two issues of Leadership, one emphasizing "Preaching and Worship"⁶¹ and the other "Worship."⁶² Also several

⁵⁸Robert Taft, "Liturgy as Theology," Worship 56, no. 2 (March 1982): 113-117.

⁵⁹Horace T. Allen, Jr., "Songs for Word and Sacrament," Liturgy 6, no. 3 (Winter 1987): 21-25.

⁶⁰Jack Hayford, "How I Prepare Myself for Worship," Leadership 11, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 80-85.

⁶¹Leadership 2, no. 3 (Summer 1981).

⁶²Leadership 7, no. 2 (Spring 1986). In this regard see William Willimon, Preaching and Leading Worship (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984); Richard Stoll Armstrong, The Pastor-Evangelist in Worship (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986); and two chapters in Thomas C. Oden, Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 85-126. All three authors briefly consider the minister's leading of the eucharist.

articles from the Winter 1990 edition of Leaven, which also emphasized worship, have been especially useful in this study.

Two articles worthy of note deal with sacramentality and worship from a "post-modern" perspective.⁶³ Diogenes Allen, in an article in Reformed Liturgy & Music, gives a good, brief introduction to the subject, affirming, "The erosion of the foundations of the modern mentality allows a sacramental understanding of nature, history, and personal life to be reinstated."⁶⁴ Fred R. Anderson says that though "a word-oriented theology has dominated Protestant worship," the sacraments are beginning to be recovered in the post-modern era. He writes that "both baptism and the Lord's Supper are being taken more seriously as integral to being a member of the body of Christ." He further states that "the once-for-all nature of baptism requires the nurture and sustenance of regular and frequent participation in the Lord's Supper" and cites the "serious movement toward weekly celebration" of the Eucharist in the Presbyterian Church.⁶⁵

⁶³For discussion of Post-Modernism, see Diogenes Allen, Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).

⁶⁴Diogenes Allen, "The Restoration of Sacramentality in a Post-Modern World," Reformed Liturgy & Music 19, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 85.

⁶⁵Fred R. Anderson, "Protestant Worship Today," Theology Today 43, no. 1 (April 1986): 67-69. See also Harold M. Daniels, "Weekly Eucharist Among Presbyterians,"

Before turning to the specific topic of the Lord's Supper, the recent edition of Leaven, which is published by members of Churches of Christ and was referred to above, is to be noted again.⁶⁶ Several quality articles can be found in this issue, including one by Randy Chesnutt that was especially useful to this project and will be discussed in the next section.⁶⁷ In an article cited above, Allan McNicol claims, "Something definitely is stirring in thinking about worship in churches of Christ."⁶⁸ He shares comments on the purpose of the assembly, including the significance and place of the Lord's Supper, and offers a brief but very helpful model for a Sunday morning assembly.⁶⁹ Several orders of worship are listed in the appendix to this issue of Leaven, including a "Service Concentrating on the Lord's Supper" from the Bering Drive church in Houston.⁷⁰

Lord's Supper

Several works specifically dealing with the subject of

Reformed Liturgy and Music 19, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 18-23.

⁶⁶Leaven (Winter 1990).

⁶⁷Randy Chesnutt, "Passover, Last Supper, and Lord's Supper: Jewish Elements for Christian Reclamation," Leaven (Winter 1990): 15-20.

⁶⁸McNicol, "Reflections on Worship," 30.

⁶⁹Ibid., 34-35.

⁷⁰Lynn E. Mitchell, Jr., "Service Concentrating on the Lord's Supper," Leaven (Winter 1990): 70-71.

the Lord's Supper are very significant and helpful in the study of the Eucharist. One of the classic studies is The Shape of the Liturgy by Gregory Dix.⁷¹ In this very extensive study the eucharist is the focus, and it is studied from the perspective of the liturgist and not the theologian or historian, though theology and history are certainly taken into account. Among the many contributions of this work is the emphasis on the "four-action shape" of the eucharist, namely that Jesus took bread, gave thanks or blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples.⁷²

Certainly of great importance is the work by J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus. Jeremias' discussion of the date and nature of the Last Supper is classic and is the standard by which other studies are measured, and he should be considered the leading voice of those who identify the Last Supper as a Passover meal. He also considers the impact of liturgy upon the eucharistic words, and his final chapter approaches these words from a theological perspective.⁷³

Another classic treatise on the Lord's Supper is that

⁷¹Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1947).

⁷²Ibid. Note especially chapters IV and V.

⁷³Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, trans. Norman Perrin (London: SCM Press, 1966). For summaries see his articles, "The Last Supper," Journal of Theological Studies 50 (1949): 1-10; and "The Last Supper," Expository Times 64 (1952-1953): 91-92.

offered by Hans Lietzmann, Mass and Lord's Supper.⁷⁴ A. J. B. Higgins, in a review of Lietzmann's book in The Expository Times, acknowledges, "It must be admitted that Lietzmann's book is exceedingly difficult to digest, and one is soon liable to get lost in the mass of detailed discussion of the various liturgies."⁷⁵

Higgins's own work, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament,⁷⁶ is an excellent volume. He disagrees with Lietzmann's claim that there were two types of Eucharistic meals ("Mass and Lord's Supper") and spends a chapter discussing that issue. While he lists the arguments for and against the Last Supper being a Passover meal, Higgins affirms, "There are, however, more positive indications that the Last Supper was a Passover."⁷⁷ He discusses the form and meaning of Jesus' eucharistic sayings and also covers the teaching of Paul and John on the Lord's Supper.

I. Howard Marshall's work was very helpful in this study. He discusses many of the same subjects concerning the Lord's Supper, but is less tedious and more readable than others such as Jeremias. His chapter dealing with the

⁷⁴Hans Lietzmann, Mass and Lord's Supper, trans. Dorothea H. G. Reeve (Leiden: Brill, 1953-).

⁷⁵A. J. B. Higgins, "H. Lietzmann's 'Mass and Lord's Supper' (Messe und Herrenmahl)," The Expository Times 65, no. 11 (August 1954): 333.

⁷⁶A. J. B. Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament (Chicago: Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., 1956).

⁷⁷Ibid., 20.

date and nature of the Last Supper is a good overview of some of the theories, and he concludes "that Jesus held a Passover meal earlier than the official Jewish date, and that he was able to do so as the result of calendar differences among the Jews."⁷⁸ Marshall has a very good concluding chapter in which he summarizes the nature, practice, and significance of the Lord's Supper and gives twelve brief biblical principles regarding its observance today.⁷⁹

Another well-known book comes from the pen of Eduard Schweizer.⁸⁰ He disagrees with Jeremias and Higgins, saying, "By and large, the arguments against a Passover meal seem more persuasive."⁸¹ Schweizer covers, though more briefly, some of the same subjects found in Higgins' work. He also discusses the manner in which Christ is present in the Lord's Supper, stating that

the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is exactly the same as his presence in the word--nothing more, nothing less. It is an event, not an object; an encounter, not a phenomenon of nature; it is Christ's encounter with his church, not the distribution of a substance.⁸²

⁷⁸I. Howard Marshall, Last Supper and Lord's Supper (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1980), 75.

⁷⁹Ibid., 141-157.

⁸⁰Eduard Schweizer, The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament, trans. James M. Davis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

⁸¹Ibid., 31.

⁸²Ibid., 37-38.

Schweizer also gives several pages of bibliographical references, which would be helpful to some.

Jean-Jacques von Allmen's work affirms the significance of the Lord's Supper. He calls it a "sacrament of faith" and states that when "we speak of it in this way, we can understand that Christians of olden days preferred to be arrested rather than to renounce the Supper."⁸³ His chapter "Anamnesis and Epiklesis" is very helpful in studying these aspects of the Lord's Supper and its history.⁸⁴

William Barclay's work is similar in structure to those of Higgins and Schweizer and covers some of the same subjects. He concludes by listing several propositions for what the Lord's Supper should mean for the Christian today.⁸⁵ Oscar Cullman is the author of one of two essays on topics related to the Eucharist in another work.⁸⁶

Martin Marty's work, noted earlier, is a brief, philosophical statement concerning the Lord's Supper. Annie Jaubert's work answers the question of the date of the Last Supper as being Tuesday of Passion week, with the arrest of

⁸³von Allmen, 115-117.

⁸⁴Ibid., 23-35.

⁸⁵William Barclay, 107-113.

⁸⁶Cullmann, Oscar and F. J. Leenhardt, Essays on the Lord's Supper, trans. J. G. Davies (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958).

Jesus on Wednesday, supporting her thesis with an ancient Jewish calendar.⁸⁷ Two other works that differ on the nature of the Last Supper are by G. Dalman⁸⁸ and W. O. E. Oesterley.⁸⁹

Elmer Freeman's book deals with some of the important historical and theological issues of the Lord's Supper. Included in his work is a chapter on the mystery religions and the question of how they affected the Lord's Supper.

The crux of the matter seems to lie in the firm historical basis upon which Christianity rested, and which the Mystery religions lacked. Their hero-gods were, after all, mythical. . . . Christianity survived the Mysteries, and the Lord's Supper survived their analogous religious meals, in the last analysis, because Jesus had lived.⁹⁰

Yngve Brilioth considers the mysteries and other topics. His is a historical study of the Eucharist in the early church, in Catholicism, and in Protestantism.⁹¹

⁸⁷Annie Jaubert, The Date of the Last Supper (Staten Island: Alba House, 1965).

⁸⁸G. Dalman, Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels, trans. Paul P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1929), 86-132.

⁸⁹Oesterley, 167-179.

⁹⁰Elmer S. Freeman, The Lord's Supper in Protestantism (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), 43. Similarly, J. R. Wilkes: "Memory, in the dynamic and creative sense that anamnesis gives it, is the key to the difference between Judeo-Christian and Pagan religions. Pagan ritual remembers, but it remembers the non-historical." He asserts that "Passover and Easter . . . remember real events in this world and, consequently, affirm not only past history but future as well." ("Remembering," Theology 84, no. 698, March 1981: 93.)

⁹¹Yngve Brilioth, Eucharistic Faith & Practice Evangelical & Catholic, trans. A. G. Hebert (London: SPCK,

The Eucharist of the Early Christians is a very useful book in that it gives the background, text, and interpretation of several ancient eucharistic prayers and texts, including those found in the Didache and in the writings of Justin.⁹²

Some works give emphasis to the meal aspect of the Lord's Supper, or to the Agape. In addition to Willimon's Sunday Dinner, Keith Watkins' The Feast of Joy is worthy of mention. His term "contemplative joy" was used in some of the study sessions. He writes that "the joy of the Lord's Supper is the remembrance of significant events and the resulting ideas that are appropriate to such a memory," such as an anniversary dinner, or a dinner following a loved one's funeral.⁹³ Markus Barth reflects on this aspect of the Lord's Supper and calls for the joy to be returned to its observance, as well as the ethical considerations by the participants for each other.⁹⁴ A similar study is given by

1956).

⁹²Willy Rordorf, "The Didache," and Maurice Jourjon, "Justin," The Eucharist of the Early Christians, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 1-23, 71-85. It is unfortunate that the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus is not included in this work. Its text can be found, however, in Dix, 157-158, and in Jones, Wainwright and Yarnold, 173-174. It is also studied and interpreted in Webber, Worship Old and New, 136-147.

⁹³Keith Watkins, The Feast of Joy: The Lord's Supper in Free Churches (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1977), 19-21.

⁹⁴Markus Barth, Rediscovering The Lord's Supper: Communion with Israel, with Christ, and Among the Guests (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988).

Arthur C. Cochrane.⁹⁵ For a study given strictly to the Agape love feast, J. F. Keating traces its history through the first four centuries.⁹⁶

Cochrane interacts with Geoffrey Wainwright in regard to the subject of eschatology and the Lord's Supper.⁹⁷ Wainwright's work is a significant one, giving a good study of the eschatological background and the eschatological aspects of the Lord's Supper.

Some of the theses/dissertations that have been helpful in this study were mentioned in the previous chapter. Those by Galston and Hucks were especially helpful.⁹⁸

There are many articles that have been published on the subject of the Lord's Supper or specific aspects of it.

⁹⁵Arthur C. Cochrane, Eating and Drinking with Jesus: An Ethical and Biblical Inquiry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974).

⁹⁶J. F. Keating, The Agape and the Eucharist in the Early Church: Studies in the History of the Christian Love-Feasts (London: Methuen & Company, 1901).

⁹⁷See Cochrane, 175-178, and Wainwright's response, Geoffrey Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 245-246.

⁹⁸Robert J. Galston, "Coming Home for Supper: Toward a Protestant Rediscovery of the Eucharist" (D.Min. thesis, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 1986); Fladger Levon Hucks, "Increasing the Understanding and Appreciation of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in Bailey Memorial, a Small United Methodist Church Located in a Small Southern Textile Mill Town (South Carolina)" (D.Min. thesis, Drew University, 1982); F. Paul DeHoff, "Toward an Understanding of the Eucharist" (D.Min. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981); and William Ray Ellis, "The Lord's Supper: A Study in Origin and Interpretation" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956).

Offering general study are articles found in Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, such as those by A. Plummer,⁹⁹ M. H. Shepherd, Jr.,¹⁰⁰ Ralph Martin,¹⁰¹ and R. S. Wallace.¹⁰² Likewise J. Behm¹⁰³ and B. Klappert¹⁰⁴ have authored general articles found in theological dictionaries. In addition, two commentaries have helpful sections dealing with the date and nature of the Lord's Supper. Both Norval Geldenhuys¹⁰⁵ and Leon Morris¹⁰⁶ favor the view that the Last Supper was a Passover observance.

⁹⁹A. Plummer, "Lord's Supper," A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 3:140-150.

¹⁰⁰M. H. Shepherd, Jr., "Lord's Supper," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:158-162.

¹⁰¹Ralph P. Martin, "The Lord's Supper," New Bible Dictionary, ed. J. D. Douglas (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1982), 707-709.

¹⁰²R. S. Wallace, "Lord's Supper (Eucharist)," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 3:164-170.

¹⁰³J. Behm, "k λ ao," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:726-743.

¹⁰⁴B. Klappert, "Lord's Supper," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 2:520-538.

¹⁰⁵Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 649-670.

¹⁰⁶Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 774-786.

An entire issue of Studia Liturgica investigated the World Council of Churches Faith and Order text Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, completed at Lima in January, 1982. Included is an article in which the author addresses questions raised by the Lima text--how they relate to the current practice of the churches and future possibilities and challenges.¹⁰⁷

Geoffrey Wainwright expands some of the direction of Eucharist and Eschatology in an article expounding some of the ethical considerations of the Eucharist,¹⁰⁸ and in another gives a brief overview of current Eucharistic discussion in several areas, including memorial, eschatology, and ecumenical activity.¹⁰⁹ David Brown calls for greater significance to be given to the fraction,¹¹⁰ while A. R. Winnett responds, saying that Jesus broke the bread "simply for distribution and not for symbolic purposes."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Bruno Burky, "The Lima Text as a Standard for Current Understandings and Practice of the Eucharist," Studia Liturgica 16, no. 1-2 (1986): 64-79.

¹⁰⁸Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," Worship 62, no. 2 (March 1988): 123-138.

¹⁰⁹Geoffrey Wainwright, "Recent Thinking on Christian Beliefs IV. Baptism and the Eucharist," The Expository Times 88, no. 5 (February 1977): 132-137.

¹¹⁰David Brown, "The Breaking of the Bread," Theology 75, no. 627 (September 1972): 479-482.

¹¹¹A. R. Winnett, "The Breaking of the Bread: Does it Symbolize the Passion?" The Expository Times 88, no. 6 (March 1977): 181-182. See also Dix, 80-81.

The Restoration Movement has offered articles to the discussion of the Lord's Supper, though not so significantly as one might expect, given the importance our heritage has placed on the Supper. Many of the articles do not discuss the more significant, theological issues. D. R. Dungan responds to the question of the unimmersed partaking of the Lord's Supper, saying, "It is certain that the ordinances of the Lord's house belong to, and were intended for the children of God. It is certain, too, that the children of God had been immersed. Now, the therefore is easy."¹¹² Moses Lard responds in similar fashion, saying the pious unimmersed can commune,

provided it can be first shown that sincerely thinking so transmutes an act of sprinkling into an act of immersion, or causes God to accept the thing he has not appointed for the thing he has. Otherwise, I say, not that the man may not commune, but that he cannot and does not commune.¹¹³

Alexander Campbell wrote about the Lord's Supper in some of his journals, mostly emphasizing that the purpose of the assembly is to break bread, that the Lord's Supper should be observed every first day of the week, and that only the immersed should partake.¹¹⁴

¹¹²D. R. Dungan, "The Lord's Supper," The Pioneers on Worship (Kansas City: The Old Paths Book Club, 1947), 105.

¹¹³Moses E. Lard, "Do the Unimmersed Commune?" The Pioneers on Worship, 119.

¹¹⁴See Alexander Campbell, "On the Breaking of Bread," Christian Baptist 3, no. 1-4 (August-November 1825); Alexander Campbell, "The Breaking of the Loaf," Millennial Harbinger Extra, no. 2 (December 1830): 61-68; G. G., "The

A few articles from the Disciples heritage, all found in the same issue of Encounter, look at different aspects of the Lord's Supper. James O. Duke gives a historical study, and a good number of sources are included in the text and notes.¹¹⁵ Calvin Porter discusses two texts from 1 Corinthians,¹¹⁶ and Clark Williamson offers a study from a more theological perspective.¹¹⁷

Some articles from members of Churches of Christ treat primarily those issues that have been important in the Restoration Movement since the days of Alexander Campbell. In his Handbook on Church Doctrines, Stafford North writes only briefly about the Lord's Supper in his section "Teaching of the Scripture on Worship." He writes against the doctrine of transubstantiation, using anything other than unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, and partaking

Passover and the Lord's Supper," Millennial Harbinger 5, no. 5 (May 1841): 206; W. K. Pendleton, "The Lord's Supper--Its Use and Abuse," Millennial Harbinger 6, no. 9 (September 1849): 518-523; W. K. Pendleton, "Baptism as a Prerequisite to Admission to the Lord's Table," Millennial Harbinger 39, no. 6 (June 1868): 321-323; and W. W. Hayden, "Union in Communion," Millennial Harbinger 39, no. 8 (August 1868): 451-452.

¹¹⁵James O. Duke, "The Disciples and the Lord's Supper: A Historical Perspective," Encounter 50, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 1-28.

¹¹⁶Calvin L. Porter, "An Interpretation of Paul's Lord's Supper Texts: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and 11:17-34," Encounter 50, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 29-45.

¹¹⁷Clark M. Williamson, "The Lord's Supper: A Systematic Theological View," Encounter 50, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 47-67.

of communion other than every first day of the week.¹¹⁸

Delmar Owens is more reflective, saying that Jesus "took some of the most simple things of life, unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, and gave them spiritual and profound significance."¹¹⁹ Betty Burton Choate has a chapter given to the Lord's Supper in a book on the sacrifice of Christ. She speaks of the Passover context and of partaking "with the expectancy of His return," and also, though not requiring it, speaks in favor of the use of homemade communion bread and includes a recipe at the end of the chapter.¹²⁰

Some journal articles are very dogmatic in speaking to the issues that have been all-important to many in Churches of Christ. Wayne Jackson argues in the Gospel Advocate for weekly communion, saying the first century church "observed the Lord's supper on every Sunday. This is simply indisputable, and those who wish to be apostolic in practice, will follow the example of the ancient church."¹²¹ Guy N. Woods argues for the use of unleavened

¹¹⁸Stafford North, Handbook on Church Doctrines (Oklahoma City: OCC Press, 1977), 116-119.

¹¹⁹Delmar Owens, Launch Out Into the Deep (Tulsa: Acorn Printing Company, 1959), 121.

¹²⁰Betty Burton Choate, Jesus Christ The Eternal Sacrifice (Winona, MS: J. C. Choate Publications, 1988), 88-103.

¹²¹Wayne Jackson, "Weekly Communion--Command or Custom?" Gospel Advocate 119, no. 5 (3 February 1977): 73. While others today are making a similar plea (Willimon, etc.),

bread and fruit of the vine in responding to a statement that "a hot dog bun is just as scriptural as unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper."¹²² Doyle Kee argues a bit more objectively from the point of the "symbolism" of the unleavened bread, acknowledging that in the Scriptures "no stress is made of the fact that the bread used was unleavened."¹²³ Jack Lewis studies the term "fruit of the vine" and states that no binding example can be formed from inferences regarding the degree of fermentation of the "wine."¹²⁴ Jimmy Jividen writes that "both the statements of the Scriptures and reasonable deductions from the Scriptures are to be used as standards of authority" and uses as his study the question "Can a person fellowship someone who observes the Lord's Supper on Saturday or on another day in addition to Sunday?" He concludes, saying, "At no time and in no way can one give 'sanctioning or participatory fellowship' to those who do not follow the scriptural pattern of observing the Lord's Supper."¹²⁵

there is not found this arrogant, judgmental tone, seen in words such as "unquestionably," "conclusively," and "indisputable."

¹²²Guy N. Woods, "Questions and Answers," Gospel Advocate 123, no. 15 (6 August 1981): 464.

¹²³Doyle Kee, "Reexamination of Unleavened Bread," Firm Foundation 93, no. 13 (30 March 1976): 3.

¹²⁴Jack P. Lewis, "Fruit of the Vine," Firm Foundation 93, no. 7 (17 February 1976): 5.

¹²⁵Jimmy Jividen, "A Case Study in Breaking Fellowship Over Inference," Gospel Advocate 132, no. 10 (October 1990):

Another author calls for "restoring to our vocabularies the sense, if not the actual words, of the Biblical record."¹²⁶

Jackson Morris addresses very briefly the question of weekly communion, saying, "There is nothing in Christian worship that holds more meaning or comes more forcibly and directly from our Lord to the Christian." He goes on to say that one's fondest memories are revived and the crucified Savior is visualized when one partakes of the Supper.¹²⁷ Clifton Rogers would be challenged by Willimon and others when he says the communion is an "eminently private, personal" time and does not take into consideration the joint, horizontal aspect. He also speaks of some "external" attempts at greater meaningfulness, such as dimming lights, saying, "We'll have to recognize these as gimmicks and of psychological rather than spiritual value."¹²⁸ Raymond Kelcy¹²⁹ and James Bales¹³⁰ are much more sarcastic in

42-43. He does say, however, that "God has not decreed the amount of bread and grape juice to be taken, the exact time that it is to be taken on the first day of the week, or set limits on the number of times it may be taken."

¹²⁶Larry C. Jackson, "On 'Taking Communion,'" Firm Foundation 93, no. 29 (20 July 1976): 8.

¹²⁷Jackson Morris, "The Communion," Firm Foundation 93, no. 13 (30 March 1976): 6.

¹²⁸Clifton Rogers, "This Do in Remembrance of Me," Firm Foundation 93, no. 28 (13 July 1976): 4.

¹²⁹Raymond C. Kelcy, "Dimming Lights and Singing During Communion," 4.

¹³⁰James D. Bales, "Singing And Reading During The Communion," Gospel Advocate 121, no. 19 (10 May 1979): 291.

dealing with such "gimmicks."

A brief history of the controversy of individual communion cups is given by James Russell, who identifies himself as a "one cupper."¹³¹ His article is very poignant in condemning the divisive and inconsiderate attitudes involved, and is also quite anecdotal, as is demonstrated by the following excerpt.

During the first four decades of this century some assemblies, for convenience, used two or three common cups but would not consent to using individual cups. In Sringdale, Arkansas, where I attended some as a lad, a cup for each row of seats was used. I well remember when a strict "one cup for a congregation" member protested. The reply to his protest was that the tobacco-chewing and snuff-dipping men used one row of seats and the other row was for non-chewers and non-dippers. This ultimately grew into an assembly where the men sat on one side of the house and the women on the other. Once a family came to visit and worship, and the man sat down beside his wife. Most of the congregation considered him ignorant of the fact that men and women do not sit together in church.¹³²

Allan McNicol in an article previously referred to studies the Lord's Supper from a hermeneutical method that examines Scripture, the Restoration Tradition, and historical Christianity.¹³³ An article by Michael Weed is a helpful contribution to the study of memory.¹³⁴

¹³¹James W. Russell, "The 'One Cup' Segment in American Church History," Mission 9, no. 8 (March 1976): 12-14.

¹³²Ibid., 13.

¹³³Allan McNicol, "The Lord's Supper as Hermeneutical Clue: A Proposal on Theological Method for Churches of Christ," Christian Studies 11, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 41-54. McNicol's notes list several good sources.

¹³⁴Michael Weed, "Our Common Past," Mission 9, no. 5

There have appeared in the journals from time to time communion meditations and services, beginning with a series of "Communings in the Sanctuary" by Robert Richardson.¹³⁵ Clifton Rogers has written several Lord's Supper services on various themes such as praise, peace, and the cross for Firm Foundation.¹³⁶ Elton Higgs has written devotional thoughts for Mission,¹³⁷ and Wilma Buckner for an issue of Mission Journal.¹³⁸ A sermon by Chuck Jones appeared in a recent edition of Restoration Quarterly in which he compares baptism and the Lord's Supper to the wedding ceremony and wedding ring. He calls the Lord's Supper "the cornerstone event in the Christian assembly," and says that its primary value is found in the fact that it is a ceremony.¹³⁹

Some articles from Church of Christ authors were more helpful for this project than others. One of those was "The

(December 1975): 15-17.

¹³⁵See Robert Richardson, Communings in the Sanctuary (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1888).

¹³⁶Clifton Rogers, "Lord's Supper--'O, Praise the Lord!" Firm Foundation 93, no. 33 (17 August 1976): 4; "'Peace, Peace'--The Lord's Supper," Firm Foundation 93, no. 38 (21 September 1976): 4; "Christ and the Cross--The Lord's Supper," Firm Foundation 93, no. 44 (2 November 1976): 4.

¹³⁷Elton D. Higgs, "Meditation on the Lord's Supper," Mission 11, no. 4 (October 1977): 13; 11, no. 8 (February 1978): 7.

¹³⁸Wilma Buckner, "Communion Meditations," Mission Journal 21, no. 4 (November 1987): 24-25.

¹³⁹Chuck Jones, "Mastering Ceremony: Pondering the Significance of the Lord's Supper," Restoration Quarterly 33, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1991): 239-242.

Importance of the Lord's Supper" by Raymond Kelcy. As was stated above, Kelcy acknowledges that many do not give the Lord's Supper the significance it warrants. He writes: "The Lord's Supper sets before the world the great and basic facts of our faith. When we preach, Christ is proclaimed in word; in the Lord's Supper he is proclaimed in symbol."¹⁴⁰

Also, Everett Ferguson has an excellent chapter in his book The New Testament Church which addresses several important issues found in much of the other literature surveyed in this paper. He speaks of its significance, saying, "The Lord's Supper, above all other acts of worship, is expressive of what the church is." Ferguson deals with topics such as anamnesis, eschatology, and the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Supper. Though brief, it is a good summary of some of the important issues related to the Lord's Supper.¹⁴¹

Of great significance is the article by Bonnie Bowman Thurston. She emphasizes the doing of the communion, as her title suggests. After some general reflections she gives a somewhat extensive treatment of the texts themselves and then draws some conclusions. She rightly says that it is the actual breaking of the bread, and not the bread itself,

¹⁴⁰Kelcy, "The Importance of the Lord's Supper," 4.

¹⁴¹Everett Ferguson, The New Testament Church (Abilene: Biblical Research Press, 1968), 60-65.

that demonstrates Christ's broken body.¹⁴² Her emphasis on the symbolism of the Supper leads her to assert that the biblical witness "suggests that little wafers and tiny plastic cups destroy the symbolism of communion as thoroughly as sprinkling does that of baptism."¹⁴³ This concern is shared by those authors surveyed above who emphasize the meal aspect of the Lord's Supper. Craig Watts speaks out strongly of this concern in an article in Integrity, saying, "We eat a dry little pellet and drink a half thimble of juice."¹⁴⁴ Leroy Garrett agrees, speaking to this issue and others in stating thirteen conclusions that would help lead to more meaningful Lord's Supper observances.¹⁴⁵

Randy Chesnutt calls for reclaiming Jewish elements of the Passover background of the Lord's Supper. His excellent article cited earlier was very helpful in the completion of this project, and his concerns are quite similar to those being raised by Willimon, Wainwright, and some of the others calling for renewal in this area.

Passover involved not only a looking up to God with

¹⁴²Bonnie Bowman Thurston, "'Do This': A Study on the Institution of the Lord's Supper," Restoration Quarterly 30, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1988): 214.

¹⁴³Ibid., 215.

¹⁴⁴Craig Watts, "Eating and Drinking With Jesus," Integrity 21, no. 3 (May-June 1990): 42.

¹⁴⁵Leroy Garrett, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper," Restoration Review 30, no. 6 (June 1988): 302-306.

praise and thanksgiving, a looking back to God's mighty acts in redemptive history, and a looking forward to God's future acts, but also a looking around to the community of which the individual was a part. . . . In celebrating the Lord's Supper today, the Church would do well to ask whether it does justice not merely to the outward aspects of the rite but also to the atmosphere of memory and hope, the spirit of thanksgiving and praise, the sense of personal redemption and corporate solidarity, and the mood of joy and celebration.¹⁴⁶

Biblical Background and Foundation

There is much in the Old and New Testaments that provides the background for the Church's observance of the Lord's Supper. The Bible places great significance on meals, and the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples is packed with Old Testament and Passover tradition. Certainly a study such as this must consider the relevant New Testament passages that speak of the institution and the early church's practice of the Lord's Supper.

The Significance of Meals

Society places great importance upon people eating together. Two children sharing a candy bar, every child's favorite subject ("lunch"), a young lady wanting to ask "him" over for dinner, state banquets involving world leaders--all express the significance people attribute to meals from the earliest days of life.

The Bible expresses that same significance. From the earliest times meals were very important in the lives of

¹⁴⁶Chesnutt, 18, 20.

God's people and in their relationships with each other and with their creator. In the Old Testament animals were sacrificed and burned, such as Noah's burnt offering upon leaving the ark.¹⁴⁷ Abraham prepared a feast for the three visitors before they went on to Sodom.¹⁴⁸ Moses and some of the other leaders of Israel, while confirming the covenant, "saw God, and they ate and drank."¹⁴⁹ Willimon refers to this passage, saying, "The meal is seal for the covenant. The nation was God's guest; it sat at God's table."¹⁵⁰ Of great significance to the Jews were the feasts and festivals, including and perhaps especially the Passover. And certainly one of the most beloved passages of Scripture is Psalm 23, which includes the statement, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."¹⁵¹ William Willimon recounts the following story in setting the context for this passage.

I once heard a story about a nomad being pursued across the desert by his enemies. The desperate man comes upon an encampment. He rushes up to the tents, hoping that these strangers will receive him. He runs up to the head tent and throws back the curtains. The inhabitants have just begun to eat. Breathlessly he

¹⁴⁷Gen. 8:20-22.

¹⁴⁸Genesis 18.

¹⁴⁹Ex. 24:11. All Scripture quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise stated.

¹⁵⁰Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 18.

¹⁵¹Ps. 23:5 KJV.

looks into their faces. Will they receive him or turn him away? They motion for him to enter and be seated. He breathes a sigh of relief. His pursuers finally reach the camp. They go to the tent he has entered. They also throw back the curtains, ready to seize the man and kill him. But when they see him seated at the table, they draw back and leave him in peace, for they know that in the Near East it is a great act of hostility toward the host to trouble a person who is seated at someone's table.¹⁵²

Meals were especially significant for Jesus and his ministry. Craig Watts writes that "Jesus never turned down a meal."¹⁵³ The Lord worked his first miracle at a wedding feast, turning water into wine.¹⁵⁴ Willimon says,

It is significant that Jesus begins his ministry in John, not with a sermon, a lecture, or even some good work of healing, exorcism, or enlightenment. He begins at a place as raucous and joyful as a wedding, with something so shocking and frivolous as turning water into wine to pick up a sagging party.¹⁵⁵

Levi (Matthew) hosted a banquet in Jesus' honor, and the Lord was criticized for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners.¹⁵⁶ Jesus acknowledged that he "came eating and drinking," and was called a glutton and a drunkard.¹⁵⁷ He went to a banquet at the home of Simon the Pharisee,¹⁵⁸ spoke of himself as the "bread of life" after

¹⁵²Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 16.

¹⁵³Watts, 42.

¹⁵⁴Jn. 2:1-11.

¹⁵⁵Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 42.

¹⁵⁶Lk. 27:32.

¹⁵⁷Mt. 11:16-19.

¹⁵⁸Lk. 7:36-50.

feeding the multitudes in John 6, and spoke of his kingdom as a banquet.¹⁵⁹ His "Last Supper" with the disciples is a critical time in his ministry and for the Church that would soon be established.¹⁶⁰ After his resurrection he is recognized by the two in Emmaus when they eat together,¹⁶¹ and reaffirms Peter after sharing a meal with his disciples.¹⁶²

In a word--for the Gospels, meals with Jesus are momentous events, worthy of comment and remembrance. Who he is, is revealed in the meals he shares. Meals are, so to speak, among his "means of grace." . . . Indeed, for the Gospels, he might be characterized as the one who shares feasts with sinners. . . . Jesus, obviously, knew the power of meals, so he shared them gladly, graciously using them to question and erode the various boundaries religion and society had erected between people.¹⁶³

The book of Acts continues to demonstrate that the disciples shared meals with one another, speaking several times of their "breaking bread" together.¹⁶⁴ As one writer says, "Luke is a Gospel of meals which culminates in the Last Supper and the post-resurrection Emmaus event; the Acts of the Apostles features the frequent coming together of the

¹⁵⁹Mt. 22:1-14.

¹⁶⁰Mt. 26:17-30.

¹⁶¹Lk. 24:13-35.

¹⁶²Jn. 21:1-14.

¹⁶³Burkhart, 83-84, 93.

¹⁶⁴For example, Acts 2:46 (the new church); 20:11 (Paul with those at Troas); 27:33-38 (Paul and his shipmates on their way to Rome). The term "break bread" will be discussed in a later section of this thesis.

young Church for the breaking of bread."¹⁶⁵

Passover and Jewish Backgrounds

The high points of the Jewish year centered around the feasts, particularly the Passover. Israel received its identity as a people upon deliverance out of Egypt, and all Jews that would partake of the Passover feast would identify themselves as being a part of those whom God rescued from Egyptian bondage.

There is ongoing discussion among scholars as to whether or not Jesus and his disciples were sharing a Passover meal at the Last Supper. Most works on the Lord's Supper cited above address this issue and include arguments for and against the Last Supper being understood as a Passover observance.¹⁶⁶ The tension is between the Synoptics, who very clearly say that they were celebrating the Passover that Thursday evening (Mt. 26:17-30; Mk. 14:12-26; Lk. 22:7-23); and John, who seems to imply that the Passover meal would be eaten the following (Friday) night (Jn. 13:1, 29; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵Galston, 31. Willimon's Sunday Dinner is a thorough treatment of the significance of meals, particularly in the life and ministry of Jesus.

¹⁶⁶See especially Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 15-88; Marshall, 57-75; Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament, 13-23; Schweizer, 29-32; Dix, 50-78; Preiss, 81-99; and William Barclay, 24-34.

¹⁶⁷None of the task force participants in this project were aware that there was even a question, and certainly not a conflict, concerning the nature of the Last Supper. All

Arguments against the Last Supper being a Passover meal begin with the passages from John listed above, which place the Last Supper and subsequent arrest and crucifixion of Jesus as being the day of Preparation for the Passover, when the Passover lambs were being slain. He reports that when the Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilate to request that he be put to death, "it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover."¹⁶⁸

Another argument says that the early church would have celebrated the Lord's Supper annually rather than weekly or daily if it were given a Passover context. Also, there is no real emphasis on the Passover lamb in the Synoptic accounts. One would have to explain why the Jewish leaders would meet on the day of the Passover feast to try and condemn Jesus and why the Romans would risk upsetting the Jews by crucifying three men on a sacred feast day. It is also argued that on the day of the Passover it would have been impossible for the disciples to think that Judas left the meal to buy something for the feast¹⁶⁹ or for Joseph to make any purchases for Jesus' burial.¹⁷⁰

held the belief that it was a Passover meal as the Synoptics state and were unaware of any possible conflict in John.

¹⁶⁸Jn. 18:28.

¹⁶⁹Jn. 13:27-30.

¹⁷⁰Mk. 14:46.

Some possible explanations for the meal Jesus shared with his disciples, if it is not thought to be a Passover meal, include its being a kiddush meal¹⁷¹, a haburah meal shared by a small company of friends,¹⁷² or an Essene meal.¹⁷³

Jeremias has answered these and other objections and has made a very strong case for the Last Supper being a Passover meal.¹⁷⁴ One scholar has written that Passover night would be "the most suitable time" for the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus, for most Jews would be "quietly at home" and thus there would be no demonstration against their actions by the people.¹⁷⁵ There are many indications that the meal was a Passover observance. Certainly the specific statements of the Synoptics dating the meal on the day of the Passover and giving it the context of the Passover meal are difficult to discount. The meal was observed in the evening at Jerusalem, and the disciples are said to have reclined at the table. Wine was drunk rather than water, and the meal ended with the singing of a hymn. Even Jesus'

¹⁷¹Oesterley, 167-179.

¹⁷²Dix, 50-70; Lietzmann, 185.

¹⁷³Jeremias treats all three of these possible explanations in The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 26-36.

¹⁷⁴Ibid, 41-84. Marshall, 57-75, and Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament, 13-23, offer good studies based to a great degree on Jeremias' work.

¹⁷⁵Geldenhuis, 668.

words of interpretation would not be unusual in correspondence with the Passover haggadah explaining the significance of the meal and the deliverance of God.

Jeremias states, "The connection between the Passion and the Passover seems to be severed by John's dating of the Last Supper on the eve of the Passover; but in actual fact this serves to emphasize the connection."¹⁷⁶ John's theological purpose was "to bring out the truth that Christ was slain as our Passover."¹⁷⁷ He appears to be justified in doing this because of apparent calendar differences among the Jews, which seem to imply that the Jewish leaders celebrated the Passover the day after Jesus and his disciples did, and that John in his Gospel follows the calendar of the Jewish leaders. I. Howard Marshall gives an excellent, brief treatment of this discussion and the issues and history involved, concluding "that Jesus held a Passover meal earlier than the official Jewish date, and that he was able to do so as the result of calendar differences among the Jews."¹⁷⁸

It is more difficult to explain away the clear sayings of the Synoptics and the Passover characteristics of the Last Supper than to harmonize John's accounts with the other Gospel writers. While agreeing with Eduard Schweizer that

¹⁷⁶Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 82.

¹⁷⁷Morris, 785.

¹⁷⁸Marshall, 66-75.

this "is a question which cannot be definitely settled,"¹⁷⁹ I must go along with Jeremias, Higgins, Marshall, Barclay, and others who assert that the Last Supper was a Passover meal.¹⁸⁰

Though Theo Preiss considers it "inconceivable" that Jesus' arrest, trials, and crucifixion occurred on the day of the Passover feast, he does acknowledge an anticipation of Passover motifs. He asserts that there were Paschal motives in the Last Supper, saying that one is not forced to accept that the meal was either a Passover feast or "an ordinary meal without Paschal character."¹⁸¹ Ralph Martin agrees, affirming that whether Jesus and his disciples shared a Passover meal or not, "it does seem clear Paschal ideas were in His mind as He sat down with the Twelve."¹⁸² Jean-Jacques von Allmen comes to a similar conclusion, reporting that

a compromise has been reached in which the idea of the paschal setting--whether precisely stated or implied from the context--is inseparable from the institution of the Supper, that undeniably the paschal setting is of major importance for the understanding and

¹⁷⁹Schweizer, 29.

¹⁸⁰The Passover context helps to explain the recording of two cups in Luke's account in chapter 22. "The first cup mentioned in Luke would simply be the second of the four cups of wine typically drunk at Passover" (Chesnutt, 18).

¹⁸¹Preiss, 81, 99.

¹⁸²Martin, Worship in the Early Church, 113. "At all events, the general setting was the passover season" (R. T. Beckwith, "The Jewish Background to Christian Worship," The Study of Liturgy, 48).

assessment of the Supper, but that it is impossible to be more specific.¹⁸³

Randy Chesnutt gives several themes important to the Lord's Supper because of this Jewish and Passover background and context. After describing a typical Passover observance in the first century A. D., he discusses several elements important in the Christian's participation in the Lord's Supper. "One such component," he writes, "is the Jewish emphasis on recounting the sacred story commemorated in the meal. . . . What the Exodus story is to Jews, the Passion story is to Christians."¹⁸⁴ This recounting is a re-experiencing, and is done in the first person, for it is a "personal appropriation of redemptive history. . . . Passover and Lord's Supper alike celebrate not the abstract fact of redemption, but the fact that God has redeemed me."¹⁸⁵ Anamnesis is the idea here, what von Allmen calls "a re-enactment of the event which the celebration commemorates."¹⁸⁶

This sense of God's past and present deliverance leads one to the belief that God will intervene again in behalf of his people, and so Paul writes that the church remembers the

¹⁸³Von Allmen, 10.

¹⁸⁴Chesnutt, 18, 19.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 19.

¹⁸⁶Von Allmen, 24. This term will be discussed more fully in the section on theological backgrounds.

Lord's death "until he comes."¹⁸⁷ In addition, the oneness and community aspect of the meal together give the congregation a sense of unity and concern for one another. And finally, there is the joyful hope and praise that should be seen in the Lord's Supper as in the Passover. Chesnutt says that "solemn remembrance and sober reflection are, of course, crucial--as at Passover--but such a reflective atmosphere need not be melancholic."¹⁸⁸ He concludes by calling on the church to examine whether it does justice to this "atmosphere of memory and hope, the spirit of thanksgiving and praise, the sense of personal redemption and corporate solidarity, and the mood of joy and celebration. In these areas the Jewish heritage of the Supper has a great deal to teach us."¹⁸⁹

The New Testament Background

This project/thesis centered on the Synoptic account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, particularly Mt. 26:17-30, and Paul's account in 1 Cor. 11:17-34. Because of time and purpose limitations in the project the line simply had to be drawn somewhere.¹⁹⁰ Though the gospel of John

¹⁸⁷1 Cor. 11:26.

¹⁸⁸Chesnutt, 20. This statement is similar to Keith Watkins' call for "contemplative joy" mentioned above.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 20.

¹⁹⁰"The primary texts of the New Testament which deal

contains some insight into the Lord's Supper, this project did not center on that material.¹⁹¹ Other passages especially emphasized were those in Acts that speak of the "breaking of bread" and the account of the road to Emmaus incident in Lk. 24:13-35.

Several of the works on the Lord's Supper already cited deal with the words of institution, comparing the Synoptic accounts and that of Paul.¹⁹² These studies bring out the similarities and differences within the accounts of the Lord's Supper, making it possible "to claim certain features as part of Jesus' ipsissima vox, his authentic intention, even when we can never be sure of what he actually spoke."¹⁹³ The accounts present what Gregory Dix calls a

'seven-action scheme' of the rite then inaugurated. Our Lord (1) took bread; (2) 'gave thanks' over it; (3) broke it; (4) distributed it, saying certain words. Later He (5) took a cup; (6) 'gave thanks' over that; (7) handed it to His disciples, saying certain

with the Lord's supper are in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20) and in Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25." (Thurston, 208.)

¹⁹¹Of special significance is Jn. 6, the feeding of the 5000 and the discourse on Jesus as the Bread of Life. For discussions of passages from John dealing with the Last Supper and Lord's Supper, see Schweizer, 7-9; Jones et al., 164-166; and especially Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament, 74-88.

¹⁹²See especially Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament, 24-55; Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 89-203; Martin, The Worship of God, 152-155; Jones et al., 156-164; Thurston, 209-213.

¹⁹³Martin, The Worship of God, 153.

words.¹⁹⁴

Later liturgical tradition reduces this pattern to a "four-action" scheme or shape: (1) the "offeratory"--"taking" of the bread and wine; (2) the prayer--giving of thanks for (eucharisteeo) or blessing of (eulogeeo) both elements; (3) the "fraction"--breaking of the bread; and (4) the giving of the bread and wine to the congregation.¹⁹⁵

Paul stresses the congregation's "remembrance" (anamnesis) of the Lord during the Lord's Supper and the command to repeat the act, ideas probably understood given the Passover context of the Last Supper.¹⁹⁶ Both the Synoptics and Paul present the Lord's Supper in the context of a meal, and it is in this same context that the disciples in Emmaus recognize the risen Lord (Lk. 24:30-35).¹⁹⁷ Martin says, "The Emmaus road disciples were aware of the Lord's risen presence as he took and broke the bread,"¹⁹⁸ while Burkhardt says that "only then, at table, do they recognize him." He goes on to say that they recognize him because "this guest has played host. He, not one of his hosts, breaks the bread. In that, his characteristic

¹⁹⁴Dix, 48.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Thurston, 212-213.

¹⁹⁷"In the same way, after supper, he took the cup" (1 Cor. 11:25).

¹⁹⁸Martin, The Worship of God, 168.

gesture of giving, Jesus gave himself away."¹⁹⁹

The book of Acts gives several references to the breaking of bread, beginning with 2:42, where it says that the early disciples "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Jeremias argues convincingly that koinonia should be understood as "(table) fellowship" or the Agape, "love feast," the meal during which the Lord's Supper was observed, and thus that the "breaking of bread" refers to the Eucharist.²⁰⁰ Whereas Acts 2:43-47 could refer to common meals in homes, it could also include the Lord's Supper, and a case could certainly be made for the disciples at this time celebrating the Supper on a daily basis.²⁰¹ Acts 20:7-12 is the account of Paul's meeting at Troas,

¹⁹⁹Burkhart, 74-75.

²⁰⁰Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 118-122. Marshall writes, "There is nothing to suggest that the love feast was a separate kind of meal from the Lord's Supper, and it seems more probable that these were two different names for the same occasion" (110). See also Marshall, 110-111, 127; Keating, 36-45; Jude 12; 2 Pet. 2:13. Though Peter uses a slightly different term (apate), "the general similarity of language in the two passages suggests that a deliberate play on words is intended" (Marshall, 172, n. 5).

²⁰¹Marshall, 128-130. Keating calls the combination of the Eucharist and the meal at this time "practically undoubted" and says that the term is very rarely used to refer to a whole meal. He writes, "Taking all the passages where the expression occurs in the New Testament, one may say that while, on the one hand, it would be impossible to restrict it with certainty to the Eucharist proper, it seems in this passage to include the Eucharist, and what was subsequently known as the Agape." (43-44) See also Plummer, 144.

which also seems to speak of the Lord's Supper and the common meal being shared by the disciples gathered there, inferring that the gathering was on a weekly basis. Acts 27:33-36 speaks of Paul breaking bread with his shipmates, and may not refer to a eucharistic service.

Nevertheless, the language which is used by Luke is probably deliberately intended to remind his readers of the meals held by Jesus and of the Breaking of Bread in the church and so to suggest that something of the associations of the church's meal were present. The meal is one in which the saving and sustaining power of God is acknowledged and praise and thanks are offered to him for his goodness.²⁰²

Marshall concludes that the Lord's Supper was observed by the early disciples in Acts in the context of a church meal, agreeing with 1 Corinthians and the Passover context of the Last Supper in the Synoptics. In addition, he writes, "The meal itself was a joyful occasion, celebrated at frequent intervals and as often as daily in the early days of the church in Jerusalem."²⁰³

Two other passages from 1 Corinthians should be briefly mentioned. The context of 1 Cor. 5:6-8 involves the flagrant case of immorality within the church at Corinth and the action of the church for which the apostle calls. Christ is called "our Passover lamb," and the church is told to rid itself of the leaven before the whole congregation becomes impure. And in 1 Cor. 10:1-22 Paul calls on the

²⁰²Marshall, 130.

²⁰³Ibid.

church to heed the warnings of the Israelites in the desert and to commune with Christ rather than idols. He seems to allude to his primary concern, which will be more forcefully stated in chapter 11, that the Corinthians were not considering one another in their assemblies, meals, and observances of the Lord's Supper.²⁰⁴

Historical Background and Foundation

Robert Webber asserts that "the most powerful sources of worship renewal are found first in the Scripture and second in the history of the church."²⁰⁵ As has already been stated, "The sources of congregational remembering are the Bible and tradition."²⁰⁶

However, many religious groups have discounted the important contribution of the historical Church and its experiences. Webber affirms that this is one of the sources of the problems people encounter in public worship today, saying that "the antihistorical bias of many Evangelicals has led to a prideful rejection of the past among some pastors and leaders."²⁰⁷ Thomas Oden attributes it at least in part to the failures of modernity, thus holding out hope that in a post-modern world some of the richness of the

²⁰⁴Schweizer, 4-6; Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament, 64-70.

²⁰⁵Webber, Worship Old and New, 14.

²⁰⁶Birch, 31.

²⁰⁷Webber, Worship Old and New, 12.

past will be considered useful again. He calls on Christians to recover what has historically been the center of Christian identity, the death and resurrection of Christ.

It is a sign of the overweening pride of modernity and a mark of late modern barbarism that we in the twentieth century pretend to have earned the right to judge and amend what Christians have repeatedly said constitutes the center of their consciousness. This has come only because we have supposed ourselves fully competent to creatively redesign the tradition and improve it with our supposedly superior modern imagination. . . . It is only when we correct the myopia of modernity by the lens of a larger historical consciousness that we begin to behold the living tradition as still intact. This is done essentially as a sustained act of historical empathy.²⁰⁸

Churches of Christ and the Restoration Movement from which we come are by no means exempt from these tendencies; rather, we have buried ourselves in them as deeply as anyone. Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes confront the naive assumptions that have plagued many in our movement.

We often have assumed that our roots are simply in the New Testament and that we really have not been shaped in any significant way by the intervening history. We assume that our churches are simply New Testament churches, nothing more and nothing less. The sects and denominations of Protestantism may be products of history, but our origins come entirely from the Bible. The implications of such an assumption are clear: the recent past has scant value in clarifying who we are and from whence we have come.²⁰⁹

Bruce Birch accurately assesses those within the Churches of Christ that hold to this fallacious attitude, saying that while some churches

²⁰⁸Thomas C. Oden, After Modernity . . . What?, 184.

²⁰⁹Allen and Hughes, 2-3.

want to claim the Bible alone as a source of faith . . . it must be said emphatically that all congregations are a part of some historic tradition that has mediated the witness of Scripture to them, and it is important to be conscious of that tradition and to acknowledge the shaping power of that tradition memory.²¹⁰

While Webber refers to an "antihistorical bias," Allen in somewhat stronger terms condemns what he calls a kind or sense of "historylessness." This permits the perception that one "stands above history," and "gives rise to unfair and inaccurate views of the past." He writes, "Such is the allure of the sense of historylessness: either to dismiss church history altogether or, more subtly, to pass judgment upon it as if we ourselves were not part of its stream." Thus we have denied our own humanness, finitude, and limitation.²¹¹

A further consequence is the inability to recognize imbalance that is swayed in the direction of the current cultural feelings. "The sweeping rejection of tradition, however, results not in a traditionless and culture-free faith but in a faith even more vulnerable to blind traditionalism." Though awareness of one's tradition and history can distort Christian judgment, it can also serve to force current beliefs and practices to conform to the biblical witness, thus conserving, sustaining, and

²¹⁰Birch, 32.

²¹¹Allen, The Cruciform Church, 4-9.

learning to appropriate it, we can chart with renewed clarity our course for the future."²¹⁶

It is with this same hope and purpose that the historical background of the Church's observance of the Lord's Supper is examined. While this must at best be a summary study, it is hoped that it will offer a taste of the rich Christian heritage that, though we have not always acknowledged, we all share.²¹⁷ The structure will be to examine the ancient church, the church of the Middle Ages, and the Reformation to the present.

The Ancient Church

During the first eight centuries of its existence the Church sought to find its identity, establish its authority and tradition, and determine how to interact and relate with the world. By the beginning of the second century, the most common term used to refer to the Lord's Supper was the Eucharist.²¹⁸

In the years before Constantine the Church suffered great persecution. In spite of this, however, Christians gathered together as best they could and regularly

²¹⁶Allen, The Cruciform Church, 4.

²¹⁷For more in depth historical studies, see especially Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 29-115; Webber, Worship Old and New, 45-84; Jones et al., 170-288; Galston, 43-69; Dix; and Hardman.

²¹⁸Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 33; Hardman, 30-31.

celebrated the Eucharist, which one writer says "was virtually universally observed."²¹⁹

One of the early documents is the Didache, originating around A. D. 100. Chapters 9, 10, and 14 speak of the Eucharistic service and clearly indicate the Eucharist was observed every week.²²⁰ About the middle of the second century Justin writes his First Apology and "gives us a relatively full description of how the Eucharist was celebrated in the second century."²²¹ These earlier documents indicate that the Christians brought the elements for the Eucharistic service and were led by a "president."²²² The service begins with a reading from the apostles or prophets, followed by a homily. Prayers are offered, and the bread and wine mixed with water are distributed by the deacons to those present and then to those absent, including widows and orphans.

Marshall writes, "During the second century the church meal and the strictly sacramental part of the meal were separated from one another and became two distinct occasions, and eventually the church meal or Agape fell into

²¹⁹Galston, 45.

²²⁰The text and comment can be found in Rordorf, 1-23.

²²¹Galston, 46. See Jourjon, 71-85, for text and comment.

²²²Willimon says that "as yet there seems to be no status distinction between cleros and laos . . ." (Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 34).

disuse." Though it cannot be determined exactly when the Agape ceased to be observed, it is clear that it provided the early context for the Lord's Supper. Marshall continues, stating, "What is important is that right through the New Testament period and beyond Christians met together to hold common meals that were more than a token reception of bread and wine."²²³

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, written around A. D. 220, is of "utmost importance in the study of liturgy."²²⁴ It contains a complete Eucharistic prayer and gives great insight into the service of the ancient Church, though Dix rightfully warns that as important as it is, it is but a single document.²²⁵ It begins with an introductory dialogue between the bishop and the people, which includes the Sursum corda, "Lift up your hearts" Next comes the prayer of thanksgiving, or the Eucharistic prayer, consisting of several parts. The thanksgiving praises God for his wonderful acts, and then reference is made to Jesus' words of institution. This is followed by

²²³Marshall, 110-111. Keating says that the separation of the Agape and the Eucharist "does not appear to have taken effect during the Apostolic Age, nor for some time afterwards." He later says that the evidence of the separation is "quite clear" by the middle of the third century (52, 104). See also Moule, 33-34.

²²⁴Peter G. Cobb, "The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus," The Study of Liturgy, 173. The complete text is found on pages 173-174, as well as in many other sources.

²²⁵Dix, 157.

the anamnesis, not just a remembrance of a past event, but, in the Passover tradition, a "re-representation" or "re-calling" or re-enacting of the past event, "making it present."²²⁶ Then follows the epiclesis, an invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic prayer then ends with Doxology.

The Church of the pre-Nicene age challenges all who have followed them by their devotion and faithfulness to the remembrance of the Lord through Eucharistic observance in the face of great persecution. Gregory Dix tells of some of these who would take communion over life itself.

It was to secure the fullness of this corporate action that a presbyter and a deacon had to be smuggled somehow into the imperial prisons, there to celebrate their last eucharist for the confessors awaiting execution; and S. Cyprian takes it as a matter of course that this must be arranged. To secure this for his companions as best he could, the presbyter Lucian lying with his legs wrenched wide apart in the stocks of the prison at Antioch celebrated the mysteries for the last time with the elements resting on his own breast, and passed their last communion to the others lying equally helpless in the dark around him. To secure this a whole congregation . . . took the risk of almost certain detection by assembling at the height of the Diocletian persecution in their own town, where the authorities were on the watch for them, because, as they said in court, the eucharist had been lacking a long while through the apostasy of their bishop Fundanus, and they could no longer bear the lack of it. And so they called on a presbyter to celebrate--and paid the penalty of their faith to a man.²²⁷

Dix continues, saying "scores of similar illustrations" could be brought demonstrating that the Eucharistic service,

²²⁶Dix, 245; Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 37.

²²⁷Dix, 152.

status from an illegal Church toward becoming the State Church.

Robert Galston lists several consequences of this change,²³⁰ the first of which is the movement from private or even secret assemblies to public ones. During this time the assembly came to be called the "Mass," from the dismissal or sending out of the people at the end of the service.²³¹ Second, worship began to change from being an act of the people to an act of the priest. Though it was still considered to be "the central act of Sunday worship," increased pomp and ceremony "gave the liturgy a growing sense of drama and majesty and the clergy a growing sense of separation from the laity."²³² Next, Galston says that this led to the assembly being less "corporate celebration" and more "a time of devotion for the individual worshipper." Finally, the eschatological emphasis was lost, as the church began to be reconciled to its place in time and history.²³³

The end result of all this was that the Roman canon lost the brevity, the sense of orderly progression in its eucharistic prayers and actions, and the sense of joyful thanksgiving which the earlier Roman Eucharist of Hippolytus displayed. A richness and sense of drama now infused the rites at the expense of the older clarity and unity. The Mass had been transformed from a communal eucharistic act into a solemn priestly sacrifice, a sacred pageant with less congregational

²³⁰Ibid., 50-52.

²³¹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 47.

²³²Ibid., 45, 43.

²³³Dix, 305.

participation. The people were less active participants and more passive spectators.²³⁴

Therefore, Galston summarizes and concludes,

liturgically, with the decrease in the participation of the laity, the increase in the individualistic character of worship and the fading of the eschatological emphasis, the stage was set for the sacerdotalism of the Medieval period.²³⁵

The Middle Ages

William Willimon says that much of the development during the Medieval years (9th-15th centuries) is now considered to be decline, especially seen in "the central liturgical fact of this period--the dissolution of the worshipping community."²³⁶

Webber discusses two developing trends during this time: the increased emphasis of the established Church on the idea of worship as a mystery and the monastic movement and its emphasis on the devotional aspect of worship. He says that the former of these had its origin in the use of ceremonial forms which, though not inherently wrong, "assume a cultic character and tend to replace the message they bear" when they become an end in themselves rather than a means to that end. The monastic movement came to draw a new

²³⁴Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 49. He sees this confirmed as the simpler, more somber Roman liturgy becomes the accepted Latin rite over the Gallic liturgies, which were more dramatic and involved more congregational participation (45-49).

²³⁵Galston, 52.

²³⁶Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 51-52.

priority on prayer as being "the sole content of life," and so "the Eucharist became an instrument of piety."²³⁷

One consequence was the development of the "Low Mass," a "simplified form" of the traditional Mass, "in which there was no singing and the priest, who was assisted only by a server, discharged the offices of deacon and subdeacon as well as that of celebrant."²³⁸ Willimon calls it "a subdued, rather mechanical service 'said' by a priest with his back to whatever people might be present, without music, spoken in a language (Latin) which the people no longer understood." In this way

the Low Mass reinforced the growing popular impression that the Mass is mostly a mechanical, priestly, individualistic affair which the priest said rather than the people acted, which is something to be watched rather than participated in by the people. . . . The Mass was now viewed as a priestly act in which even the people's presence--much less their active participation, offering, and Communion--was unnecessary.²³⁹

The Middle Ages brought changes concerning the elements themselves. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the doctrine of transubstantiation became official Church dogma. This doctrine was developed to explain how the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus. The "substance" became the actual body and blood of Christ, though the "accidents," the physical characteristics, remained,

²³⁷Webber, Worship Old and New, 67-70.

²³⁸Hardman, 98.

²³⁹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 53-54.

allowing them to continue to appear as ordinary bread and wine.²⁴⁰

It was also during the Medieval times that the actual bread was changed from leavened to unleavened. Though there could be a case made for the New Testament Church using unleavened bread, Willimon argues this was not so in the beginning.

There is every reason to believe that the first Christian Eucharists used regular leavened bread. Later, as the Mass became more mysterious and sanctified, and more exclusively identified with the Jewish Passover, "special" unleavened bread was created. . . . Ordinary table bread, the bread of the people, became unacceptable for the Mass. Priestly, "holy" bread was called for. The bread was no longer a sign of the offering of the stuff of everyday life; it became a pure white wafer, specially baked by sanctified hands, a sign of a pure and incorruptible priestly sacrifice.²⁴¹

Oscar Hardman agrees, saying that during the Middle Ages "unleavened bread began to be used," and he also states that its use was possibly due in part to a greater identification with the Jewish Passover.²⁴²

One might question Galston's concluding statement that the people during the Middle Ages "were encouraged in faith and in ministry, if not in koinonia," though he rightly

²⁴⁰See Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 54-57; and Galston, 54-55.

²⁴¹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 57.

²⁴²Hardman, 98. While it must be assumed that Jesus used unleavened bread if one accepts the Passover context of the Last Supper, the question of what the early Church used remains open, and I would agree with Willimon's statements in this context.

reminds the student of history that "this was the medieval reality; the Church (even though this nomenclature usually meant the clergy) was composed as always of people of their own time."²⁴³ Willimon is correct, however, when he writes, "The performing of the Mass was viewed as the way to produce the real presence of Christ so that Christ's people might adore him rather than commune with him. . . . Reform was needed, and reformation was soon to come."²⁴⁴

Reformation to the Present

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century had a great impact on worship. Though he acknowledges that contemporary Christians should not "act as though the Spirit first came to the sixteenth-century Reformers and discount all that precedes them as apostate," Robert Webber asserts, "The most significant resources for worship renewal in the church . . . are found in the Scripture and in the ancient and Reformation periods."²⁴⁵ In general, the Reformers rejected the Mass, rejected Transubstantiation, rejected the power of the priesthood for the priesthood of believers, and restored the primacy of teaching and preaching to the corporate assembly. To a certain degree, they affirmed the importance of the Lord's Supper, giving all Christians the

²⁴³Galston, 56.

²⁴⁴Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 58, 60.

²⁴⁵Webber, Worship Old and New, 14, 15.

opportunity to partake of the bread and the cup. Most Reformers (Zwingli being the primary exception) advocated weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, but the Church settled on quarterly observances.²⁴⁶

Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg and became a key figure in the Reformation. His theme of Sola Scriptura was a battle cry, calling for the Scriptures to be given their rightful place and authority in the life of the Church. "Luther insisted that the pope had for centuries held Christians captive" through several means, including transubstantiation and withholding the cup from the people.²⁴⁷ Though he rejected transubstantiation, Luther believed that Christ was especially present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. However, he eliminated the fraction (the breaking of the loaf) and further reduced the Eucharistic service to Jesus' words of institution, enabling the sermon to dominate Sunday worship.²⁴⁸

Huldreich Zwingli's views on the Lord's Supper were more radical and extreme than those of Martin Luther. His

²⁴⁶Galston attributes this to the fact that the people of Reformation days were "living out of the medieval mind set" and thus were not able to accept all the ideas of the Reformers (57, 61-62).

²⁴⁷Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era 1500-1650 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), 111.

²⁴⁸Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 64-65.

"minimalist view of the sacraments"²⁴⁹ included a denial of the bodily presence of Christ in any way in the Eucharist.²⁵⁰ Zwingli's views led him to reject the Lord's Supper as the normal Sunday activity of the assembled church. His service was "strongly didactic," his stress was "upon the Word and a rational response to the Word," and thus "Zwingli was more a child of the emerging Enlightenment than a restorer of ancient practices."²⁵¹ As one writer says, "Zwingli has, perhaps, had more than his fair share of influence on Protestant worship."²⁵² This view is shared by William Willimon:

Anyone familiar with Protestantism's elevation of preaching as the major worship event, the almost complete lack of lay involvement in worship, and the emphasis upon education and moral exhortation of the laity through the liturgy can readily see the lasting influence of Zwingli.²⁵³

John Calvin did not share Zwingli's views on the Lord's Supper, though his "doctrine of the eucharistic presence is somewhere between Luther's and Zwingli's."²⁵⁴ Calvin, like

²⁴⁹Ibid., 68.

²⁵⁰Williston Walker et al., A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 446. "In no point of Christian doctrine was his divergence from Luther more apparent than in his interpretation of the Lord's Supper, and this disagreement ultimately sundered the evangelical ranks" (445). See also Grimm, 158-159.

²⁵¹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 67-69.

²⁵²Galston, 58.

²⁵³Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 69.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 70. Grimm states, however, that "he stood

Luther, wanted the service of the Table to be the normal Sunday occurrence, and like Luther was unsuccessful in causing it to happen.

Zwingli was the only Reformer who disagreed with the desire to return to the ancient structure of Word and sacrament. His emphasis was on the Word only. This position remained the most influential in the circles of Calvinism, and, to the distress of John Calvin, quarterly communion, rather than weekly communion, became standard in the churches most influenced by Calvinism. This influence extended through the English Puritans to the Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and independents and spread through them to most of American Protestant Christianity.²⁵⁵

Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, had a great impact on the Church of England through the composition and publication of his Book of Common Prayer, partially due to the invention of the Gutenberg press. As with the other Reformers, Cranmer's belief that the Eucharist be received each Lord's Day was never accepted. His communion services carried the heavy penitential character of the Medieval Church as well as the strong didactic character of the Reformed Churches.²⁵⁶

The Counter-Reformation of the Roman Church was exactly what one would expect:

it was at once reactionary, conservative and

closer to Luther than to Zwingli" (290). For a more in depth study see Alexander Barclay, The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper: The Eucharistic Teaching of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1927).

²⁵⁵Webber, Worship Old and New, 76.

²⁵⁶Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 75-84; Galston, 60.

authoritarian. The Council of Trent was a council of the Church under siege. This resulted in a period of liturgical stagnation between Trent and Vatican II. Again, it was Gutenberg's invention which helped to fix and maintain the uniformity. Many of the things for which the Reformers were calling, such as a reduction in the power of the priests and saying of Mass in the vernacular, could not be given serious consideration, however right they may have been, since it would be seen as giving in to heresy.²⁵⁷

John and Charles Wesley come on the scene in the eighteenth century during the time of the Great Awakening. Both held strong beliefs in the importance of the Lord's Supper, seeing it, among other ideas, as an evangelistic opportunity. The Wesleys "were responsible for 166 hymns on the Eucharist."²⁵⁸ John Wesley "communed on the average of twice weekly and urged his Methodists to receive the sacrament frequently."²⁵⁹ However, like the Reformers before them, the Church that followed them did not share that same concern for frequent communion.

The Nineteenth Century Enlightenment also had a great impact on the Church. It was in this environment that the movement that would include Churches of Christ was born, and it shared the characteristics of the Rationalism and Revivalism of its day. Willimon notes that the "Disciples of Christ" or Stone-Campbell Movement was "one of the most interesting of a number of new Protestant groups" born

²⁵⁷Galston, 62.

²⁵⁸Ibid., 61.

²⁵⁹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 99.

during this time.

In an age of bitter disputes among factions within American Protestantism, the Disciples decided that such divisions are due to "human opinions" which have been added to the simple basic Christian requirements. They resolved to avoid all that the Scriptures avoid. Using this resolve as their guiding principle for reform, they dispensed with creeds, sacraments, and infant baptism. But their biblical emphasis did lead them to recognize the centrality of the Lord's Supper for Christian worship. Disciples therefore recovered weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper--an anomaly in a time when whatever influence which the Lord's Supper had among most American Free Church Protestants was lessening.²⁶⁰

Lynn Hieronymus says that though the Stone-Campbell churches continued to give "lip service" to the centrality of the Lord's Supper, by 1910 the sermon was becoming the "high point of worship." He sees this demonstrated in the movement of the sermon to the end or "climactic point" of the worship service. Though other explanations could be offered for this change in the order of service, Hieronymus states, "I believe that one contributing factor was the fact that the people--at least the preacher--viewed it as most important."²⁶¹

Willimon, in commenting on the revivalism and rationalism of American Protestant churches at the end of the nineteenth century, succinctly asserts, "The sermon, ending with a passionate plea to 'come to the altar and be saved,' was the center of worship. . . . Baptism and the

²⁶⁰Ibid., 103.

²⁶¹Hieronymus, 11-12.

Lord's Supper took a back seat to the supreme 'sacrament' of the sermon." He writes that prayer "too often degenerated into a 'sermonette with the eyes closed,'" and that "the transcendent focus of worship was replaced by human-centered worship" which was "designed to motivate, titillate, convict, soothe, inspire, or entertain the worshipers rather than to help the worshipers focus upon God."²⁶²

Presently, liturgical renewal is taking place in many denominations. As the articles by Diogenes Allen and Fred R. Anderson mentioned above in the survey of literature indicate, the post-modern philosophy is providing a philosophical base for a theology that does not cut off the sacraments for the priority of the Word. Churches of Christ share in this spirit of worship renewal, and it is hoped that this renewal will lead us to an examination of the major theological perspectives of the Lord's Supper and recovery of its biblical, historical place at the center of Sunday worship. It is to a discussion of these crucial, theological points that this paper now turns.

Theological Background and Foundation

While it is not the purpose of this project to develop a theology of worship, it has been assumed and affirmed that the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper must be understood and experienced in the more general context of

²⁶²Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 103.

worship. Therefore, a few words on worship are appropriate.

First of all, it must be affirmed that the worship spoken of in this context is corporate, deliberate worship. It occurs when the church assembles on Sunday. The discussion of whether every act in a Christian's life is an act of worship to God is not considered in this study; nor does this study deal with small group studies and gatherings for praise, meditation, and devotion. The context of this study is the Sunday assembly and the "sharing in the public worship of God as an act of corporate fellowship."²⁶³

The many works on worship noted above, plus the countless studies not included, demonstrate the seriousness and vastness of a study on Worship. These studies lead one to the conviction that the focus of the assembly is the acknowledgement and vision of God on the throne, and the adoration and praise that should naturally result. This is the vertical aspect of Christian worship, as this quotation from John Burkhart illustrates.

We live in a society where the value of almost everything seems to be estimated in terms of what it is good for. Nothing appears to deserve esteem simply for its own sake; nothing seems to have intrinsic value; and, for many of us, the world can be divided between the useful and the useless. . . . It is scarce wonder, no wonder at all, that in a society dedicated to consumerism, people ask, "What can I get out of worship?" As if getting something out of everything expresses an appropriate response to life! The question of worship, when so stated, does not take God seriously. It does not ponder the true worth of God, for to treat God as if God were a means to our ends is

²⁶³Martin, The Worship of God, 12-13.

to imagine that we ourselves are gods. God is not humanity's servant.²⁶⁴

Both the biblical and historical witnesses affirm that the Church through the ages has met together not only to share in the worship of their God and their Lord Jesus Christ but also because of mutual needs and concerns for one another and their faithfulness in their Christian walk in a world that at times has been unsympathetic and even violently opposed to those Christian principles. This is the horizontal aspect of Christian worship and is also a significant part of the Lord's Supper.

In turning to the Lord's Supper, several important theological points must be considered in response to the biblical and historical issues and studies completed thus far.

Both the biblical and historical witnesses agree that the Lord's Supper or Eucharist is the focal point of the assembly. The centrality of the sermon is more a product of the Zwinglian influence and the Enlightenment than either the New Testament or the historical Church. Even for the Roman Church during the Middle Ages through Vatican II in the 1960's, "Whatever its history and however decadent its celebration had become, the fact is, that for the millions who called themselves Roman Catholics over the years, whether they watched or communicated, the Eucharist was at

²⁶⁴Burkhart, 16.

the center of their worship and work as Christians."²⁶⁵

The biblical foundation is strong for the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper as the climax of the assembly, and the practice of the historical Church only verifies the call of many in the religious world today for a full service of Word and Table each Lord's Day. William Willimon effectively answers those who would be critical of weekly observances because it may become too frequent and thus routine and meaningless. He admits that "not all of our daily meals are special or full of significance. Some are, some are not." The point, however, is that nourishment is given and received. And so he makes the application, saying that "whether a service strikes you as deeply moving or as routine, the important thing is that you are fed." Similarly, Willimon illustrates the frequency needed at the Lord's Table with the amount of time needed to build a friendship, and one begins to realize that it is not a question of quality time and experience versus quantity time and experience; rather it is to assert that quality time is not possible without quantity time.

We might respond to the question, How often should our church have the Lord's Supper? by asking, How often should we commune with the risen Christ? Is once every three months enough? Hardly. Friendship takes time, commitment, risk, frequent meetings. The more you get together, the more you grow together. Sometimes your gathering with a friend will be invigorating, inspiring, and full of significance. Sometimes it will be a cup of coffee, a little idle talk, and nothing

²⁶⁵Galston, 63.

more. But the important thing was that you met. You got together. You provided the opportunity for a deep encounter. You took time.²⁶⁶

Though it is impossible to determine without question or doubt whether or not the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples was a Passover meal, it is clear that the meal was observed in the Passover context. The Lord's Supper is thus an acknowledgement of the Salvation History of the Lord for his people throughout time, culminating in the gift of his son into the world, his death for our sins on the cross, and his resurrection. In addition, the Passover context provides significant background to the Lord's Supper and the important theological meanings and perspectives brought out in this section.

The Lord's Supper is an act which has both vertical and horizontal significance. The vertical is represented in the proclamation through the Supper of the death and resurrection of Christ our Savior and Lord and the fellowship that is shared with Christ in the communal meal. The Lord's Supper is a "pictorial presentation of the facts of the Gospel," it is the Gospel portrayed "in dramatic action."²⁶⁷ The horizontal is represented in the fellowship the participants share with each other and draws on the great background and history of shared meals in Bible times, in the life of Christ, and in our own days as well.

²⁶⁶Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 99-100.

²⁶⁷William Barclay, 110.

Perhaps a good place to compare the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Lord's Supper is in the statement of Paul to the Corinthians when he chastises those who eat and drink "without discerning the body of the Lord."²⁶⁸ The "body" is taken by some to mean the person of Christ, while others see in it a reference to the church.

Allan McNicol argues that the reference emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ rather than the church, though he acknowledges that "when Christ is perceived correctly in the Supper, it follows that there is a demand to show care for others."²⁶⁹

Ralph Martin, however, says the statement "is best taken to refer to the corporate nature of the church."²⁷⁰ William Barclay flatly states, "The person condemned is not the person who does not discern that the elements he takes in his hands are the Lord's body. The person condemned is the person who does not discern that Christians are the Lord's body."²⁷¹ Craig Watts writes that the abuse in Corinth was a kind of "classism" that the apostle condemned.

He called upon them to "discern the body." That didn't

²⁶⁸1 Cor. 11:29.

²⁶⁹McNicol, "The Lord's Supper as Hermeneutical Clue," 47.

²⁷⁰Martin, The Worship of God, 159. Similarly, Randy Chesnutt says the statement "is probably an appeal to acknowledge the corporate character of the Christian community" (20).

²⁷¹William Barclay, 109.

mean he wanted them to meditate on the nail-wounded flesh of the earthly Jesus. Rather, Paul wanted the Corinthians to pay more attention toward each other, to be more concerned, accepting and loving to each other. At communion we are to remember what God has done for us in Christ, but we are also to remember who we are as a community. We are to remember that we have been called to be a community that cares for the hurts of others, that seeks to include those who have been rejected, that seeks to feed those who are hungry.²⁷²

Leander Keck likewise says that the Corinthians had lost all sense of consideration for the poor among them, and possibly because of a strictly vertical understanding of the Supper. "The communing was between the individual and the Lord; what difference did it make who else was or was not there?"²⁷³

Craig Watts remembers trying to picture in his mind "all the vivid images of the crucified Christ" while at the same time striving "to ignore everyone else around me and block out every distraction," isolating himself from all others. "Just me and Jesus." He tells of dinner at a friend's house where no one talked except to say, "Please pass the potatoes," bringing to mind the initial dinner Fraulein Maria shared with the von Trapp family in "The Sound of Music." He says, "Too often we approach the Lord's Supper that way. We try to get into our private world with God and pretend no one else is around." Watts asserts that this practice "misses the point of having a communal meal. . . . Our Lord is present at the communion table to meet us

²⁷²Watts, 43.

²⁷³Leander E. Keck, Paul and His Letters (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 63.

and revitalize us, as a community, not as isolated individuals."²⁷⁴ William Willimon obviously agrees, as this quotation demonstrates:

Many people see Sunday morning as primarily a private time for "me-and-Jesus" individualism and subjectivism. Individuals come and sit in individual pews and think individual thoughts and eat individual bread. . . . Private, personal meetings with God have their time and place. But church on Sunday is not the time or the place. Sunday is family day. It is a joyous day to get together, to reform and re-form the body, to meet one another, and to meet God. We are called forth from our rugged individualism and yoked to the Body. Unlikely, separated individuals are converted into family. We come to the table as virtual strangers; we rise and go forth as kinfolk.²⁷⁵

These authors remind us of the ethical implications of the Lord's Supper, rooted in both its vertical and horizontal aspects, but especially in our awareness of one another as we commune together. Barclay says that Christians "must be in unity before they dare approach the sacrament," and that to dare to partake of the Lord's Supper "unaware or forgetful" that we are the body of Christ "is nothing less than blasphemy." The only cure for the disunity and inconsideration "is to remember and never to forget that this table is the Lord's table, and not the table of any Church."²⁷⁶ Randy Chesnutt writes that the Lord's Supper "should therefore foster a sense of communal identity and solidarity. To participate as an individual

²⁷⁴Watts, 42-43.

²⁷⁵Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 105.

²⁷⁶William Barclay, 109.

without a sense of oneness and fellowship with the larger Christian community is to make a mockery of the essential communal character of the Supper."²⁷⁷

An interesting attempt to reconcile the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Lord's Supper is found in an article by Calvin Porter. He suggests that both interpretations have merit, saying one must make "the connection between the death of the Lord and the church" or else come under the apostle's condemnation.²⁷⁸

I am somewhat inclined to agree with Porter, though I am not completely in agreement with his wording. It is not a question of which of these two interpretations is correct; both are in the apostle's heart and are significant in resolving the problem at Corinth. Geoffrey Wainwright says that there should be "a dual understanding," with "both the eucharistic and the ecclesial body being intended."²⁷⁹

Bonnie Thurston asserts that "the idea that individual Christians are united as the body of Christ is important," saying, "As we share the elements, we become one with Christ in taking him in, but also one with each other by sharing common elements."²⁸⁰ Ralph Martin, in commenting on Paul's message to the Corinthians, says the apostle seeks to

²⁷⁷Chesnutt, 20.

²⁷⁸Porter, 40.

²⁷⁹Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology, 185.

²⁸⁰Thurston, 215-216.

demonstrate to them that the humanward perspective "is indissolubly linked to the godward reference. No communion with the Lord apart from fellowship with one's neighbor in love and concern is possible--that would be his plain speaking in the drift of these verses."²⁸¹ The vertical and the horizontal aspects of the Lord's Supper are both affirmed, and both must be present for the individual to worthily partake. Keck draws the very appropriate conclusion:

Thus Paul understands the Supper as a sacramental rite which involves the believers not only with Christ, specifically with his death, but also with one another. The unity of the community is not the result of mutual accommodation, a social contract, but the result of being "baptized into one body" and of eating one loaf. Therefore, "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:26). What was happening in Corinth was just the opposite. Therefore their meals were not "the Lord's Supper," regardless of how the Corinthians may have understood it and irrespective of how "meaningful" their experiences might have been.²⁸²

It must be noted that the Lord's Supper is in the context of a meal. The rich biblical and historical background, including the Agape feasts, demonstrates that for at least the first century or two the Church celebrated the Eucharist as it shared a common meal together. It was not until abuses such as those confronted by Paul in 1 Cor. 11 that the memorial instituted by Jesus was separated and kept while the meal that was more peripheral was left

²⁸¹Martin, The Worship of God, 156.

²⁸²Keck, 64.

behind. In addition, the meals Jesus shared with his disciples during his ministry, as well as the rich Old Testament significance given to meals, are part of the background for the meal our Lord chose as his remembrance.

This remembrance, or anamnesis, is a crucial part of the Lord's Supper. The idea is not a mere remembering, but a re-enacting, a re-experiencing. "To recall something in the liturgy, particularly for the Jews, is not to focus on the dead past; it is to proclaim its presently manifested power and our place within its present reality."²⁸³ As Everett Ferguson notes, "Each Jew who celebrated the Passover became himself a participant in the Exodus event. . . . Thus, instead of calling the past to mind, the past was brought into the present and its benefits made operative."²⁸⁴ Ralph Martin writes, "There is a dynamic sense of 'memorial,' which suggests life not death, and is based on the evocative power of the 'memory' of Israel in its cultic worship of God." He continues, saying that for the Jews, "worship was dramatic and vital, reliving the past through its creed and liturgy, and calling Yahweh's past deeds out of their 'pastness' into a living 'present,' where their saving benefits were newly appreciated and experienced."²⁸⁵ When Jesus says, "This do in remembrance

²⁸³Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 37.

²⁸⁴Ferguson, 61.

²⁸⁵Martin, The Worship of God, 147.

of me," he is calling us to relive his life, death, and resurrection in a dynamic way, not just to be reminded of the experiences of the Lord and those who were there at the cross but to experience and appreciate those events ourselves today. Leroy Garrett writes, "We 'remember' by entering into the event ourselves and becoming a participant in his suffering. It is more than a 'memorial.' It is a sharing in the gift of life, the repeated acceptance of the gift of salvation."²⁸⁶

This re-experiencing in the Lord's Supper is helped when the church acknowledges and participates in the ceremonial aspect of the Eucharist. Ceremony and symbolism are important in the observance of the Supper. The four-action or seven-action shape of the Eucharist is something that can be restored.

The "fraction" or breaking of the bread to signify Christ's broken body is a key point that many do not acknowledge as they eat the Lord's Supper. Some scholars do not grant significance to the breaking of the bread. Gregory Dix says that at the Last Supper the bread was "broken simply for distribution and not for symbolic purposes," and that "there is nothing in the record of the last supper to suggest that our Lord made any point of the broken bread representing His own Body 'broken' on the cross." He does, however, acknowledge "that this symbolism

²⁸⁶Garrett, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper," 303.

of the fraction as representing the passion was explicitly adopted in some quarters in the second century," as indicated in part by the rendering of 1 Cor. 11:24, "This is my body which is broken for you" (KJV).²⁸⁷ Geoffrey Wainwright asserts that "It is the taking of the elements, the thanksgiving, and the communion which have constantly emerged as the central features of the sacrament."²⁸⁸

There is, however, much in favor of communicating to the congregation the symbol of Christ's broken body seen in the breaking of the bread. Lynn Hieronymus writes, "It is my studied observation that Christian Churches/Churches of Christ are among just a few churches that do not emphasize the Fraction, the act of breaking of the bread,"²⁸⁹ though Alexander Campbell spoke out clearly of the significance and necessity of this act, saying that "he that gives thanks for the loaf should break it."²⁹⁰ Bonnie Thurston is very strong in calling for this recovery, asserting that

it is the physical breaking which represents the spiritual breaking and passion. As it was a spiritual necessity that Christ should die, so the loaf must be broken. It cannot be eaten whole. It is the breaking of the bread that shows forth the broken body, not the

²⁸⁷Dix, 80-81. See also the article by A. R. Winnet, "The Breaking of the Bread: Does it Symbolize the Passion?"

²⁸⁸Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Understanding of Liturgy in the Light of its History," The Study of Liturgy, 497.

²⁸⁹Hieronymus, 148.

²⁹⁰Campbell, "The Breaking of the Loaf," 67.

bread itself.²⁹¹

In addition, the significance of the common cup needs to be given attention. As Thurston notes, "It is the pouring out of wine (and water) from a flagon into a cup that symbolizes the outpouring of Christ's blood for us." She severely questions the practice and use of individual cups in that it takes away from this important symbolism.

The use of little individual cups destroys the symbolism of communion. . . . The witness of the Synoptic Gospels and of Paul on the subject of the institution of the Lord's supper suggests that little wafers and tiny plastic cups destroy the symbolism of communion as thoroughly as sprinkling does that of baptism.²⁹²

She is not alone in calling for a concerned look at this practice. Allan McNicol writes,

There is little attempt to highlight the symbolism of the loaf and the cup. The practice of breaking the loaf in connection with the prayer of thanks at the table, an important liturgical act for early Restorationists, has been abandoned. No pouring from a cup takes place at the table. In other words, our observance of the Lord's Supper only vaguely approximates what took place in the ancient church.²⁹³

William Barclay powerfully acknowledges McNicol's comparison of first century and present Lord's Supper observances.

There can be no two things more different than the celebration of the Lord's Supper in a Christian home in

²⁹¹Thurston, 214. See also the article by David Brown, "The Breaking of the Bread."

²⁹²Ibid., 214-215.

²⁹³McNicol, "The Lord's Supper as Hermeneutical Clue," 43.

the first century and in a cathedral in the twentieth century. The things are so different that it is almost possible to say that they bear no relationship to each other whatsoever.²⁹⁴

Though Barclay is overstating, he certainly makes his point, and others are in agreement, such as Leroy Garrett, who writes, "We must recognize that there is hardly any resemblance between the way we take the Lord's Supper and the way Jesus did, or even the early church." Garrett goes on to acknowledge, however, that "It is all right for us to do it differently (we really have no choice) so long as we capture the meaning of the Lord's Supper." He makes some suggestions to help bridge the gap, including partaking in small groups which, among other things, "would allow for a single chalice or cup, and all could drink from the same cup as did Jesus and his disciples." This, however, could take away from the communal aspect of the whole church partaking together. Garrett decries what is done today, though, saying, "Scores or hundreds of tiny plastic cups stacked several feet high in silver trays and served by a dozen waiters makes it very difficult to catch the symbolism of the Supper we read about in the New Testament."²⁹⁵

Craig Watts appeals to the meal context, saying the way the partaking of the Lord's Supper "has evolved makes it rather difficult to see it as a real honest-to-goodness

²⁹⁴William Barclay, 99.

²⁹⁵Garrett, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper," 305.

meal. We eat a dry little pellet and drink a half thimble of juice."²⁹⁶ William Willimon is encouraged as he reacts to the renewal he sees in these areas today.

As the central symbolism of water is being recovered in our renewal of baptism, so the central symbolism of a meal is being recovered in our renewal of the Lord's Supper. Real leavened bread and real wine should be offered, blessed, and given in sufficient quantities so as to lift up the full, rich, and wide-ranging symbolism of a common meal where the host is Christ himself. Many congregations are recovering the joy and the vivid symbolism of using a common cup and a common loaf of home-baked bread. We Protestants are learning again to trust the old, biblical symbols rather than rely exclusively upon words. We are learning again that the Lord's Supper is something which is done--tasted, touched, smelled, and acted--rather than something which is only spoken and heard.²⁹⁷

Jack Lewis acknowledges that though it is possible if not likely that Jesus and the early church used fermented wine in the Last Supper and Lord's Supper, he also rightly states that grape juice is certainly appropriate.²⁹⁸ I am against churches today using fermented wine, because grape juice is in good supply and readily available, because it is faithful to the symbolism of the "fruit of the vine," and because it has not been the source of immeasurable heartache and suffering as has the fermented wine of our culture.

²⁹⁶Watts, 42.

²⁹⁷Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 125. "When I think of the sad brokenness of modern life, the tragic, lonely detachment we suffer, I can think of no more expressive symbol of this detachment that a miserly, plastic, disposable thimble of a glass in which watered-down, antiseptic juice is offered to God's thirsty people" (Willimon, Sunday Dinner, 106).

²⁹⁸Lewis, "Fruit of the Vine."

This conviction was reinforced when one of the members of the study group for this project wrote in a journal entry, "I, personally, since I am a recovering alcoholic, am grateful that we do not use wine."

The case for leavened bread and the common cup are difficult to overcome. Though Doyle Kee makes a strong point concerning the symbolism of unleavened versus leavened bread from 1 Cor. 5:6-8,²⁹⁹ and that unleavened bread was probably used by Jesus at the Last Supper because of the Passover context,³⁰⁰ what he fails to do is establish any proof that the early church used unleavened bread. Acts, 1 Cor. 11, and the historical evidence seem to point to the conclusion that unleavened bread began to be used only after several centuries, and that the early Christians, true to the meal context of the Lord's Supper, used "regular, leavened, ordinary table bread."³⁰¹ Craig Watts says that the context of the Lord's Supper in the first century church was "sort of a primeval pot-luck. . . . The bread and wine

²⁹⁹Although leaven is used in a positive sense by Jesus in the Kingdom parable in Mt. 13:33.

³⁰⁰Doyle Kee, "A Reexamination of Unleavened Bread," Firm Foundation 93, no. 13 (30 March 1976): 3. See also the article noted earlier by "G. G." in the Millennial Harbinger, "The Passover and the Lord's Supper," where the author states, "I do not see how Bible Christians can think of representing the body of Christ, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, with a large, huffy, light loaf. I think the same reasoning that would justify this, would justify sprinkling" (206).

³⁰¹Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 57.

that the earliest Christians used for communion was no different from the bread and wine they had served with their lamb and lentils."³⁰² Leroy Garrett presents a scenario for a Lord's Supper observance that is closer to what the early church may have done than many of us have realized.

There should also be one loaf placed before the partakers, not diced wafers or Matzo crackers. A loaf and not crumbs. It need not be unleavened. When Jesus "took bread" it was unleavened only because it was a Passover meal. He did not choose unleavened bread, and he certainly did not prescribe it. It would be appropriate for us to "take bread" that is consistent to our way of life, which is not Matzo crackers (Herein is probably our greatest sin in the way we do the Supper) or unleavened cakes. I would suggest a large loaf of French bread, the bigger the better. Let it be blessed and broken, like Jesus did, and let it be passed among the believers, not on a plate but hand to hand, so that they could literally break bread together. One could hold the loaf while another broke off a piece (not a crumb), and thus they would break bread together, perhaps on their knees. In the same way we would pass the chalice to each other and drink together . . .³⁰³

It of course is more difficult in the age of AIDS than ever before to convince people to share in a common cup or a common loaf. Bonnie Thurston gives the suggestion of pouring the fruit of the vine into a cup on the table and then passing the trays as usual.³⁰⁴ J. R. P. Sclater perhaps only somewhat jokingly wonders if insurance companies require higher premiums of those who do not use individual cups, saying, "It would be scientifically

³⁰²Watts, 42.

³⁰³Garrett, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper," 305.

³⁰⁴Thurston, 214.

interesting to discover whether there is an appreciably higher rate of mortality in their membership, which can be reasonably traced to their use of the common cup." I am inclined to agree with him, however, when he says that it is probably too late to protect against the "modern innovation of individual cups,"³⁰⁵ and so perhaps some suggestions such as Thurston's noted above may be effective compromises. The call to recover the meal aspect of the Lord's Supper, and the symbolism and ceremony associated with it, is one that should not be silenced or ignored.³⁰⁶

Of great significance in the Church's observance of the Lord's Supper, and an aspect that has not been emphasized appropriately, is the eschatological aspect. Whenever Christians partake of the Lord's Supper we proclaim the Lord's death "until he comes."³⁰⁷ Thomas Oden writes, "The Eucharist is the presence of Christ experienced sacramentally as end-time banquet."³⁰⁸ There is in the Eucharist a sense of the "already" and the "not yet" in which the future heavenly banquet is affirmed while the

³⁰⁵Sclater, 173.

³⁰⁶See also Willimon, Sunday Dinner, particularly 102-110, where he decries the "self-contained, thimble-size glasses and tasteless, infinitesimal bits of bread far removed from the original, biblical experience of eating with Jesus, now almost incomprehensible to the average person" (104).

³⁰⁷1 Cor. 11:26.

³⁰⁸Oden, After Modernity . . . What?, 136. See also Ferguson, 63-64.

present earthly existence is also acknowledged.³⁰⁹ Barclay states "that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we at one and the same time remember the past sacrifice of our Lord and affirm our certainty of his coming triumph."³¹⁰ Ralph Martin speaks of the "celebratory tone" in light of the Salvation History of the people of God, saying, "The eucharist traces the Heilsgeschichte themes from creation to the new world of God's ultimate rule over all creation."³¹¹ This sense of God's deliverance instills a mood of joy similar to that found among the Jews in their observance of the Passover.

Passover was not a somber occasion but a very festive one. While frivolity and levity were considered inappropriate . . . the predominant mood was one of joyous celebration. Such joy was considered a natural corollary of the sense of deliverance from bondage that each participant was encouraged to experience afresh. In the case of the Lord's Supper, solemn remembrance and sober reflection are, of course, crucial--as at Passover--but such a reflective atmosphere need not be melancholic. It may be suggested, in fact, that a genuine sense of redemption from sin through Christ cannot help but issue in joyful celebration not unlike that which typified Passover.³¹²

I. Howard Marshall echoes this view when he discusses in the context of the heavenly banquet the "elements of thanksgiving and joy which mark the Lord's Supper." He

³⁰⁹Marshall, 152-153; Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology, 147.

³¹⁰William Barclay, 110.

³¹¹Martin, The Worship of God, 169.

³¹²Chesnutt, 20.

denies any conflict between this attitude and the one of "solemnity and reverence which Paul commends as appropriate at the meal." Though he does not accept a worldly sense of frivolity and pleasure, Marshall asserts that the blessings and gifts of the Lord represented in the Lord's Supper

must inevitably lead to the expression of joyfulness and praise to God. . . . The New Testament does not appear to associate sorrow or mourning over the death of Jesus with the celebration of the Supper. The supper was not an occasion for mourning over his death, but rather for rejoicing in his presence and giving thanks for the benefits procured by his death. Whatever might have happened in a later period, the early church remembered at the Supper what the Lord's death had provided rather than grieved over the fact that he had to die. The joy of salvation experienced and the hope of its heavenly consummation were dominant.³¹³

Keith Watkins' term "contemplative joy" expresses these thoughts well. He speaks of the joy of the Lord's Supper as contemplative or meditative, "as an idea, as an enduring state of mind," rather than something brought on simply by a present, temporary experience. "One of the functions of religious ceremonies is to keep alive this contemplative joy, by reminding people of the reasons for rejoicing and encouraging them to do so. The Lord's Supper does this very thing."³¹⁴

Having studied the biblical, historical, and theological backgrounds and foundation of the Eucharist, herein is humbly offered a summary statement of my theology

³¹³Marshall, 152-153.

³¹⁴Watkins, 19-21.

of the Lord's Supper.

A Theology of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was the focal point of the worshiping Church of the New Testament and is the focal point when the Church gathers for corporate, deliberate worship today. The Ministry of the Table is part of the normal, typical worship assembly on the Lord's day and is complimented and accompanied by the Ministry of the Word and other acts of worship.

The Lord's Supper is a reaffirmation of the Salvation History of the Lord and his people. Just as the Passover brought to mind the great deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage and gave them an identity as the people of God, so the Lord's Supper gives the church its identity as the saved people of God. It is a proclamation in which we confess the Lord as God and Jesus as the risen, living Savior.

The Lord's Supper is an act in which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are remembered and re-experienced. For the worshiping believer the past events of the Savior's life and death are made present in a dynamic way and are experienced again today.

The Lord's Supper is an acknowledgement of our fellowship and unity with one another, as well as a confession of our responsibility for one another. We are the community of the risen Lord, brothers and sisters in the

family of God, members of the body of Christ. The Lord's Supper is the family meal of the Church and calls to mind the pleasant memories of meals God's people have shared together in Old Testament days, in the life and ministry of Christ, in the Church through the centuries, and in our own lives as well.

The Lord's Supper is a ceremony in which each believer is to take an active part. The symbolic nature of the bread recreates the body of Christ broken for us and the wine poured out for our sins and unites us with those through the ages who have paused to take part in this ceremony and who have been encouraged and nourished through its observance.

The Lord's Supper expresses our hope. Just as we believe that Jesus came and lived and died, we believe that he arose from the dead, that he lives today, and that he is coming again. The Lord's Supper looks ahead to the day when we will sit at the table with the Lord in our eternal home.

The Lord's Supper is thus an act of contemplative joy. It calls for meditation upon the high cost for our salvation and joyful thanksgiving that the price was paid. Our mood should reflect our joy and gratitude and be solemn but not somber, joyful yet reverent.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for the Methodology

As Mark Ellingsen has written, "Theology is thought about God, specifically, reflection on Scripture and doctrines." The study of theology, though at times a dirty word for some in Churches of Christ, is, like theology itself, "indispensable" and vital to the Christian faith. "The theological task, that of gaining a proper understanding of the biblically-based doctrines, must be a high priority for Christians in our contemporary situation."¹ Oden insists that "any well-formed theology" utilizes "a well-known quadrilateral of sources for understanding God's self-disclosure in history: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience."² This agrees with the authors referenced in this thesis, such as Robert Webber, who asserts that "the most powerful sources of worship renewal are found first in the Scripture and second in the history of the church."³

¹Ellingsen, 1.

²Oden, Pastoral Theology, 11.

³Webber, Worship Old and New, 14.

Thus the methodology for this project was to take a group of members of the Woodland West church through a thorough study of the biblical and historical background of the Lord's Supper, help them to engage in theological thought and discussion on this study, and lead them in developing a theology of the Lord's Supper from their experience.

A significant aspect of this project is the ideology that calls for the members themselves to develop this theology, rather than the elders and staff meeting behind closed doors in a "smoke-filled room" to set policy and theology. The church leader's mission and goal is to lead others toward maturity, to help them develop a faith that is their own, and sometimes in the process to help them verbalize and reflect on what they really believe. It was therefore the function of the group to come up with their own theology of the Lord's Supper. The importance and appropriateness of this aspect was emphasized in the group's reaction to the original title of the project and the document that would result, "A Theology of the Lord's Supper for the Woodland West Church of Christ." Whereas a few initially had difficulty with the question of theology, the really troubling part of the title was the perception that the group was deciding the theology of the whole congregation. This concern was strong enough that ultimately the title of the final document was changed to "A

Theology of the Lord's Supper." And at the very beginning of the study one person acknowledged on an information sheet the fear "of this group or any other dictating to others how they should celebrate their personal communion with God." Obviously, this group--and their church--believes in the individual's right and obligation to come to his or her own theology and beliefs on this subject.⁴

Finally, as has already been stated, the methodology used was similar to that used by others in comparable projects. Most notable are those projects led by Fladger Hucks and Robert Galston, where small groups were led through intense studies on the Lord's Supper and its biblical and historical backgrounds.

Methodology

The task force participants consisted of seventeen adult members of the Woodland West church, ten men and seven women. All were married, including four couples in which both spouses were participants. Two of the church's seven elders were participants, as were their wives. Three deacons and the church's youth minister were also included. Two of the participants were retired, and six were under the age of forty. Most had been members of this church for over ten years, while only one (the youth minister) had been at

⁴See Cartwright, 51-52, who asserts that the minister "serves as a guide but not as the founder of theology," even though he may be much more qualified to do theology than most other members.

Woodland West less than a year.

The participants were asked to complete an information sheet at the beginning of the study.⁵ Included in this short information sheet was a question that asked what hopes, expectations, and fears they had as they entered this study. Most responded by saying they thought the Lord's Supper needed more emphasis and study and were excited to study the subject and the way the church here observes it. Some acknowledged having little more than a "basic" understanding of the Lord's Supper and were a little anxious about an in depth study. Some expressed a particular interest in the Lord's Supper and the hope "for spiritual growth in emphasis on the Lord's Supper." All seemed to share the desire to strengthen their observance of the Supper and to help the church improve its Service of the Table as well.

The structure of the study was to meet on Thursday evenings for four successive weeks in October, 1991. The task of the project as expressed in an information letter to the participants was "to develop a theology of the Lord's Supper for the Woodland West church." The participants were asked to keep a personal journal throughout the study and were given an assignment to read specific Scripture texts

⁵A copy of the Participant's Information Sheet is found in Appendix A.

before the first session.⁶

Session 1: Biblical Backgrounds⁷

The purpose of the first study session was first of all to familiarize the participants with the nature, structure, and task of the project, as well as to convey my gratitude and appreciation to them for their willingness to be involved.

The focus of the session was on the biblical background of the Lord's Supper. The beginning point was discussion concerning the importance placed today on meals and eating together, followed by the study of the significance attached to meals in the Old Testament.

The question of whether or not the Last Supper was a Passover meal brought lengthy discussion. The tension between the Synoptics and John was discussed, followed by other objections to the Passover theory. Possible choices and explanations were given, and the case was made for the Passover context of the Last Supper. This was followed by the discussion of Passover elements found in the Lord's Supper, to which the article by Randy Chesnutt was

⁶Scriptures to be read before the first session were Mt. 26:17-30; Mk. 14:12-26; Lk. 22:7-22; 1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:17-34.

⁷A copy of the lesson outline given to each participant for each of the four study sessions can be found in Appendix B.

especially helpful.⁸

The group then briefly named several of the events in Jesus' life and ministry that were experienced in the context of some sort of meal. Finally, some of the New Testament passages were considered and a chapter from Webber's Worship Old and New given as homework to prepare them for the historical discussion to follow.⁹

This first session bogged down in the discussion of the Last Supper/Passover question. Though this is an important issue in the study of the Lord's Supper, too much time was taken for this discussion. This could be attributed in part, however, to the lack of awareness on the part of the group that there was any question at all about whether or not Jesus and his disciples were observing the Passover that night. Ultimately, the group could not discount the very plain statements of the Synoptics that this was a Passover meal and seemed happy with the ultimate conclusion that it likely was a Passover meal and that either way the Passover context was certainly present.

Overall, the main purpose and objective--to provide a good biblical foundation for the next three sessions--was accomplished.

⁸Chesnutt, 18-20.

⁹Webber, "A Theology of Order (The Eucharist)," Worship Old and New, 131-147. Several of the participants found this reading difficult, an indication of the lack of historical study among this group which is likely quite common in our movement.

Session 2: Historical Backgrounds

The study of the historical backgrounds was begun with a discussion of the Lord's Supper in New Testament times.¹⁰ Marshall's comments were especially helpful in this study and the conclusions which were drawn.¹¹ Two of these conclusions, written on the participant's lesson outlines, were these:

- a. The Lord's Supper was a normal part of the church's assembly, and was celebrated frequently--at least weekly and possibly daily.
- b. The Lord's Supper was a part of a common meal which the Christians shared, but it was differentiated from that meal.

The major focus of this second session was on the historical church and its observance of the Lord's Supper through the centuries. From the early centuries of the ancient church, readings from The Didache, Justin's First Apology, and the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus were discussed.

From the time of the Middle Ages, the increased ceremony and mystery of the Eucharist was discussed, with readings from Webber¹² and Willimon.¹³ Included was some discussion on the Low Mass and the doctrine of

¹⁰This would have been more of a review than it was had it not been for the lack of time spent in the first session on this discussion due to the lengthy discussion of the Passover issue.

¹¹Marshall, 108-11, 126-133.

¹²Webber, Worship Old and New, 61-71.

¹³Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 39-60.

Transubstantiation.

The Reformation period was briefly covered, with some of the common characteristics of the different streams being discussed. This led into a discussion of the Enlightenment and its impact, particularly the rationalism of the day and the emphasis on the spoken word or sermon. Finally, some issues related specifically to the Restoration heritage were discussed, including weekly communion, what kind of bread and fruit of the vine are to be used, and the question of individual crackers and cups.

In conclusion, the significance of the Lord's Supper was stressed, that it should be the normal, weekly practice of the church. The ceremony and symbolism were seen as significant, including the "four-action" shape, the anamnesis, and the individual member's active participation in the service. The session ended with a reading from Willimon on the importance of historical study,¹⁴ and the group was given a reading from Ralph Martin as homework.¹⁵

This session was of particular importance, because traditionally we in the Churches of Christ, as has been

¹⁴Ibid., 120.

¹⁵Martin, "The Table of the Lord," The Worship of God, 145-170. The group responded somewhat more favorably to this reading. Though it was still difficult to read because of the theological depth, it was more in the Protestant/evangelical tradition than Webber's reading, and so the task force members were a bit more comfortable with it. One participant wrote in his journal, "This reading was much more comfortable to me--probably because it is written in a much more familiar 'language.'"

pointed out above, have not always acknowledged our history and connection with the church through the centuries. The participants seemed to be interested in and benefit from the historical study.

The group was asked to consider the issues that had arisen during the first two sessions and to begin during the week to determine which would be significant enough to include in the statement of theology the group would develop.

Session 3: Theological Perspectives

The third session began with a review of some of the significant themes from the biblical and historical studies of the first two weeks. Next, a discussion of the question, "What is meant by 'A Theology of the Lord's Supper for the Woodland West Church of Christ?'" was undertaken, with the participants being told, "It is a statement of what we believe is the word and will of God on the subject of the Lord's Supper."

The thrust of this third session was to come to some consensus as to what general themes should be included in the final statement of theology. The purpose of the discussion was to give the group something specific to work from, for without it there would be no real possibility of coming up with the stated theology in the fourth session.

This session was, as one member called it in her journal, a "brainstorming session." The major themes from

the first two sessions were listed on a marker board. The group was reminded that the purpose of this project was not to decide strategies for improving the Lord's Supper services at this church but was rather to study the biblical, historical, and theological background and foundation for the Supper and thus to develop a written theology. The group was asked to differentiate between those issues that needed to be included in such a statement and those that are implications of that statement or strategies for another group to discuss and develop at a later time. The issues that were deemed especially significant for this project and the statement of theology were these:

- Focal point of worship;
- Horizontal aspect--unity, family, fellowship;
- Vertical aspect--relationship with God;
- Sense of joy and celebration;
- Anamnesis;
- Regular--time/frequency;
- Ceremony and symbols--not empty, but meaningful;
- Salvation History--connection/continuance with the past;
- Participation--not passive but each one active;
- Comfort/Hope/Future--salvation (heaven);
- Proclamation and confession.

A letter that enumerated these items was sent to each of the members of the group the next day in preparation for the final session. The purpose of this third session, to give the group something specific to work from the following week in developing the written theology, was thus accomplished.

For homework the group members were given first of all a copy of a "Mission Statement" developed by a similar group

as part of a previous Doctor of Ministry project. The purpose of this assignment was to give them a sample of what a statement of theology might look like and to help them have a sense of what the following session would be working toward completing. Also, the participants were given a reading from I. Howard Marshall, the concluding chapter in his book Last Supper and Lord's Supper, which includes what can be considered his theology of the Lord's Supper.¹⁶ Finally, the group was asked to consider during the week what might be some future implications for this church as a result of this study.

Out of sensitivity for the group members and concern for the possibility of successfully accomplishing the goal of the project, I asked the participants to consider having five sessions instead of four--thus spending two sessions on the writing of the theology or being willing to stay late for the final session. The group committed to staying later than the stated time if needed the following week.¹⁷

Session 4: A Theology of the Lord's Supper

After expressing appreciation for the group members' participation in the project and giving a brief overview of the task and format of this final session, the group addressed the question, "What shall we call this document?"

¹⁶Marshall, 141-157.

¹⁷The final session actually lasted three hours.

It was noted that though the vast majority were comfortable with calling it a "theology," some were not happy with the perception that this group had decreed what the doctrine of this church was on the subject of the Lord's Supper. The title was changed from "A Theology of the Lord's Supper for the Woodland West Church of Christ" to simply "A Theology of the Lord's Supper."

The remainder of the time was spent discussing the significant themes from the week before and assessing their relationship with each other, prioritizing them, and actually creating the wording for the final document. While this was a very difficult undertaking and took about three hours, it was most rewarding for me. The group members demonstrated a very clear understanding of the issues and a deep involvement and commitment to the study. Though it was hard work, developing this statement of theology during this fourth session was of great benefit and was an especially memorable experience of growth.¹⁸

Though there was not time to discuss future implications and strategies, the participants were given evaluation forms to complete which included this question.¹⁹ The session was a success because the goal of

¹⁸The final document is included in the next chapter of this thesis.

¹⁹A sample copy of the Project Evaluation Form is given in Appendix C. Some of the comments from the returned forms are included in the final two chapters of this thesis.

developing a very thoughtful statement of theology of the Lord's Supper was reached. The group members were again thanked, and the session ended, as did each of the four sessions, with prayer.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The final product and result of this project is the statement of theology developed by the group, and that statement is included in this chapter. There are other concerns and results, however, such as the evaluation of the process that led to the formulation of this theological statement. There are also the questions of how this statement compares with the literature surveyed earlier, as well as the effect this project will have on the stated problem of chapter one. It is to these issues that this thesis now turns.

Results of the Study Group Process

While the content can be judged by studying the final statement of theology, process is also of great importance, and it is worthwhile to make some judgments concerning the process undertaken in developing the theological statement. Of great significance in judging this process is feedback received through journal excerpts and project evaluation forms. One participant commented on both the content and process of the study sessions when he wrote, "The progression of this process was very natural, going from a

study/review of the New Testament text to the historical observance to discussing our beliefs and conclusions to writing the theology." This individual shared my view that the exercise of actually writing the statement of theology was a powerful experience, picking "the writing of the theology as a group" as the one thing that especially impacted him, "because of the sharing of beliefs and thoughts that went on and the fact that most people had something very worthwhile to contribute."

Several task force members commented favorably on the class discussion and dynamic. One person wrote, "It was a good group--no one was afraid to speak up." Another said, "One of the most successful attributes in this activity was the excellent class participation."

The only negative that came through in several responses was the time constraint. One participant wrote that the material "was almost too long for four sessions," but acknowledged that "getting people for more than four [sessions] may have proved very difficult." Another person shared this frustration of so much good study to be involved in but a limited time in which to give.

The only real negative was the time constraint. I believe it was necessary in this case to accomplish Bill's objectives, but I would like to be part of a study that would cover the material in the same format but with more time allowed for discussion and study of some of the issues. The content was good except that with more time allowed additional side topics could be discussed and the implications could be added to the end. The process was good, except for feeling rushed and sometimes cut off.

The structured nature of the study caused one person to comment that there was "a sense that class opinion was guided as opposed to free thinking." He went on to say this came about "when some scriptures were referenced but were not thoroughly investigated." Again, this is probably a reaction against the time constraints, as another member expressed appreciation to the leader for "allowing the group to come to our own conclusion(s) rather than leading us to his."

Some members expressed finding the historical study difficult, though necessary and useful. "The history section seemed a little long, but I realize it's crucial," acknowledged one participant, while another found the Webber reading "very dry and very 'forced.'" Similarly, one group member wrote in his journal, "The Webber work was difficult to read and I didn't agree with some of what he said. However, it did provide some background and familiarity for lesson two." In speaking of the lesson on the historical background, this person was quite perceptive as he went on to say that "the material here was very unfamiliar. An open mind is required when studying the history of Christianity. I would like to study this in more depth."

One participant suggested the leader give the students his summaries of the readings instead of assigning the whole chapters, though another member said, "I don't know how I would have done it, but Bill could have assigned more

reading, some of which he had obviously done, which might have served to enlighten/educate us more."

Several commented that their personal observances had changed because of a greater awareness of the symbolic, ceremonial, and joyful aspects of the Supper, one saying, "These changes were obviously due to our study." Another wrote that he found

the idea of "a participation" to be especially intriguing--to me, "participation" goes beyond "observation." We state that we are going to "observe the Lord's Supper" but really we should be "participating" in it. "Observer" gives the feeling of "casualness;" "participate" more of a feeling of "active participation."

As one of the participants, one of our deacons, led the congregation in a communion meditation two months after the last study session, I was struck by those concepts that had been brought out in our study which he included in his devotional. He spoke of being able to look up to God and his redemptive history, of our horizontal relationship with each other, and of being able to look forward to eternity.

Significant to the evaluation of the process is the evaluation of the leader, and the participants responded very positively to a question related to my leadership of the project. "Bill did a fine job in leading this study," wrote one member, while another said, "One of Bill's great strengths is leading a class." One member wrote, "I think Bill did great--I wouldn't change anything." Another person said, "I give Bill an A+. He prepared and presented with

knowledge and enthusiasm. When the classes were completed we were glad we attended . . ."

I would have to echo these comments on the overall success of the project, with the only negative being the time constraint. Unfortunately, that will always be a reality, but it possibly would have helped to have had six sessions instead of four, though it is difficult, as one member stated, to get people to participate in a longer study. If we were to do this again, however, I would probably have five or six sessions, allowing more time for the first and last sessions. The group worked well together, was genuinely involved in the study, and seems to have benefitted a great deal. It was a very rewarding process and provided a rich opportunity for discovery and growth for leader and participants alike.

Synthesis with Survey of Literature

The survey of the literature offered in chapter two was a massive undertaking. This section will seek to compare a few of the conclusions reached by the study group with some of the general observations from that survey.

The group came away from the study more committed than ever that participation in the Lord's Supper is the climax or focal point of the Sunday assembly. Some of their comments reflected Hieronymus' statement that though Restoration churches assert that this is true, too many times mere "lip service" is given to the significance of the

Eucharist.¹ Though one person commented that it seems difficult to say that one part of our assembly is more important than another, the group was quite committed to this significance being given to the Lord's Supper and our Service of the Table demonstrating that significance.

The question of how often one should partake of the Supper is related to the significance attached to it. Task force participants came away from the study with a renewed sense of commitment to the practice of weekly communion. Our conviction was given a solid biblical and historical foundation and was strongly supported in the literature, as leaders and writers from other Christian faiths call for their churches to restore a full service of Word and Table as their normal Sunday morning activity.²

Two significant aspects of the Lord's Supper, the vertical and the horizontal, were discussed thoroughly both in the literature and in the group study sessions. The vertical aspect is seen especially in the literature related to worship. A sense of the wonder and holiness of the transcendent God is called for in approaching the throne to offer praise to the Lord during the Sunday assembly. This aspect was strongly felt by several of the participants. One of these called for us to spend "ample time singing only praise songs and reading scripture of the Lord's Supper,

¹Hieronimus, 11-12.

²Willimon, Word, Water, Wine and Bread, 125.

Psalms, etc. . . ." In doing this, she writes, "we would be focusing as we should and setting the conditions to 'joyfully' partake of the Lord's Supper. (We would sing songs of encouragement and admonition afterwards.)"

While not denying the significance of the vertical, the readings, especially writers such as Willimon and Watts, give special emphasis to the horizontal aspect of the Lord's Supper. The group also recognized this as being a significant part of the communion, as the situation in Corinth and the apostle's reaction certainly indicate. The group thus recognized that during the Lord's Supper we are not only called to "Look up--to God" but that we are also commanded to "Look around--to each other." One cannot scripturally partake of the Supper without an awareness of both the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the Eucharist. While it seems appropriate that one aspect might be the theme during a particular service, over a period of time both aspects should certainly be emphasized.

Some of the group members indicated that the study of the idea of anamnesis was of great benefit to them. The literature emphasizes the re-experiencing of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus and not just the remembering of it. This study has helped these participants and enabled them to make their participation in the Lord's Supper a dynamic re-living of the Christ event.

Several of the participants in the study group shared

that they were impacted by the idea of the Lord's Supper being a time of reflective, "contemplative joy."³ The literature, calling back to the Passover and other meals shared by God's people and particularly during the life and ministry of Jesus, sees the Eucharist as a time of praise and joy in response to God's deliverance--past, present, and future. The eschatological aspect of proclaiming the Lord's life, death, and resurrection "until he comes" was emphasized in the literature and also was present in the theology developed by the group.

Finally, the literature calls for further study, reflection, and renewal in the area of worship and the Lord's Supper. This call was shared by our group, and more of their suggestions in this regard will be shared in the final chapter of this thesis.

Effect on Problem and Purpose

The problem stated in chapter one concerned the "cancer" that was troubling many churches today, namely "the failure to understand and practice public worship."⁴ It was acknowledged that Churches of Christ have suffered from this disease, as has the Woodland West church. There was a great need for substantive reflection on the biblical, historical, and theological foundation for worship in

³Watkins, 19-21.

⁴Webber, Worship Old and New, 20.

general and particularly the Lord's Supper. The stated purpose was thus to help the participants of the project to study and reflect on these issues and to develop a written theology of the Lord's Supper.

This purpose was successfully achieved. Not only did the participants receive a great opportunity of reflection upon the biblical, historical, and theological backgrounds of the Lord's Supper, but our church was able to begin a journey that will lead to renewal in our Service of the Table as well as all our worship experiences. It was not always, however, an easy process. As some acknowledged, at times it was quite unsettling. One woman wrote that she had never "heard it discussed that the Lord's Supper could scripturally be taken more often than only on the first day. That's interesting." Another member was a little more dramatic as he expressed in his journal his response after the first two sessions on the biblical and historical foundations.

My first reaction to our Thursday evening meeting was to want to run down the halls of Woodland West, pulling out handfuls of hair (my own or others), yelling "No!" until I woke up in my own bed, safe and sound--only slightly rattled. . . . Unfortunately--and fortunately--that didn't happen. Leavened bread? Fermented wine? The audacity--the heresy--the unbelievable, incredible shock--the questions--the answers--the willingness to look, to question, to search, to find, to question more and yet to understand--What a journey of faith--an adventure in learning!

The general response was one of gratitude for being involved and for the opportunity to take part in this

"adventure in learning." One participant wrote, "I believe the whole (project) was positive and successful. It's caused me to be able to identify my feelings and thoughts on this subject." This typifies the views felt by many, for though each felt initially the need for more study and meditation on the Lord's Supper, these were thinking Christian leaders who had already attained some degree of spiritual maturity. One deacon's wife wrote, "I suppose that I had at least heard or thought most of the ideas that we touched on in class throughout the years. But the class made me walk up to those thoughts and feel them and taste them." What a wonderful comment on a study of the Lord's Supper! Finally, one group member wrote, "After this class, I am certain that I will never partake of it lightly again and I realize that it is a great honor to get to participate in the Lord's Supper."

Where the church will take this beginning is yet to be seen and is the question addressed in the final chapter. The final result, the actual end product of the project/thesis, is the statement of theology developed by the group, and is the final section of this chapter.

Statement of Theology of the Lord's Supper

A Theology of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is the focal point of our assembling together to worship God.

The Lord's Supper is the foundation upon which we build our joint worship to God, remembering God's saving acts throughout history. Our observance of the Lord's Supper is based on the command of Jesus, "Do this in remembrance of me," and is a proclamation and confession that He is Lord and Savior. It is therefore an expression of our joy in the hope of our salvation. We share this joy as we commune together around the Lord's table.

The Lord's Supper is a re-experiencing of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which should be observed every Sunday. When we eat the bread--which is His body--and drink the cup--which is His blood--we actively participate in this ceremony with our Lord and with each other, and joyfully look forward to His return.

By making it the focal point of our assembly, the Lord's Supper allows us to :

Look up--to God;

Look back--to God's redemptive history;

Look around--to each other;

Look forward--to eternity.

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

CHAPTER V
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Implications

Upon completing a project of this magnitude there are always some needs and implications that arise, as the study uncovers some important issues and concerns. An obvious call is for other churches to engage in similar studies and to restore significance and meaning to their Service of the Table.

Several of the task force members had suggestions concerning future action of the Woodland West church in the areas related to this study. One wrote that he did not think that there were changes that had to be made in our observance but that there possibly were some changes that could "enhance" that observance. He acknowledged, however, that "these would probably have to follow a more general study by the rest of the congregation." One woman, acknowledging after the study that there were "still a few questions" in her mind, said, "I feel that a series of sermons about the Lord's Supper is in order. I feel that there may be other individuals other than myself that have some confusion." Another agreed, saying that "more detail

awareness by the congregation is needed." Finally, one participant wrote that "all Christians should look into this subject without fear periodically." While acknowledging that it may be natural for some, she states, "I'm not sure whether being and thinking holy is natural--I think people like me need training in it."

It seems to me that the participants are correct--the first need to be addressed is some sort of congregational study in this area, and a sermon series is probably the best way that could be accomplished. This could be done in conjunction with an adult Bible class series or it could stand alone. While a congregational series would not have the same dynamic as a small group study, it could be in depth enough to share the important Biblical, historical, and theological backgrounds of the Lord's Supper. This would provide the theological basis on a congregational level for the next step.

Once the foundation is set, the question to be addressed would be "What do we do now? How can we more effectively do what our theology of the Lord's Supper states?" It may be that this will call for another task force, or this too could be studied in Bible classes. It was the researcher's assumption and conviction that one cannot ask "What can we do?" until the theological basis and background have been developed. Once that is done, however, we must move on to the more practical concerns.

One change that can be accomplished soon is a change in the order of the service. Presently, the Lord's Supper comes before the sermon in Sunday morning assemblies. It seems to me that the statement and conviction that the Lord's Supper is the focal point and climax of our assemblies would be reinforced if the sermon led up to the Service of the Table. This summer may be an ideal time to consider this change. During the summer our assemblies will precede our Bible classes on Sunday mornings; so having the Lord's Supper late in the service may be quite acceptable to most people. Of course, a concern is dropping too much change at one time on our members, but I think this could work very well and would love to see it become permanent whether classes follow or precede the assembly.

There are other issues this study has exposed that our congregation should address. The Sunday evening communion service is currently being done in the cry room in the back of the auditorium during the singing of the closing song. There must be a better way to accomplish this and to make it a realistic possibility that both the vertical and horizontal emphases of the Lord's Supper would be experienced on Sunday evening. It would certainly be appropriate to have the evening service of the Table in the auditorium. Consideration could be given to encouraging all present to partake, even those who participated in the Lord's Supper that morning. This would be quite a change

for some and may not be practical, but it is certainly not unscriptural.¹

Another issue of particular importance is the symbolism of the one loaf and the one cup. As was stated above, we are probably past the point where a common cup is possible, but our church needs to brainstorm for ways this symbolic message can still be dramatically portrayed. The "fraction" or breaking of the bread as well as the pouring of the grape juice are other changes that could bring us in closer communion with the historical church, including the one described in the New Testament. This would also help to bring out more of the meal aspect of the Lord's Supper, and perhaps other ways of accomplishing this could be studied. The very strong possibility that the first Christians used leavened bread and not unleavened bread is intriguing to me. This is another aspect that may be too monumental a change, but the reaction of the congregation to the Biblical and historical studies could make it something to be considered.

The final implication to be discussed relates to the problem and purpose of the project. There is a need for a similar study on the more general subject of worship and worship renewal. This study of the Lord's Supper has effectively begun this process, but this is an area in which

¹Jimmy Jividen affirms, "God has not decreed . . . the exact time that it is to be taken on the first day of the week, or set limits on the number of times it may be taken" (Jividen, 43).

much more growth is needed. There is movement in the religious world at large, as well as in Churches of Christ, to place more emphasis, thought, and significance upon those occasions when the church gathers to worship. The Woodland West church has begun that journey but has a long way to go. When the corporate, deliberate worship of the church is renewed and revived, the church itself and each of its members are given new life as well.

Conclusion

William Willimon has written of the renewal that takes place when we come to the Table of the Lord, saying, "We come weak, hungry, despondent. We leave shouting, with the first disciples, 'He is risen!'" We "feast upon this enactment of love," and the experience of sharing the Lord's Supper with Christ and his Church inspires us faithfully and confidently to follow our Lord into the world.

In so doing our eyes are opened. We see that it is not all up to us in worship or in life. Our actions are but loving responses to the God who, in bread and wine and the everyday stuff of life, has reached out to us. We shall not go away from worship hungry. Rather, we shall leave refreshed, strengthened for the week which lies ahead, renewed by the table fellowship.²

While working on this project/thesis with the concerns of family and ministry always very much present, I longed for a sabbatical, a time to go off somewhere away from the daily grind and concerns of life. I wanted to think and

²Willimon, With Glad and Generous Hearts, 142, 143.

study undisturbed and concentrate on writing.

But then I remembered what the Lord's Supper is all about, what it commemorates, the event it brings to the present all over again. God did not take a sabbatical and escape the problems of humanity. God did not even settle for simply being an uninvolved observer. Instead, God acted. He became involved in the human situation, taking on flesh and blood himself. Jesus walked the dusty roads of people's lives and immersed himself in their experiences. He laughed with them and shared their joys. He cried real tears with them and shared their hurts and their pain. He broke bread with them. He died, was buried, and was raised to life, and now lives forever, giving humanity the promise and hope that he is coming again.

The Lord's Supper brings all of this in front of us each and every week. It calls us to share our God's concern for people and like him to act in their behalf. During the Lord's Supper we sit at the table with our Creator and our Savior, and we leave nourished and empowered to be a force for God in his world today. For as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we fix our eyes on the salvation of our God, and we focus our hearts on the needs of our world. And as others see Jesus living in us, they acknowledge that once again God has come to help his people.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION SHEET

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Participant's Information Sheet

Name _____

How long have you been a Christian?

How long have you been a member at Woodland West?

Briefly describe your past and present involvement in the
work of the Woodland West church.

Briefly tell some of the hopes, expectations, fears, etc.
you have as you enter this study, based on the subject
matter, your spiritual pilgrimage, your present
relationship with God and/or the church, etc.

APPENDIX B

LESSON OUTLINES

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Lesson 1: Biblical Backgrounds
October 3, 1991

Objectives

Each person will:

1. know what the nature, structure, and task of the project are;
2. have a general knowledge of the Jewish and Passover backgrounds of the Last Supper and Lord's Supper;
3. have an appreciation of the importance of meals in the ministry of Jesus;
4. be familiar with Jesus' words of institution at the Last Supper;
5. have an idea of the Biblical significance of the Last Supper and Lord's Supper.

Introduction

1. Express appreciation to the participants.
2. Explain the nature of the Doctor of Ministry program and the Project/Thesis.
3. Explain the structure and task of the project.

A. Old Testament Backgrounds

1. What significance do we place on meals today?
2. What significance does the Old Testament place on meals?
 - a. Noah's sacrifice (Genesis 8:20-22)
 - b. Abraham's three visitors (Genesis 18)
 - c. Moses (Exodus 24:9-11)
 - d. Psalm 23
 - e. Passover and other Feasts
3. Was the Last Supper in the context of a Passover meal?
 - a. Synoptics v. John

- b. Other objections
- c. Other choices
- d. A possible explanation
- e. Passover features of the Last Supper
- f. Conclusion

- 4. What Passover elements inform the Last Supper/Lord's Supper?
 - a. Salvation history
 - b. Anamnesis
 - c. Future presence
 - d. Community
 - e. Celebration

B. Jesus and Meals

Give examples of events in Jesus' life and ministry involving food or meals.

C. The accounts of the Lord's Supper

- 1. Matthew 26:17-30 (Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-22)
- 2. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
- 3. Relate these narratives with the background given above.

D. Other New Testament passages

- 1. 1 Corinthians 10:14-22
- 2. Acts 2:42; 2:46; 20:7-12 (27:33-36)
- 3. Luke 24:13-35

E. What is the significance of the Last Supper/Lord's Supper in light of this study?

F. Homework

- 1. Information sheet
- 2. Robert E. Webber, "A Theology of Order (The Eucharist)", Worship Old and New, pp. 131-147
- 3. Personal Journals

G. Prayer

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Lesson 2: Historical Backgrounds
October 10, 1991

Objectives

Each person will:

1. be given the opportunity to ask questions related to the structure of the project and the homework assignments;
2. have a general understanding of how the Lord's Supper was observed in New Testament times;
3. have a general understanding of how the Lord's Supper was observed at various times during the last 1900 years.

Introduction

Questions about the homework, journals, project?

A. The Lord's Supper in New Testament times

1. Some Scriptures
 - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
 - Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-12
 - Jude 12; 2 Peter 2:13
2. Some Conclusions
 - a. The Lord's Supper was a normal part of the church's assembly, and was celebrated frequently - at least weekly, and possibly daily.
 - b. The Lord's Supper was a part of a common meal which the Christians shared, but it was differentiated from that meal.
 - c. What kind of emblems were used?

B. The Lord's Supper in the Historical Church

1. The Didache, chapters 9,10,14 (A.D. 100)
2. Justin's First Apology, chapters 65-67 (A.D. 150)
3. Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition I,4 (A.D. 220)
4. The Middle Ages - Ceremony and Mystery
5. The Reformation to Modern Times - Understanding and Experiencing
6. Some issues in the Restoration Movement

C. Some Conclusions

1. The significance of the Lord's Supper
2. The ceremony of the Lord's Supper

3. The experience of the Lord's Supper
4. Others?

D. Homework

1. Ralph P. Martin, "The Table of the Lord", The
Worship of God pp. 145-170
2. Personal Journals

E. Prayer

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Lesson 3: Theological Perspectives
October 17, 1991

Objectives

Each person will:

1. call to mind significant conclusions of the two previous lessons on biblical and historical perspectives;
2. have a clear understanding of what is meant by a "theology of the Lord's Supper";
3. take part in a discussion that will provide the framework for the next session;
4. have a good idea of the issues that will be included in the theology to be written in Session 4;
5. begin thinking about future implications for our church as a result of this project and study.

Introduction - Questions concerning the project?

A. Review - 1 Cor. 11; Acts; Synoptics

"Some Conclusions" from Session 2 Outline
Significance
Ceremony
Experience

B. Define - What is meant by "A Theology of the Lord's Supper for the Woodland West Church of Christ"?

It is a statement of what we believe is the word and will of God on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

C. Consider - What are the important points of this study that are significant enough to be included in our final product?

D. Homework

1. "Mission Statement" for Woodland West from 1990 task force
2. I. Howard Marshall, "Conclusion", Last Supper and Lord's Supper, pp. 141-157
3. What might be some future implications for our church as a result of this project?
4. Personal Journals

E. Prayer

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Lesson 4: A Theology of the Lord's Supper
October 24, 1991

Objectives

Each person will:

1. participate in discussion over the previously determined significant subjects, with the end product being a completed statement of what this group believes concerning the Lord's Supper;
2. participate in discussion concerning implications of this project/study for the Woodland West church.

Introduction

Appreciation for participation
Task and format for this session

A. What shall we call this document?

B. Significant issues to be included:

Focal point of worship
Look around - horizontal
 unity; family; fellowship
Look upward - vertical (relationship)
Sense of joy and celebration
Anamnesis
Regular - Time/Frequency (after "focal point"?)
Ceremony and Symbols - not empty, but meaningful
Salvation History - connection/continuance with the
 past
Participation - not passive but each one active
 (horizontal?)
Comfort/Hope/Future - salvation (heaven)
Proclamation and confession?

C. Where do we go from here? (Implications)

D. Homework

1. Finish and turn in Personal Journals
2. Complete and turn in Project Evaluation Form

E. Concluding thanks and prayer

APPENDIX C

PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
FOR THE WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

Project Evaluation Form

- 1) Have your thinking or beliefs changed concerning the Lord's Supper since you began this project? If so, in what ways? To what would you attribute these changes?
- 2) Has your participation in and observance of the Lord's Supper over the past few weeks been affected by this study? If so, how has it been affected? What do you think caused the changes?
- 3) What is the single discovery or event that has most impacted you during this project and study? Why do you think it affected you so?
- 4) What have been the positives about this project? What do you think were the best parts of the process and study? What was successful?
- 5) What have been the negatives during this study? What do you think did not work well, or was ineffective? If we were to take another group through a similar study, what changes would you make in content (what is studied)? What changes would you make in process (how the study was carried out)?
- 6) How do you think Bill did in leading this study? In what areas was he particularly helpful to the group and to the study? What could he have done differently that would have helped the study and the participants?
- 7) Do you think this has been a worthwhile study/project? Why or why not?
- 8) What do you think needs to be done now, if anything, in the area of our church's observance of the Lord's Supper? What are some of the implications of this study?
- 9) Do you think it would be helpful for other churches to engage in a similar study? Why or why not?

10) What other comments do you have, either of specific aspects of the subject and the project, or of a more general response?

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