Nazarene Theological Seminary

# Consumer Culture and the Free Church Tradition: Addressing the Problems of Consumerism through a Eucharistic Ecclesiology

A Dissertation in the Practice of Ministry Submitted to
the Faculty of Nazarene Theological Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by
Dale A. Stoops

Kansas City, Missouri
April 2023

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

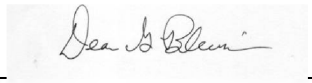
# Doctor of Ministry Dissertation Approval

**Student Name:** Dale Stoops

**Dissertation Title:** *Consumer Culture and the Free Church Tradition: Addressing the Problems of Consumerism through a Eucharistic Ecclesiology*

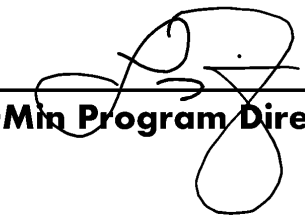
**Date of Defense:** March 22, 2023

We, the undersigned, determined that this dissertation has met the academic requirements and standards of Nazarene Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry program.



**Faculty Advisor, Dean Blevins**

**Second Reader, Dirk Ellis**



**DMin Program Director, Levi Jones**

# ABSTRACT

Dale A. Stoops

Consumer Culture and the Free Church Tradition:
Addressing the Problems of Consumerism through a Eucharistic Ecclesiology

The Free Church tradition suffers from a disconnect between theology and practice which allows consumer culture to infiltrate the church. Consumerism often manifests itself through objectification, alienation, and disengagement. The Free Church can find hope through renewing its sacramental heritage and embracing a Eucharistic Ecclesiology of communion, community, and compassion. This project will identify the problems of consumer culture through survey of social sciences and theological engagement. It will then address the theological heritage of the Eucharist and the loss of sacramental appreciation within the Free Church tradition. The reclamation of Eucharistic theology provides the framework for a Eucharistic Ecclesiology that addresses the influences of consumerism and leads to a revitalization of spiritual formation, clergy development, and laity participation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The life of faith is lived in community, among family, friends, and the great "cloud of witnesses." I am most thankful to my wife, Kayla, and our children for enduring the many hours of research and writing which was often done away from home. The support of my family has been invaluable in keeping me focused and encouraged. I am grateful for Southside Church of the Nazarene, where I have served for nearly ten years, in providing me the opportunity to pursue a doctorate. I am grateful for my cohort in the new friendships and challenging conversations. You have all made my journey more enriched than I could have imagined. I would like to thank the professors who shared from their experience and knowledge to guide us in this path of spiritual formation and discipleship. Doug Hardy and Rebecca Laird have been great encouragers throughout the writing process. My advisor, Dean Blevins, has been faithful through these few years of writing to aid me in offering this project to the church. I am grateful for his expertise and guidance. My second reader, Dirk Ellis, offered his time and knowledge to challenge me through the editing process. Additionally, I have a number of family members, close friends, and ministry partners who have encouraged me. Faith is certainly lived in community, and I am forever grateful for how broad mine has become because of this journey.

AN EXPLORATION OF AN

ECCLESIOLOGY FOR

THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Approved by

_____

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

_____

Faculty Advisor

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Discussions in theology often make the distinction between orthodoxy and orthopraxy: right beliefs and right practices. The two perspectives remain connected but separate branches of theology addressing both what we know and how we practice what we know. There appears a tendency in local church settings to focus largely on what one knows at the expense of right practice. This is not to say every local congregation possesses faultless belief or practice. However, an emphasis on belief apart from practice, or practice from belief, often forgoes a grounding within Scripture that supports the sacraments. A disconnect occurs when belief and practice do not align, producing vulnerabilities within the church. Free Church tradition remains particularly prone to being anemic in a disconnect between theology and praxis, leaving it without the strength to resist cultural influences.

It is presumptuous to claim the North American context in which consumerism and individualism has spread characterizes the entire North American region. However, within areas of the Midwest the tendencies appear among a more conservative constituency. The demographics show many areas of the Church of the Nazarene to be predominately white, middle-class.[1] The congregations alluded to within this study reflect this context. The presumption of this study holds these to be a traditional reflection of the Church of the Nazarene.

The purpose of this writing is to begin a conversation within the Church of the Nazarene on the harmful consequences of consumerism and how a shift in the way the church views and

[1] "Religious Landscape Study: Members of the Church of the Nazarene," *Pew Research Center*, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/church-of-the-nazarene/.

practices Eucharistic theology can present a way forward. The USA/Canada Region is at the forefront of local church education, vitality, and leadership. With a conversation centered on a Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the denomination can find strength and direction within clergy education, spiritual disciplines, laity participation, and the Eucharist.

As opposed to high-liturgy churches which partake of the Eucharist weekly, Protestant evangelical churches, many within the Free Church tradition, tend to observe the sacrament quarterly or monthly at best. Partially, this can be attributed to an education which favors the cognitive role of the office. Janine Morgan documents the shift in philosophy arising from the Reformation and rationalism. She argues the emphasis on rationalism, particularly within the church, resulted in an emotionless religion, focused more on anchoring doctrine within Scripture to the detriment of an impassioned faith.[2] According to Morgan's analysis, the church will often be described as dry and cold. Naturally, it would be remiss to discount the excitement of Pentecostal worship or the early days of the holiness movements. Traditions often emphasize one characteristic of the Presence of God over another. Whereas one may anticipate physical manifestations of the Spirit's power, another may focus on a change in morality and ethic. Some churches centralize the task of preaching, while others the reception of the Eucharist. Wesleyan holiness churches would want to include all dimensions, however, pragmatically, they tend to emphasize the preached Word leading to a change of behavior. It is this description which is meant by a Free Church tradition—a church which places less emphasis on sacramental ritual and more attention to an unwritten, free-form liturgy.[3] This is opposed to a High Church liturgy.

---

[2] Janine Paden Morgan, "Emerging Eucharist: 'This Is His Story, This Is My Song,'" *Missiology* 39, no. 4 (October 2011): 446, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001867472&site=ehost-live..

[3] This definition does not include Protestant churches which chose to adopt a written liturgy or prayer book.

A High Church liturgy relies upon traditional, scripted ritual as its core theological instruction and formation. Traditions within a High Church liturgy view the Eucharist as the penultimate act of worship within the liturgy, while the sermon or homily is secondary at best. The acts and postures of worship prepare the congregant to receive the Eucharist. High Church liturgy is sacramental in identity, a sign of the life of faith, embodying the risen Lord. High Church functions through a set order of service and prescribed readings, following the liturgical Christian calendar. Tradition may be viewed as nearly or equal in authority to Scripture.

Theologically, liturgy is commonly defined as the "work of the people." Free Church traditions and High Church traditions inherently have a liturgy. The people are shaped by the rituals, free-form acts, or written liturgies within the worship of the church. This formation within the liturgy of the worship influences the spirituality of the believer. The liturgy is an expression of the church's ecclesiology. It is the structure, philosophies, and activities of the church, guided by its theological groundings, which characterize its ecclesiology. Though, Avery Dulles notes: "while all Christians distinguish between the 'true' Church and its defective sociological realizations, there is no general agreement about what the true Church is or how it is to be recognized."[4] The prominent image the church has of its identity is in the eschatological reality of God's kingdom. A Eucharistic ecclesiology forms its liturgy around the sacramental identity of Christ. It is an expression of the kingdom of God embodied within the life of the church.

Free Church tradition does not have a robust enough ecclesiology, whether in its theological or philosophical strength, to resist cultural influences. There can be disconnect between the theology of a Free Church tradition and its practice, particularly regarding the

[4] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Expanded (New York, NY: Image, 1987), 137.

Eucharist, which allows consumerism to infiltrate the church. In contrast, a Eucharistic ecclesiology is better able to respond to the challenges within the contexts of this study in this era of the church.

One example of weak resistance occurs through the presence of consumerism in Free Church settings reflected in the two vignettes below, as well as in the research of Dirk Ellis who identifies the Church of the Nazarene as a Free Church tradition. Often consumerism may pervert the Christian faith in these Free Church settings—particularly when faith, viewed as transactional, becomes narcissistic.

### a. *Vignettes*

The following two vignettes illustrate the problem within the context of a Free Church tradition within the Church of the Nazarene. These examples are not meant as a criticism to any congregation they reflect, therefore all names and places have been changed. The vignettes serve as indicators of the contextual problem of consumerism within the North American church of the Nazarene tradition.

#### i. The Traditional Nazarene Congregation

First Church of the Nazarene resides in the heart of Midwest America. The people describe the congregation as a friendly, welcoming place. They look forward to meeting visitors and hope to leave a positive impression. The leadership within the congregation have a long-standing relationship with the people, many of which either helped organize the church or are descendants of founding members. Many of the people regard the primary motivation for the church is to make disciples, consequently most of the ministries revolve around teaching and equipping. The Sunday School groups are the driver of these ministries. They are built around a

homogenous core, often with personal and relational connections. The groups are led by teachers who design or facilitate lessons around a biblical theme.

The worship service for First Church occurs on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. following the hour of Sunday School. The service maintains a similar structure from its time of organization. The people join in congregational singing from the hymnals, frequently reciting lines from memory. The songs hold familiar and nostalgic places within the hearts of the people. They are words which have been sung by generations and connect with significant moments within the spiritual journeys of each member. In fact, it is not uncommon for a visitor to comfortingly remark how pleasant it is to hear the "old songs" still being sung. The people of First Church take delight in these compliments for the songs are a substantial part of their liturgy. The culmination of the worship service occurs in the sermon. The congregation hired the pastor specifically because of their enjoyment of the preached Word. The church expects the pastor to prepare during the week for this moment within the service. An evaluation of the weekly service is often characterized by remarks on the effectiveness of the sermon. Closing prayer and benediction follow the sermon. Occasionally, the congregation will receive the Lord's Supper. However, in this Free Church, Protestant context, it is not viewed as necessary as the sermon.

Weekly ministries at First Church are often centered around maintaining the well-being of the regular attendees. Some of the people will participate in intermittent "outreach" programs, which are designed as opportunities within the community to share their faith and invite people to attend First Church. The success of these ministries is based upon the number of people from the community who positively respond by attending a service within the near future. The people of First Church operate in much the same way as they always have and do not see a need for change.

ii. The New-Traditional Nazarene Congregation

City Community Church is also located in Midwest America, within the same cultural region as First Church. It developed out of a traditional congregational context. The church leadership recognized a need for change when attendance began to decrease, and enthusiasm waned. The congregation moved to incorporating newer music within their Sunday worship. Unfortunately, a few older members could not accept the loss of their familiar and treasured songs, and so they left to find another church which continued to sing only the hymns. The people of City Community lamented the loss of these members but felt that change was necessary for their growth.

The worship service gained a new enthusiasm with more up-tempo and contemporary music. The remainder of the service was largely left unchanged. The culmination of the liturgy continues to be the sermon and preparation for it is the pastor's main responsibility. The Eucharist is served monthly, with fear that a more frequent observance would lose meaning. The ministries of the congregation shifted focus through their cultural change. Sunday School and discipleship remain the primary means of congregational instruction. The community ministries increased with a focus on community development. The people of City Church are well-connected with the school system, allowing for ministry opportunities within the life of the community.

The congregation experienced growth and eventually felt the need to begin a building campaign to accommodate the influx of new members. The new building is being designed with a larger sanctuary and more classrooms to allow for the current ministries to expand. The congregation organizes programs and events to entertain the people and creatively disciple. Both the onsite ministries/events and the communal ministries/events are seen as essential to the life of

City Church. The success of these ministries is not based upon the number of people who attend the service, but the number of people from the community being reached. Overall, the congregation views the ministries as opportunities to share their faith and non-threateningly invite people to the church.

### iii. Reflection

Both illustrations share commonalities among churches within the Nazarene tradition in the Midwestern United States. There would be a wide spectrum within these congregations as to a specific translation of Scripture being read, music artists represented, theological leanings, etc. However, there are very similar ecclesiological and sacramental identifications among them.[5] The sermon and music are considered the most important aspects of the liturgy with the former holding the central role. Every act of the worship service leads up to the sermon. The activities and ministries of the church may focus inward or outward, but largely are intended to build up the community of faith either overtly or inherently. Community development among the congregation is often conducted within the realm of formal instruction in the paradigm of teacher/student relationship. Spiritual growth appears to be equated with intellectual maturity. Accountability structures are also difficult to determine, likely (if at all) occurring organically among informal relationships.

Ministry success is concentrated on numerical and structural growth. Vision originates and flows from the leadership, beginning with the pastor. The congregations operate within this hierarchical structure. Strengthening the audience accessibility is a primary goal of the leadership. Additionally, within Free Church traditions it is often perceived that maintaining

[5] I do acknowledge there are congregations within the Nazarene tradition with an affinity for a written liturgy and/or emphasize sacramental rituals in worship, however, as they appear to be in the minority within the tradition, I am focusing upon the Free Church liturgy which is found in my context.

engagement through increased entertainment is considered important. Capital campaigns towards building improvement and expansion are viewed as key indicators of ministry effectiveness. These emphases can be aligned with a consumer culture in regard toward maintaining comfort, self-indulgence, individual engagement, and a desire to acquire/attain more. These observations do not suggest that all congregations prove consumerism, nor diminishes the effectiveness of their ministry. Rather, the reflection suggests there is a presence of consumerist culture which may lead to a loss of the *missio dei.* Perhaps a different tradition, one that embraces a sacramental approach to ministry would be more efficacious. It is evident more data is needed to define the scope of Free Church ecclesiology, for which Dr. Dirk Ellis has provided.

### *b. Ethnographic Study of the Church of the Nazarene by Dirk Ellis*

Dr. Ellis in his graduate research for Andrews University and Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary partly examined if there was a loss or modification of the Wesleyan theology of Christian perfection within the Church of the Nazarene. He conducted a survey of liturgical practices, hypothesizing that a contributing factor to a loss of identity was related to "the denomination's rejection of prayer book worship, the failure to develop a robust liturgical and sacramental theology, and the demise of revivalism."[6] The English-speaking churches selected within the denomination were given detailed instructions and surveys for the pastors and congregants. Dr. Ellis received completed surveys from 53 churches and 1,550 congregants.[7]

Dr. Ellis discerned from the data three types of congregations: those who prominently used the prayer book, those which occasionally used the prayer book, and those who rarely made use of the prayer book. The research showed many Nazarene churches surveyed rarely employed

---

[6] Dirk Ray Ellis, "The Relationship Between Liturgical Practice and Spirituality in The Church of The Nazarene with Special Reference to John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection" (Andrews University and Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2012), "Problem."
[7] Ibid., "Method."

the prayer book in their liturgical practices. Specifically, the congregants suggested reciting creeds and praying written prayers to be of little value to a healthy spirituality. However, the majority of those surveyed believed congregational singing to be valuable. Over a third surveyed suggested their spirituality to be personal and not connected to the official teachings of the denomination. Additionally, a similar percentage believed regular attendance not to be necessary. The survey also asked the participant to value private and corporate worship. Dr. Ellis found that nearly half of the congregants valued the former over the latter. Interestingly, the three liturgical types he discerned did not show much difference in responses.[8]

The lack of differences alludes to a deeper liturgical deficit. Ellis attributes this to an aversion of ritualism within the church, which has plagued the sacramental practices. Further, he writes: "The desire for inward-focused experiential worship has placed overly subjective practices at the forefront of worship and marginalized the enduring practices of Christian antiquity that potentially serve therapeutically as means of grace for the healing of the sin-sick soul."[9] This suggestion of Ellis supports the idea that a lack of rejection of negative cultural influences resulting in a weak spirituality. The surveys point to an anemic spirituality guided by a Free Church ecclesiology with a low-emphasis on what they perceive to be adverse traditional High Church rituals, adopting instead their own free-form rituals.[10] Inherently, a Free Church ecclesiology without an emphasis on sacramental rituals may lack a robust spirituality.

### *c. Thesis*

This writing argues that a Wesleyan theology of the Eucharist embraces a stronger formational and missional core, inviting a Free Church setting to resist consumerism's tendency

[8] Ellis, "The Relationship," "Results."
[9] Ibid., "Conclusions."
[10] Such as altar calls, testimonies, etc.

to view the Christian faith as transactional and individualistic. This Eucharistic ecclesiology reveals a faith that is resistant to the desire to look inward with apathy towards the world; rather, viewing faith as a movement toward the Other, while engaging the world around it.

This work will center its discussion around the Eucharist to address consumerism in a Free Church setting by redefining a Wesleyan sacramental theology considering social science, biblical engagement, and theological reflection. The objective of this exercise is to illustrate how a renewed Eucharistic theology informs a Eucharistic ecclesiology helping the church engage with God, one another, and the world through a ministry of Communion, Community, and Compassion.

### *d. Defining of Terms*

It would be helpful to identify and define the terms which are meant by High Church, Free Church, and Eucharistic ecclesiology.

High Church within this discussion will include churches that use a written liturgy and/or prayer book with a particular emphasis in the liturgy on the Eucharist. These churches would include Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and others which use a formal liturgy. These traditions often have inherited or constructed a liturgy which has been employed for centuries. They place an emphasis on tradition and sacraments and do not practice a free-form liturgy. Often the service is led by a priest/pastor, though other official positions may take part within the liturgy or rituals. Some discussions might suggest these congregations to be labeled as "liturgical," though this term assumes that other churches which do not have a prayer book also do not have a liturgy. However, all churches have a liturgy, whether written or free-form. This work chooses to use High Church for any tradition Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox which use a written or prescribed liturgy with a special emphasis on the Eucharist.

Free Church within this project consists of Protestant evangelicalism which does not strictly follow a written liturgy or primarily emphasize the Eucharist during times of worship. It sits in contrast to High Church liturgy which often follows a written liturgy (generally tracing roots back for centuries) and usually emphasizes reception of the Eucharist as the primary function of worship. Liturgy within Free Church traditions is often free-form, that is lacking consistency from one congregation to another, often deferring to the local worship leader or clergy to construct. Though similar elements of worship and theological beliefs may be common, one congregation's particular liturgy may not be like another. The assumption of this study is an apparent disconnect between theological beliefs of denominational tradition and the practices of local congregations. Free-form liturgy allows for the pastor or church leadership to organize the liturgy in what manner is deemed appropriate. The responses and applications for Free Church for this study will focus largely on the Church of the Nazarene, which finds its roots in Anglicanism but often practices a free-form liturgy.[11]

A Eucharistic ecclesiology embraces the theology and ritual of the Eucharist as an understanding for spiritual formation and identity, both for the believer and the congregation. It is more than an appreciation of the sacraments or a regular observance of the Eucharistic liturgy, rather a way of life: viewing the Eucharist as informative and formative. High Church traditions often embrace the Eucharist as primary and form a theology of life and function around it. This does not equate High Church liturgy with Eucharistic ecclesiology, that is to suggest a Eucharistic ecclesiology must be High Church. On the contrary, this particular study focuses on a

[11] Although individual congregations may practice a written liturgy, this conversation will focus on the congregations which practice a free-form liturgy. Also taking into consideration that some of the rituals within the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2017-2021*, (Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017) find inspiration within *The Book of Common Prayer*, (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press, 2019), this discussion will assume observation of these to be the exception and not the norm to a local congregation's weekly liturgy.

re-formation of Free Church traditions centered around the Eucharist without necessarily embracing a strict written liturgy or weekly observance of the sacrament.[12] A Eucharistic ecclesiology forms the church around the movements of the liturgy, as outlined by Henri Nouwen: chosen, blessed, broken, and given. These movements embrace spiritual formation that counters consumerism's effects of objectification, alienation, and disengagement through an emphasis on communion, community, and compassion.

### *e. Methodology*

Researching culture, including consumer culture, remains a continuous task as scholars seek to understand and help society make sense of the world and as marketers wish to know the wants and needs of the people to make a profit. The writings on the Eucharist also appear extensive: from different theological traditions, cultures, and ideologies. The research within this document seeks to form a basis of understanding of consumerism, and its effects on culture, as well as on the Eucharist and sacramental theology. This discourse focuses on four areas of inquiry: social scientific (including the psychological, sociological, and economical fields), historical and biblical research, theological studies, and faith community development.

The first chapter establishes the problem by first noting a disconnect of practice and theology in the Free Church tradition. It provides the setting by outlining the context and providing congregational surveys and demographic data. Further, it defines terminology for this dissertation.

The second chapter discusses the biblical and theological foundations of Eucharistic theology within the Gospel Institution Narratives and Paul's instructions to the church, as well as

[12] This is not to discount the efficacy of High Church liturgy.

observing shifts within the Free Church tradition from its New Testament roots to the present day and notes the Church of the Nazarene's lack of sacramental emphasis within this tradition. The following section delves into the rise and influence of consumerism by referencing social scientific and theological sources. The second chapter concludes by studying Vincent Miller's work on consumer culture and noting elements within consumerism which propose a challenge to the Free Church tradition.

The third chapter suggests a theological response to these challenges by examining Wesleyan sacramental theology within Methodism, from the Wesley brothers to American Methodism. It moves to provide an overview of Eucharistic theology within the Church of the Nazarene and suggests a lack of consistency in theology and practice. The consequence of this research leads to a Eucharistic ecclesiology which aims to combat the harmful effects of consumerism within the Free Church tradition by offering a renewal of Wesleyan Eucharistic understanding.

The fourth chapter provides a new framework of spiritual formation through liturgical practices, challenging Wesleyan-holiness sacramental theology by calling for a renewal and outlining a Eucharistic ecclesiology. It is organized around Nouwen's themes of the Eucharist being chosen, blessed, broken, and given. These themes guide the development of a Eucharistic ecclesiology of communion, community, and compassion which combat the negative influence of consumerism.

The fifth chapter reflects upon this renewed ecclesiology by emphasizing the place of spiritual disciplines, community, and service within the sacramental life. A Eucharistic vision of life for the Wesleyan-holiness tradition within this ecclesiology introduces a sacramental approach to ministry by adopting a paradigm of communion, community, and compassion,

including teaching and valuing Eucharistic life to promote healthy, Christ-centered congregations in contexts which are either unhealthy or seeking an alternative form of ministry. The implications of such an ecclesiology extend to clergy development and laity participation and creativity within the liturgy of the church. The intended outcome is one of transformation from an inward-focused faith to a missional faith, whereby the people of God join in the *missio dei* as an embodied presence of Christ.

# CHAPTER TWO

## UNDERLYING ISSUES BEHIND THE PROBLEM

Within the foundation of the church, as established by Christ in the Gospel accounts and the Acts of the Apostles, there is a sacramental understanding of life. Throughout the evolution of the church's history, theologians and congregations have navigated various cultural philosophies and influences. The church in its current age, however, is least prepared to resist the influences of culture. By abstaining from the depths of Eucharistic theology, the Free Church tradition has experienced a disconnect between its belief and practice and developed an anemic ecclesiology. If a church is challenged by the culture it engages, whether through consumerism, racism, militarism, politics, etc., the church no longer effectively represents that which was commissioned by Christ. Consumerism reveals this anemic ecclesiology through commodification, prioritizing the self over the community, and valuing use over giftedness. This chapter will focus on the movement from a New Testament sacramental vision to the development of Free Church spirituality. This will highlight the intended response of the Free Church tradition to dissuade elitism within the established church and the exclusion of laity from participation within the liturgy. The discussion will move on to the Church of the Nazarene's placement within the holiness movement and its development of Eucharistic theology.

The discussion shifts to address an overview of consumerism within culture through the lens of social science and the theological works of William Cavanaugh and Philosopher James K.A. Smith. The study relies on Vincent Miller's work, *Consuming Religion*, to establish negative influences of consumerism in general, and particularly within the Free Church, focusing on its inability to mitigate the power of objectification, alienation, and disengagement. These

characteristics prove antithetical to the work and purpose of the church and the gospel that provides a counternarrative. The second half of the review addresses primarily the harmful effects of consumerism including major theological concerns, and analysis of the Free Church's deficits. Only after recognizing the full challenges of consumerism does the study then move to provide a more positive theological response. The suggested response of an ecclesiology grounded in the Eucharist, undergirded by both Wesleyan sacramental imagination and High Church practice, follows in Chapter Three.

### *a. Movement from New Testament Sacramental Vision to Free Church Spirituality*

The New Testament sacramental vision lies within the Gospel Narratives of Institution and in Paul's writings. This tradition guided much of the church's practice, eventually being recorded in written history. The organization of the church developed into a High Church tradition which ultimately replaced the family meal gatherings that characterized early practices with the Eucharistic rite. The Free Church tradition arose in response to perceived malpractices within the church. It sought to dispense with elitism and exclusion. As the tradition evolved, its adoption of free-form liturgy allowed gaps in its theology and practice. Arising out of this tradition, the Church of the Nazarene has been inconsistent in its Eucharistic practice. This disconnect in the Free Church tradition is discussed in this section, allowing for consumerism to infiltrate the church.

#### i. New Testament Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Expressions

A reexamination of the New Testament sacramental vision exposes the shift in the spirituality of faith through the history of the Free Church tradition as it has been exposed to modern culture. The Scriptures comprise the basis of sacramental theology: Eucharistic

establishment by Christ and precedence within the early church. The writings of Luke's Gospel and of Paul in 1 Corinthians will primarily be examined through biblical scholarship and theology for an understanding of the Eucharist in the New Testament.

The Gospel narratives outline the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Recognizing Christ as a person of the divine Godhead separates Christianity from its Jewish roots. Jesus, preparing for his impending death, gathered the disciples to participate in the Last Supper. During the evening, Jesus picks up a loaf of bread and a cup of wine.

> And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."
> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 22:19-20, NIV).

The disciples had gathered with Jesus in a secret meeting place. Jesus took a few moments to give a preamble to the meal itself. He told his disciples how he "eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (verse 15). He had established two things at this Passover Meal: 1) what is to transpire is tied to the celebration of the Exodus; and 2) He is about to suffer. Jesus then promised not to eat the Passover meal or drink wine until the kingdom of God comes. David Neale describes this as a transformation of the Passover celebration to an eschatological longing. The Eucharistic narrative recognizes the fulfillment of the Exodus promise in the kingdom of God to come.[13] Luke's gospel establishes the Last Supper as an event indicative of the Passover meal—a type of the traditional Jewish celebration. The meal Jesus shares with his disciples becomes the fulfillment of the Jewish festival. Therefore, the Passover lamb is now

[13] David A. Neale, *Luke 9-24: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 220. "The Lord's Supper transforms the Passover meal into a symbolic 'second Exodus' with an eschatological banquet motif. The full redemptive power of the Exodus will finally be realized in the kingdom of God . . ."

realized within the Lamb of God, Jesus. The synoptic Gospels recognize this correlation as more than symbolic, but a cosmic reality.

There are two elements to the Supper which traditionally became the sacrament of Eucharist: the bread and the cup. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus said the bread represents his body which is given "for you." Neale offers a possible source for this offering, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. It is also likely the phrase, "do this in remembrance of me," echoes a principal basis for Passover.[14] Thus, the bread can be seen to symbolize the Passover bread. Neale suggests a similarity of bread eaten quickly and being unleavened as a metaphor for urgent deliverance from God's judgment; a similarity he believes now represents God's judgement at the cross. The bread became a central image in the Passover celebration, just as it has become a central element in the Eucharist.

The cup of wine is the second element Jesus employs during the meal. He told the disciples, in verse 20, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Again, Neal finds a correlation with Passover and the Eucharist. Jesus' description can be viewed first as a reference to his blood soon to be spilled on the cross. However, it may also reference the blood of the lamb in the Egyptian Passover which was dashed upon the doorways with hyssop branches in Exodus 12:22. The writer of Hebrews said, "There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood" (Hebrews 9:22). The Old Testament practice of making animal sacrifices was instituted to atone for the sins of the people. The New Testament, however, makes it clear this practice is no longer necessary as Jesus has become the "lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:19).

[14] Neale cites Exodus 12:14, 25-27; 13:3, 9, 14 as corresponding Passover texts. These verses use the language of: "lasting ordinance," "commemorate," "celebrate," and "reminder" (NIV).

Luke's gospel account of the Supper appears to have been altered by some Italic and Syriac sources by excluding vv.19b-20. Luke records that Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and said "this is my body. . ." Some manuscripts exclude the following verses from these altered sources which read:

> 'given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'[15]

Bradley Billings probed the implications and reasoning of such a change. He found the most likely reason was to address the accusations made by the Greco-Roman world. The most expressed concern against Christianity was aimed at the community meal. Due to the clandestine early morning or late-night gatherings, Christian meal practices garnered suspicion. The secret nature of their gatherings, coupled with the mysterious ritual they observed, the Eucharist, led many to accuse the Christians of cannibalism among other things. Justin Martyr, one of the early Christian apologists, refuted any accusations that the ritual meal involved infanticide or cannibalism. Early Christians practiced their faith in isolation of the surrounding culture, in part because of the societal pressures/ persecution. This, however, only fanned the flame. While Greco-Roman gatherings were often homogenous, Christian gatherings were often diverse due to the belief among Christians that there is no distinction among people. This belief was considered radically counter-countercultural; thus, the Gospel message was often viewed as a threat.[16] Billings concludes the "longer reading" of the traditional Lukan narrative is genuine. He also

---

[15] Luke 22:19b-20 NIV.

[16] Bradly S. Billings, "The Disputed Words in the Lukan Institution Narrative (Luke 22:19b-20): A Sociological Answer to a Textual Problem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 519, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=23025342&site=ehost-live. "Whereas shared meals in the Greco-Roman world were generally as homogeneous as possible, the Christian corporate meal proceeded on the grounds that there was to be no distinction between peoples. In this the gospel imperative was both radical and counter-cultural, even dangerously so."

suggests a timeline between 150 and 200 A.D. where the once joined Luke-Acts narrative was separated. This separation likely led to the adoption of the "shorter reading" in some manuscripts to serve as a precaution for Christian communities which were scrutinized for barbaric acts and suffered violent repercussions.[17] Though the institution narrative was altered for concern over social perception, the practice of the Eucharist was continued by the early church as an observance and reminder of Jesus.

Paul provides the clearest scriptural picture of the sacrament as practiced in the early church. His vision of the church is theologically grounded in Christology, evidenced by a sacramental ecclesiology. The church symbolizes a unity of the body as the Body of Christ and practices a self-giving love. N.T. Wright notes the meaning of *agape* connotes a practical outpouring of compassion.[18] As there is a theological understanding of faith, there is a proportionate pragmatism. A visible expression of their faith became the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul viewed the sacrament as a unifying element with the early church. As John McRay discusses, Jewish and Gentile believers met to share a common meal, indicating their mutual faith and love. This *agape* meal was often accompanied by the Eucharist within the house churches of the early believers. These homes were not large, private dwellings, but often communal housing with small apartments. It was a cramped, stuffy, gathering of people who

[17] Billings, 525. sometime between 150 and 200 c.e. the Lukan text of a still conjoined Luke-Acts volume was altered at the point of the institution narrative, producing the enigmatic "shorter reading" represented in Codex Bezae and its small number of Syriac and Italic allies, so as to safeguard the Christian communities for whom the texts were produced from further allegations of flagitia and from further outbreaks of the violence experienced at Lyons.

[18] N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 164. "Those who were called by God when the gospel was preached were to become a single community, meeting together for worship and prayer, and not least helping one another practically, which would normally include financial support."

shared a common faith.[19] The women of the faith community often served the meal.[20] The Eucharist served as a reminder of their faith in Christ, as a unifying element of the church, and a call to love in service.

The Luke-Acts narrative imparted the words of institution, as well as denoting its use post-Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47). The first letter to the Corinthian church, however, outlines the ritual itself. Paul commented on the use, practice, and abuse of the Lord's Supper in 10:15-18 and 11:23-34. He wrote: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Sampley highlights the connection between Jewish tradition, including Paul's heritage as a Jew, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He writes: "The idea of memory and remembering has roots that reach back into Israel and are a part of Paul's Jewish heritage . . . The old story becomes the teller's story; liturgy unites the old story with the current worshipers' story."[21] For Paul, the sacrament was more than just a ritual to be performed legalistically, rather it was an invitation to join the story of God's salvific work. It is in this vein he wrote: "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Paul believes the sacrament rehearses the whole narrative of redemption in Christ, placing the believer within this story every time they participate in the Eucharist. They discover their identity within the narrative of God's story. The Eucharist is more than a ritual, it is a liturgy for life.

The Corinthian church abused the practice by becoming intoxicated and over-indulging to the point of excluding others from participating. McRay argues for a contextual understanding of the early church's misuse. He notes that the house churches met either in larger homes of

---

[19] John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2003), 393. McRay notes on the size of the dwellings: "In the Roman Empire in the first century, 90 percent of the free population and more than 90 percent of the slaves lived in small, crowded, high-rise apartment buildings."

[20] Ibid., 395.

[21] J. Paul Sampley, "1 Corinthians," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. X, XII vols. (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2002), 935.

wealthy members or in smaller gatherings within the lower-class communal dwellings. The former partook of the best food and sat comfortably, while the latter ate lesser food within a common area. McRay suggests a gluttonous overture to the gatherings, where those who came late were left with no food or joined a drunken gathering. He also discusses an alternative scenario where within the communal tenement dwellings, the poor would combine their resources to provide a potluck meal and overindulge at the expense of those who came late.[22] In either context, it is understood that the people minimized the faith and ignored the call of Jesus to love others as a fitting expression of a right relationship with God. It is due to these failings that Paul explained some pre-requisites to participation in vv. 27-34. There should be a "discerning" of oneself, an evaluation of one's relationship to the Christ whose presence is manifested in the Eucharist traditions. Paul warned that those who would participate in the sacrament in an "unworthy manner" would be judged as some (v. 30) have already. He also suggested the people should wait for one another before participating, implying the communal nature of the sacrament.

Currently, the liturgies of the church are varied, yet most contain the element of the Eucharist—whether practiced weekly, monthly, or yearly. The Eastern Orthodox churches, for example, follow the Byzantine Divine Liturgy developed around 800 A.D. The Eucharist is the pinnacle of their liturgy. From the entrance and prayers to the chants and reception of the elements, the Divine Liturgy finds its place in this sacrament. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Mass finds its climax in the Eucharist. The traditional Eucharistic Prayer precedes the reception of the elements, with a silent reflection after communion. Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, is known for celebrating communion only four times year, as opposed to the weekly celebrations of

[22] McRay, 396.

the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The elements were also delivered by the deacons to the people as they remain seated. This, again, contrasts with the previously mentioned liturgies where the people participate by physically moving forward to receive the elements from the priest. The Anglican and Episcopal churches derive their liturgies from the Roman Catholic rite. Many of the liturgies require confession, pardon, and a Prayer of Thanksgiving before receiving the Eucharist. This includes the United Methodist Book of Worship (1992) and the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship (1993). Pentecostal worship varies from the previously mentioned liturgies, their receiving of the elements, similar to Zwingli, is done four times a year. The Pentecostal churches, however, place importance on exercising the gifts of the Spirit. In the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, communion may be observed during the middle of the liturgy, however, it is optional. The highlight of this worship is in the opening medley, climaxing in the sermon.[23]

Despite such variation in liturgies, the Eucharist has been a common element of Christian worship throughout church history and across many denominational lines.[24] The form and practices of the liturgy have shifted throughout, however, the sense of the sacramental remains. The definition and vision of sacrament differs from one tradition to another and certainly has evolved since the New Testament period. The Eucharist is, though, what James White calls the most distinctive Christian practice of worship. The foundation of the recognizable sacrament is not found within early Christianity, yet within the Jewish roots that the movement of Jesus Christ was built upon. White references three elements of Jewish worship which have influenced the Eucharist—an influence that when forgotten, leads to a distortion of the sacrament. These

---

[23] Frank C. Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 45-64, http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.nts.edu/ehost/detail/detail?nobk=y&vid=4&sid=e48c8415-e7be-4e27-ab72-ea3bd27fcc1b@sessionmgr103&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ==#AN=528105&db=nlebk.

[24] This is not true of all, i.e. the Friend's Church (Quakers) and Salvation Army.

elements are the temple, synagogue, and family meals.[25] Firstly, within the worship of the temple, the altar holds a prominent place. Sacrificial worship was an integral part of Jewish culture. The relationship between God and the people was contingent upon the sacrifices of the people made upon the altar by the priest as mediator. Temple worship was a means of relating to God as the chosen nation, while also serving a restorative role between individuals. The notion of sacrificial worship echoes within the Eucharistic language of the gospel accounts. Jesus speaks of his body and blood being broken and poured out. Secondly, worship within the synagogue further highlights the relationship of the Eucharist to Jewish culture. Synagogue worship included forms of prayer where one blessed and thanked God. White notes these prayers recounted God's mighty and saving deeds, while also imploring God to realize the promises hoped for within the writings of the prophets. These prayers became foundational for the Eucharistic prayers of blessing. Thirdly, the family meals often included prayers of thanksgiving and sharing of food and drink. White specifically focuses upon the connection of the Eucharist with the Passover meal. Bread and wine are used during both meals and special words of promise are spoken. White notes: "Words and significant acts help to make present the saving power of God's acts culminating in the great event of liberation and look forward to God's future works of deliverance."[26] These three elements of Jewish worship encapsulate the vision of God's kingdom made present through Christ. Further, through the institution of the Eucharist, Christ made it possible for the church to remember and realize this vision of liberation and redemption. Apart from the letters of Paul and what historical records can provide, little is known of the Eucharistic practices within the early church. It is not until the second and third centuries with

[25] James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 230.
[26] Ibid., 232.

the writings of the *Didache* that the Eucharistic prayers are revealed. Justin Martyr provides the first description of a Eucharistic service as a response to allegations of cannibalism within church worship. The third-century writing, *The Apostolic Tradition*, provides additional insight to church practices, outlining prayers and practices of the Eucharistic liturgy. By the sixth century, White notes, the marriage of Word and Table became the norm for the next thousand years. The words became varied throughout different regions, but most held to the actions of the Eucharistic liturgy alluded to in the New Testament institution narratives. White mentions the several geographical divergences with the wordings of the Eucharist, traditions such as: Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, East Syrian, Alexandrian Basil, Byzantine, Gallic, Celtic, Gallican, and Roman. White notes: "A common characteristic is florid language and Eucharistic prayers which, except for the *sanctus* and words of institution, change entirely according to the day or season, providing extraordinary variety."[27] Even within the Roman traditions, several variances developed, prompting Charlemagne to seek uniformity within the rite to aid in perpetuating imperial unity. However, it was not for another couple hundred years when Gallican rituals were combined with the Roman rite that a unified sacramentary was offered. This Western Eucharistic liturgy was inherited by the Medieval Reformers.

The fellowship of the meal characterized the Eucharist for the early church. From these New Testament foundations and correctives, the church stretched across the known world. The rituals carried the church through persecution, cultural influences, and heretical challenges. In fact, McRay argues this was the understanding for the church as it continued to meet as house churches. He says: "The Lord's Supper was celebrated in the context of such communal meals by a large proportion of Christians through the fourth century, when the construction of large

[27] White, *Introduction*, 242.

basilican church buildings began, and with this an emphasis on sacrament and liturgy and a corresponding diminution in the practice of communal dining."[28] The High Church approaches to the sacrament have separated the Eucharist from its early context within the *agape* meal. The detachment of the Eucharist from the fellowship gathering may even be more noticeable within the Free Church tradition where the preached Word is primary. Additionally, it is likely the early church met weekly, and observed the Eucharist within this gathering.[29] This is often in contrast within the Free Church traditions which observe the sacrament less frequently and partake in various manners[30]. Since it can be inferred that the church no longer views or observes the Eucharist with the same comprehension as the early church, it would be appropriate to elaborate on the evolution of the Free Church tradition and its influence on the Church of the Nazarene.

ii. Free Church Tradition and Its Beginning

The Eucharist has been practiced by the universal church since its institution over 2,000 years ago. Free Church tradition has only existed since the Reformation, five hundred years ago. Throughout this time, the Eucharist has been a part of the long-standing liturgical practice of the people of God. In the Roman Catholic Church, it is received during "Mass," in the Eastern churches it is the "Divine Liturgy," while in Protestant worship it can be called the "Eucharist,"

---

[28] McRay, 397.

[29] Ibid., 398-401. McRay discusses the interpretations of the original language and their relevance to the determination of the early church's beliefs and practices concerning the eucharist. The word *koinonia*, which Paul uses to discuss the "fellowship" of the church, references a "'participation in' the process of eating and drinking (1 Cor. 10:16). It is a participatory memorial for all Christians rather than the observation of a sacramental performance by the clergy" (398). Further, he notes there is no word "day" in the Greek text when referencing the time of meeting in Acts 20:7. The phrase is *kata miav sabbatou*, which means "according to first of week." McRay argues this use of idiom can apply to a year, day, or week. What is likely from the context is that Paul met with the congregation at Troas to break bread with them on the first day of the week because it was their tradition. Additionally, when considered with the context of Acts 20:7, it is probable the Lord's Supper was eaten every Sunday within the Corinthian church (401).

[30] Some churches may partake through individual servings, common cup, by intinction, etc. See Dirk Ellis, "Relationship . . ." 90-92.

"Holy Eucharist," "Communion," "Holy Communion," or "Lord's Supper."[31] In 155 A.D., Justin Martyr provided the first full description of a Christian liturgy, an order of service for the people of God to embody when they gather for communal worship.[32] In light of such common appreciation, Free Church tradition was not intended to develop something new but to "reform" liturgical practice by making it accessible to the people. By the time of the Reformation, the Eucharistic prayer, summarizing and proclaiming the faithfulness of the church, had lost its original meaning.[33] The Reformation focused upon personal piety and the unworthiness of the worshipper to partake in the sacrament without humble contrition. Theological understandings of justification became narrowed to substitutionary atonement, losing the sense of Christ's sacrifice in its restorative sense. The Eucharist conformed to this theology and became a means to secure the favor of God rather than a proclamation of the favor already resting upon God's people. This section will discuss the rise of the Free Church tradition in response to perceived ecclesial malpractice. Later in the chapter, a section will then demonstrate how consumerism has infiltrated the church and perverted recent ecclesial practice in a way that has lost the original intent of the reformers.

Protestantism, taking a life of its own following the Reformation period, sought to engage people on an individual level. Martin Luther, for instance, felt every person should have access to the Holy Scriptures in their own language, often seen as a positive development from the Reformation. Above all else, the Reformation was a response to a characterized evil within the church, that of indulgences and the exclusion of congregants. Free Church tradition began, as

---

[31] See Appendix I for a more detailed examination of other views on the sacrament.
[32] Senn, 43-44.
[33] White, *Introduction,* 243. White notes: "Inasmuch as this occurred at all, it had been relegated to the creed as part of the service of the word (in the West) or as a prelude to the anaphora (in the East)."

Christopher Ellis notes, as a rejection of "Papist" worship and any aspect of worship which could not be traced to Scripture. Tradition and human innovations were not considered as authoritative as the revealed Word of God. This is the premise behind the *ordo* of Free Church worship where the content is more important than the structure of the liturgy. Ellis describes four main themes within Free Church tradition: Scripture, devotion, community, and eschatology.[34]

The rise of Free Church tradition was accompanied by the introduction of Scripture in common language. The Reformers intended for the people of God to have access to the Word of God. Additionally, they believed the ecclesiastical and liturgical formation of the church should be grounded in Scripture. The liturgy was viewed as an act of worship to God, not from obligatory obedience to a human authority. Much of what the Methodists would later reclaim, the Reformers hoped for an inward disposition of the heart which accompanied outward practice. The Free Church tradition also desired for devotion and an openness to the Spirit. Free-form practice was believed to allow for the work of God within the personal lives of believers and the liturgy of the church. Ellis writes: "The set-apartness of the Church is not a ritual separateness, dependent on various ritual actions, but a moral commitment to the ways of God, obedience to his ordinances, and commitment to him in worship."[35] This emphasis on Scripture and devotion were viewed as instrumental in reforming the church. These inward dynamics were believed to work outward within the Christian community and the eschatological calling of the Church within the Kingdom of God. The Free Church tradition viewed the Church as "holy people not holy places." The intention was to minimize sacred things and place significance on the people and community development. Despite periods of persecution, the church saw worship as trusting

[34] Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 74-75.
[35] Ibid., 86.

together in the faithfulness of God. This focus upon God's grace has been exemplified in the Free Church tradition's soteriology and eschatology. Further, Ellis notes a theme of context and horizon, remembering the past and looking to the future. These Eucharistic themes were important for the Free Church tradition in moving away from the confines of the written liturgies of the High Church. Additionally, the Reformers intended to include the congregation through congregational singing, responsive prayer, and the corporate partaking of the Eucharist.

Unfortunately, the development of an individualized Protestant ecclesiology evolved in the centuries to follow. Frank Senn comments on how Protestant churches developed in the post-Revivalist era:

> Preliminaries included songs of gathering and praise, testimonies, the offering, and the pastoral prayer. Both the offering and the intercessions lost their connection with the word and the meal. The high point of the service was the sermon. Under the influence of camp-meeting practices, pulpits were reduced in size and often became podiums on which the Bible and the preacher's notes could be placed. But sermons were no longer read; they were delivered ex tempore so that the preacher could freely move about the stage and more effectively engage the hearers.[36]

The Protestant liturgy became focused more on entertaining the worshipper than on their formation. In fact, Gordon T. Smith illustrates this theological shift in the worship space: "Increasingly the visual center of worship is not the podium as the center for preaching and teaching, or the communion table as the focus of our worship and representing the presence of Christ, but a screen—often so large and dominant that it overshadows all other potential signs or symbols of our common faith."[37] Without a grounding in the sacraments, the liturgy moved away from a communal worship to an individualized worship where prospective worshippers now

---

[36] Senn, 29.

[37] Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2010), 190, Kindle.

"church shop" based upon their wants and desires. Church membership is a fluid relationship contingent upon the believer feeling entertained and/or fulfilled by the services of the ministry.

Alongside a shift in Protestant ecclesiology came a change in liturgical worship. As previously mentioned, an individualized worship experience became predominantly the norm in Free Church settings. Coinciding this experience was a shift in Eucharistic worship practices. William Barclay, a Presbyterian theologian, notes how Protestant theology has revolved around the Eucharist being a "memorial of the sacrifice of Christ" and a "commemorative sacrifice."[38] Receiving the sacrament became an observance of Christ's sacrifice and eventually this observance was relegated in importance. The Eucharist lost its significance and gave way to preaching as central in Free Church liturgy. The partnership of Word and Table is lost in favor of elevating preaching as the primary liturgical act. Kilmartin believes this again to be the result of Reformation theology:

> The purpose of sacraments is not to provide the occasion for affirming in the liturgical assembly, by a delayed reaction, what has already come to pass. The understanding of communal worship behind this interpretation, which reduces worship to the fulfilment of a natural-law obligation to give due honor to God, forms part of the tradition of scholastic and Reformation theology.[39]

The focus of the sacraments as a memorial observance is linked to nominal Christianity, at the very least a legalistic version of the faith. Introduce consumerism to this culture and the focus shifts to doing things better for the sake of attracting more participants.[40] Faith becomes transactional in nature: "Jesus died, I acknowledge his death and offer my faith, Jesus saves me, I observe the law-obligations, and Jesus lets me into heaven." There is a give-and-take in this relationship. Often prayer develops into wish-fulfillment or a transaction whereby offering a

---

[38] William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 99.
[39] Edward J. Kilmartin, "Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church," *Theological Studies* 50, no. 3 (September 1989): 538-539, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056398905000306.
[40] This became a focus of the seeker-sensitive movement.

certain number of prayers or good works is exchanged for an expected miracle. Personal preference and needs are given the highest priority within this Free Church spirituality.

Hideo Ohki cautions against this one-dimensional approach. He claims a liturgy focused only on the sermon or homily, no matter how well constructed or delivered, is an incomplete witness to the faith.[41] He names preaching as the prophetic function and the observance of the Eucharist as the priestly function. Ecclesiology has held these two in tension rather than as separate offices of the clergy. Ohki continues: "If the church is merely a happening that occurs each time the Word of God is preached, then the issue of the formation of the church will never even be raised. The formation of the church is a concern that will manifest itself with deep meaning only by the recovery of this balance of which we have been speaking."[42] There is no single act of the church which sets itself against another, however, the loss of one reverberates throughout the whole. Free Church ecclesiology has wrongfully viewed the liturgical acts through a perspective of their commodity (a phrase of consumerism) for the promotion of a particular spirituality. However, Paul wrote that one part of the body is not greater, the loss of one is felt by all. The Eucharist invites the believer into an experience that does not overpower but informs and complements one's knowledge about God. The sacramental life embodies what it represents.

This concept of a symbiosis continues when discussing the graces of God. If we were to argue justification as the *telos* of faith, then we would live deficient lives. Gifford Grobien summarizes this point in stating the understanding of justification as a grace-filled moment

---

[41] Hideo Ohki, "The Formation of an Eschatological Eucharistic Community: An Issue for the Protestant Church in Japan," *Mid-Stream* 24, no. 3 (July 1985): 230, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000949849&site=ehost-live. "Through the medium of preaching as the incarnate Word, Christ is witnessed to. But no matter how perfect the sermon may be it is by nature an incomplete and inadequate witness."

[42] Ibid., 232.

whereby one is given a new Christian character by Christ with the call to do good deeds. This new life is not complete, however, as the believer continues to grow and develop through practices of the Christian community, among which he lists preaching, prayer, rituals, and good works.[43] A holistic theology of the biblical narrative views the redemptive arc of history through the lens of God's love as central. Conversely, due to the Enlightenment, the church devalued the sacraments. As James White notes, the Roman Catholic church focused upon the validity of one receiving the Eucharist, viewing it primarily as effecting grace. On the other hand, much of Protestantism viewed the Eucharist as memorial, where, particularly in America, the Eucharist is aligned with religion's purpose of being morally edifying.[44] Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic rite has changed and with it several Protestant denominations. The mass is conducted within the native language of the congregation and the Eucharistic liturgy follows more closely that of early recorded worship services, while the priests were given pastoral discretion. Additionally, White notes how the church has allowed human sciences to influence the church's understanding of human perception and the interpretation of symbols. This has resulted in churches emphasizing the quality of the Eucharistic service and including the corporate body within the liturgy. While many mainline Protestant denominations have adopted some form of a Eucharistic liturgy, the Frontier and Pentecostal traditions continue to allow pastoral discretion in the structure.[45] The frequency and theological implications of the celebrations vary throughout

---

[43] Gifford A Grobien, "Righteousness, Mystical Union and Moral Formation in Christian Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 77, no. 1–2 (January 2013): 148, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001953469&site=ehost-live. "In justification, a person is newly born in Christ, which grants him a new Christian character to do good works. This character continues to develop through the exercise of virtues under the guidance of the Christian narrative, that is, the practices of the Christian community, such as preaching, prayer, rituals, and communal good works."

[44] James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 155.

[45] Ibid., 158.

American Protestantism in denominations or non-denominational churches which do not adhere to a written liturgy.[46]

Within American Protestantism, these writers argue that Free Church tradition disregards the full redemptive story, focusing upon good deeds or personal preference which may only value liturgical acts for their usefulness. Further, the worshipping body may, as an extension of this ecclesiology, be appreciated for what they can offer. However, the biblical narrative expounds that growth in Christ—spiritual formation—occurs as the believer observes the practices of the faith community, which include, but are not limited to, preaching and the sacraments. The Eucharist is an important liturgical act of the church, informing and transforming the life of the believer and the community of faith. The sacrament and its rituals should not be under-valued or disregarded, as the Free Church tradition has been culpable.

iii. Church of the Nazarene Lack of Sacramentality Connected to the Free Church

Growing out of the Wesleyan-holiness movement, with a focus on personal piety, the Church of the Nazarene adopted the rally cry of "called unto holiness." Officially organized in 1908 at Pilot Point, Texas, the Nazarene movement embraced its holiness roots. How deep did the roots go, however? The new denomination was birthed from several holiness movements across the United States. Connecting many of them was their heritage in Wesleyan and Methodist tradition. Sacramentally, the movement would either follow the path of American Methodism or Wesleyan with its roots reflective of Anglicanism.[47] The Church of the Nazarene, embracing a place in the Free Church tradition focused on life transformation, also became more

[46] Though it could be argued to what degree even individual High Churches perceive or adhere to a theologically grounded eucharistic liturgy.

[47] Though this does not account for the entirety of theological roots of the Church of the Nazarene as it grew from an amalgamation of holiness movements.

aligned with the evangelical tendency to lessen the frequency of sacramental observance within the liturgy.[48]

At its inception in 1908, the denomination published the *Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene*. It outlines the movement's theology, polity, and organizational structure. The Nazarene doctrine on the Lord's Supper was that it is a "memorial and communion supper . . . essentially a New Covenant ordinance." The *Manual* continues by calling it "declarative" of God's grace through the death of Christ and the salvation made possible therein. The sacrament is for those who show "reverent appreciation for its significance" and have "faith in Christ and love for the saints . . ." The denomination encouraged believers to receive the sacrament as often as possible.[49] During the most recent quadrennial publication of the *Manual* in 2017, the gathered assembly revised the statement, organized under the "Articles of Faith." The statement no longer includes the word "memorial" or "New Covenant ordinance." It acknowledges John Wesley's conviction that the sacrament is a "means of grace" where Christ's real presence is among the gathering through the Holy Spirit. The statement reads: "All are invited to participate by faith in Christ and be renewed in life, salvation, and in unity as the Church."[50] The previous requirements for reception continue: reverent appreciation, faith in Christ, and love for the saints. As Geoffrey Wainwright observed among the Methodists thirty years ago, the Church of the Nazarene seems to be rediscovering an appreciation for the Eucharist. However, this revival of sacramental theology is a recent trend and has not always been the *modus operandi*.

---

[48] Although it has incorporated a Eucharistic liturgy reflective of the *Book of Common Prayer*, local congregations within the Church of the Nazarene have not always honored this tradition.
[49] *Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene* (Los Angeles: Nazarene Publishing Company, 1908), 30-31.
[50] *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2017-2021* (Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017), 34-35.

Throughout the theological development of the movement, the Church of the Nazarene has been inconsistent in its opinions on the Eucharist. Dirk Ellis observes this through the merger of various holiness groups which brought a range of sacramental emphasis. Quakers saw the sacraments as unnecessary and distractions, while the Anabaptists diminished Wesley's view. This becomes evident, Ellis notes, in the rarity of observance and haphazard administration of the sacraments. As the Wesleyan-holiness movements spread and formed new denominations, including the Church of the Nazarene, observance of the Eucharist changed. Ellis discusses a shift which has occurred within the denominational sacramental practice. He identifies an early value and emphasis on the sacraments, yet with each addition of a holiness camp to the fold, sacramental theology became muddled from various theological roots. In fact, he notes how the sacraments become of secondary importance to the liturgy of the church.[51] As previously mentioned, the 1908 *Manual* encourages receiving the Lord's Supper as often as possible, however, in 1928 this endorsement was removed. Though this appears to be a sudden change of policy, Ellis says the denomination was "never in danger of being deemed *constant communion*."[52] He supports this accusation by referencing several periodicals and biographical accounts which reference some portions of the denomination receiving the Eucharist less frequently than others. It appears there was a recommendation for a minimum quarterly observance, but even this was not adhered to by every congregation. Ellis suggests one reason for the inconsistency of doctrine and practice is the emphasis on the Eucharist being an ordinance and not a sacrament, citing Brent Peterson's assertion of a lost "sacramental vision."

---

[51] Dirk Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 144. "Even though many of the first-generation Nazarenes valued the eucharist and emphasized the importance of baptism, the sacramental confusion created by the divergent holiness streams served to further relegate the sacraments to a place of secondary importance or beyond."
[52] Ibid., 145.

Kyle Tau supports this inconsistency by claiming many of the denominational theologians, such as H. Orton Wiley, W. T. Purkiser, H. Ray Dunning and J. Kenneth Grider, rarely expounded upon the practice of the sacrament beyond acknowledging it as a sacrament of the Church. It was not until Staple's work, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, that the movement found a voice for sacramental theology. Tau asserts that of all the theologians, not one had proved capable of demonstrating a theological coherency with existent beliefs and practices among the ecclesiastical community.[53] Throughout the growth of the movement, the Church of the Nazarene has remained preaching-centered. Ellis' conclusions suggest as much: "Overall the balance between Word and Table found in Wesley's liturgical theology as well as that of the ancient church is absent from many Nazarene liturgies."[54] In fairness, there may be encouraging signs of a shift in sacramental theology by the recent changes to the "Articles of Faith" concerning the Eucharist. However, Diane Leclerc cautions for the need of a renewal in Eucharistic practice and holiness preaching as companions in sanctification and spiritual growth in the grace of God.[55] These writers suggest that belief and practice must align for effective change to occur.

### *b. Rise and Influence of Consumerism*

The theological and ecclesiastical developments through the last few centuries have brought positive and negative changes within the church. The church has endured major shifts within its own culture, let alone the geopolitical climates of its context. Secular culture has no

---

[53] Kyle Tau, "A Wesleyan Analysis of the Nazarene Doctrinal Stance on the Lord's Supper," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (2008): 103, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001687745&site=ehost-live. "none has successfully shown in significant ways how any of this theological development relates to the actual belief and practice suggested by the concrete ecclesial body . . ."

[54] Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 163.

[55] Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2010), loc. 5404, Kindle.

doubt influenced the church, whether through the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, or Modern and Post-Modernism. Unfortunately, the deterioration of sacramental theology has caused a weakness within the church to respond to such cultural influences. Currently, one of the great influences is the rise of consumerism with its characteristics of commodification, prioritizing of the self, and valuing usefulness.

i. Consumerism and Consumer Behavior within Human Science and Political Ethics

Consumerism finds itself entrenched in the United States' economical system within the concept of capitalism and a free market. There is a private producer of goods and services who, in turn, offers these products to a consumer. The U.S. economy is built upon this relationship of supply and demand. The initial question on the anemic nature of Free Church ecclesiology, particularly within the Church of the Nazarene, was on the fundamental identity of consumerism as a negative force within society. This question led to an investigation of its impact upon community development, particularly within the faith community and subsequent theological responses.

Michael Solomon has provided a multi-editioned textbook on consumer behavior, where he defines and extrapolates the consumer culture. He provides an overview on the consumption process, a three-staged event consisting of: prepurchase issues, purchase issues, and postpurchase issues.[56] The consumer may take part in any of these three stages and could take the form of organizations or groups. Opposite the consumer is the marketer who exists to meet the needs of the consumer. Solomon says: "Marketers can satisfy these needs only to the extent that they understand the people or organizations that will use the products and services they sell."[57] It is

[56] Michael R Solomon, *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*, 12th ed. (Hoboken: Pearson, 2017), 7.
[57] Ibid., 8.

for this reason marketing professionals study consumer behavior. Age, gender, family structure, social class and income, race and ethnicity, geography, and lifestyles all help define and focus the marketing of goods and services. Solomon, writing in 2017, noted that over 2.5 quintillion bytes of consumer data are created in a single day. Additionally, he says this number doubles about every 40 months. [58] We can easily imagine that number has increased within the last several years as the world continues to be more reliant on technology and cybershopping. Evaluating this data, marketers can understand and shape trends. In fact, Solomon describes how marketers influence the worldviews of society and peoples' lifestyles: Consumers' ideas of the world, their identification with certain people as heroes, even the ways in which they dress are all impacted by marketing.

Consumer behavior notices how consumers often buy products for their meaning rather than their use. Brand loyalty and image impact a person's choices. The study also observes the difference and impact between needs and wants. A need is something necessary for life or for achievement of a goal, while a want is defined as a specific manifestation of a need which is influenced by culture and personality. Solomon illustrates how hunger is a need, but one's fulfillment of that need can take various forms.

Solomon also identifies the role of social media in consumer behavior. The social media platforms are highly influential in people's lives and in marketing evaluations. Research has shown people not only desire to join social communities but contribute to them as well. To demonstrate the impact of social media, Solomon provides staggering statistics: "It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million listeners. TV took 13 years to reach 50 million users. The Internet took

[58] Solomon, 12.

4 years to reach 50 million people. In less than 9 months, Facebook added 100 million users."[59] Social media provides instant social interaction, participation, and influence.

Consumer behavior further identifies the ethics of business. Solomon notes there are certain society standards by which a culture judges what is right or wrong. He claims there are universal values of "honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect, justice, integrity, concern for others, accountability, and loyalty." However, the notions of right and wrong differ among cultures, people groups, and organizations.[60] One important question he addresses within the ethics of business is if marketers manipulate consumers. The fundamental identity of the market is to supply goods and needs which the consumer needs, that is, the consumer holds the power to choose when, how, and what interactions take place with organizations. However, marketers have been accused of creating artificial needs, suggesting they design their own market. Solomon rejects this notion by referring to his definition of needs and wants. The need exists and cannot be created, yet how it is fulfilled may be suggested by the market; the market also may simply create an awareness of the need. The idea could be related to the old axiom: "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." If the need or desire is not present, the offering of a product is inconsequential. However, if the need is identifiable, multiple means of addressing the need may be provided and marketed. This is not to say all marketing is equal or free from manipulation.[61]

Consumer behavior explores the role of materialism within culture and how possessions play an important role in the lives of people. Materialism is defined as the importance attached to

---

[59] Solomon, 21.
[60] Ibid., 35.
[61] One form of manipulation has been the use of subliminal messages and the effectiveness or ethical use of such means within advertising. A second form of manipulation can be discovered within children's television networks that intend to implant certain products within the minds of children who may influence an adult's purchases.

these possessions. Research indicates US consumers have increasing and easy access to goods. Additionally, self-identity is impacted by these goods. Consumers may value the product before the purchase, believing it has the power to bring them happiness. Their satisfaction has been found to wane after they acquire it when they realize this did not happen. Despite this finding, Solomon says consumer's demands continue to grow.

ii. Challenges to Consumer Behavior

Rather than continue to recite the optimism of consumer behavior, Solomon notes there is a dark side. People are not always rational consumers. In fact, these negative consumer behaviors negatively impact individuals and society. For instance, excessive drinking and tobacco use are a result of societal pressure. Cultural fixation on acquiring wealth has led to shoplifting and fraud. Cyberterrorism is an increasing concern in this technological age. Consumer and social media addictions, physiological or psychological dependency, are further problems. Additionally, cyberbullying is an alarming reality within the social media culture. Solomon also describes compulsive consumption, excessive shopping for the sake of relieving anxiety, stress, and boredom, similar to compulsive eating. Studies find these compulsive behaviors may be manifested in a way likened to a drug addiction.

The United States has observed a shift in the communal ethic with an emphasis placed upon the individual. Some psychological studies have argued individualism is damaging mental health. Rob Whitely has suggested the evidence points to individualism decreasing membership in social and religious organizations. He believes this negatively impacts mental health resulting in increased suicide rates and a lack of support structure necessary to the treatment of disorders like PTSD. Therefore, he concludes social support and community involvement are necessary

means to counter mental illness and improve mental health.[62] Matthew Smith says this trend towards the individual impacts the national ideology as well. He cites BREXIT as one example and the recent American presidential campaigns as another. He finds mental health to be a societal and individual responsibility.[63] On the other hand, individualism on its own is not necessarily a social evil. According to Abigail Marsh, nations which have been ranked as the most individualistic are also the most generous. She contends the growth in personal wealth and individualism, despite conjuring some cost to society, does not equate to a rise in selfishness.[64] Marsh may not believe individualism leads to selfishness, however, it is difficult to reconcile the mental health statistics with her findings, especially in light of the dominance of consumerism with its emphasis on commodification and individual desires.[65]

The impact of consumerism has been noted to decrease mental health. Clair Brown, studying the effects of consumerism, suggests it leads to identity being tied to the accumulation of possessions. Eventually, this leads to an inequality among those who are able to buy and those who are not. She writes: "Feelings of social discontent and anxiety rise with growing inequality and keep people fighting to maintain their social position, leaving them unsatisfied with their

---

[62] Rob Whitely, "Is an Increase in Individualism Damaging Our Mental Health?," Psychology Today, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/talking-about-men/201707/is-increase-in-individualism-damaging-our-mental-health.

[63] Matthew Smith, "Does 'Rugged Individualism' Undermine Mental Health?," Psychology Today, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/short-history-mental-health/201809/does-rugged-individualism-undermine-mental-health.

[64] Abigail Marsh, "Could A More Individualistic World Also Be A More Altruistic One?," NPR.org, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2018/02/05/581873428/could-a-more-individualistic-world-also-be-a-more-altruistic-one.

[65] See "Mental Health Myths and Facts," MentalHealth.Gov, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts, and Vanderbilt University, "Indicators of despair rising among Gen X-ers entering middle age," Science Daily, accessed May 1, 2019, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190415200249.htm.

new, fancier, lifestyles."[66] Individualism and consumerism are on the rise in American culture. Psychologists have noted this tendency negatively impacts mental health, while supporting the benefits of social organization.

Solomon continues his text to describe the effects on personality, attitudes, family systems by consumer behavior. He also notes the creation of consumer cultures: cultural subsets and even a global culture. Solomon's text helps to describe and define the culture of consumerism, particularly the field of consumer behavior. His work examines the relationship of consumer and marketer as a shared, dependent interaction. He dismisses the idea of marketing manipulation; however, he does note the negatives of consumer behavior. He seems to deflect the blame of these negative behaviors upon the culture rather than on consumerism itself. Materialism is a result of personal choice or misplaced manifestations. Consumer behavior studies culture, influences society, but is not responsible for negative cultural conduct. It is an interdisciplinary study of consumer/marketing relationships. It seems there is unresolved controversary as to whether it should be an academic study or an applied discipline. Solomon appears to write for informative purposes rather than cultural commentary. He idealizes the consumer relationship and the ethics of business, while noting but deflecting the negatives of consumer behavior. If marketers defer to the power of the consumer, then the consumer is the one to whom all things are held accountable. The consumer, however, is influenced by marketing. It is difficult to see how these societal evils are to be addressed.

Endres and Panagopoulos researched the impact of political activity on consumer behavior. They discovered consumers alter their purchase habits based upon the political

[66] Clair Brown, "Why Over-Consumption Is Making Us Unhappy," Psychology Today, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/buddhist-economics/201803/why-over-consumption-is-making-us-unhappy.

leanings of companies. Buying and boycotting is impacted by this political consumerism. In fact, political-consumer behavior is intimately linked to political knowledge, interest, and ideological passion. Political consumerism appears to be centered on punishing a company which is opposite one's political leaning rather than rewarding one which is aligned with them. In fact, the authors' conclusion suggests a consumer's choices and behavior is an expression of the polarization in party politics, political views, and personal preferences. They appear to agree with Solomon's description where consumer behavior is a barometer of cultural values, while also holding the power to alter the offerings of the marketer.

### iii. The Consumer

Restad writes an overview of the history on consumerism and the impact of consumers on culture. He offers a definition of consumer as impacted by the economic, social, technological, geographical, and spiritual contexts in which they live. However, he writes: "'Consumer' clearly is an identity. However, it is so thoroughly entwined with cultural and group identities (including the expected gender, race and ethnicity, and class, as well as 'producer') that it stymies attempts to isolate and examine it as a unique or separate entity."[67] The last two centuries have identified and offered warnings about consumerism. Writers have noticed the shift in a culture of scarcity to one of abundance; of necessity to comfort and convenience. Restad concludes that the ever-evolving nature of the consumer has led to its indeterminate definition.

A consumer may be more than an individual, yet unable to truly be named. He writes: "It encapsulates that essential, transformative quality of unpredictable, pent up desire for change, improvement, advancement, distinction, and inclusion that historians find endlessly fascinating

[67] Penne Restad, "The Third Sex: Historians, Consumer Society, and the Idea of the American Consumer," *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 3 (2014): 770, doi:10.1093/jsh/sht109.

and society finds compelling and disruptive."[68] More than offering a simplistic definition, Restad offers a historical and social recounting of studies on consumerism. It is hardly a new phenomenon as it has evolved over time. However, as culture is rapidly changing, so too does the identity of a consumer. The author does not address the ethical dimensions of consumerism except to merely state they have been debated through the last couple centuries. However, he does identify the insatiable appetite of consumerism to acquire and progress.

These resources, while helpful in defining consumerism and its many facets, fail to address one important aspect of society: economic inequality. From an economic perspective and the study of consumer behavior, resources are dedicated to those can participate within the consumer/producer/marketer relationships. Goods and services are traded from producer and consumer; however, the conclusions are hardly definite as to whose best interests are being served. Greed, prejudice, pride, and individualism are prevalent characteristics in these relationships. At its best, the culture which derives from this paradigm is altruistic and concerned for justice. Unfortunately, the rise of materialism and individualism from the consumer culture has resulted in far less noble cultural reflections. It is the concern of philosophers, ethicists, and theologians to discern the moral implications of social and individual behavior.

### *c. Preliminary Responses to Consumerism*

A deeper question emerges from these conversations within the human sciences. It is concerned with how the church is to respond to consumer culture. If it cannot be decided whether consumerism is inherently evil or the effects and influences of consumerism are dangerous to the Christian faith and ecclesiastical practices, then how is the church to respond to it? One thing is understood: consumerism, as a part of American capitalism and culture, is

[68] Restad, 781.

present within the church. Several theologians provide a contemporary response. In particular, the work of Vincent Miller provides the strongest theological organizing principle for engaging consumerism in a critique of the Free Church tradition and in support of a Eucharistic Ecclesiology.

### i. Preliminary Theological Responses

William T. Cavanaugh addresses these concerns for culture. In his work, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, he discusses when a free market is truly free, how Christians are to consume rightly, being global and local, and how scarcity is not inevitable. He challenges economic inequality by directing every transaction to consider the well-being of both parties. As a Roman Catholic theologian, he naturally points to the *telos* of every interaction being participation in the life of God. He does not dismiss capitalism; though, he does call for a revisioning and renewal of current practices.[69]

In addressing consumerism specifically, Cavanaugh claims the primary dilemma is not greed. He states greed is characterized by an over-attachment to things while the main concern of consumerism is detachment. In fact, he notes: "Most people are not overly attached to things, and most are not obsessed with hoarding riches. Indeed, the United States has one of the lowest savings rates of any wealthy country, and we are the most indebted society in history."[70] Solomon even noted this tendency towards detachment in his discussion on consumerism. People believe the item or service will bring satisfaction to their life, but they are disappointed once their hopes are realized. Constant dissatisfaction is one of the key characteristics of consumerism, according to Cavanaugh.

---

[69] William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2008), loc. 15, Kindle.
[70] Ibid., loc. 402.

An argument based on greed and materialism establishes a dichotomy between things spiritual and material. The incarnation of Christ most prominently disproves this dualistic notion. Rather than being about the things themselves, Cavanaugh argues the struggle is between what is valued for meaning and identity. Consumerism lends itself to the pursuit of things—despite the consequences and ethical dilemmas in production, producers, and product.

Unfortunately, there are two things Cavanaugh fails to address in this discussion. First, Solomon elaborates on various failings of consumer behavior: notably, compulsions, addictions, and unethical decisions. Cavanaugh, on the other hand, appears to assume consumerism is itself a disease, organically breeding these negative behaviors. Secondly, he does not acknowledge consumer ethics. Endres and Panagopoulos discussed political consumerism and the decisions of consumers being grounded in an organization's practices and ideologies. Simultaneously, Cavanaugh is pessimistic of consumerism and hopeful for humanity. He is far more specific, though, in detailing unethical practices of production and consumption, specifically the detachment between consumer and the path of production. Once more, Cavanaugh does fail to acknowledge the concern of some consumers in organic products and "green" production. He does reason that there is a lack of concern due to society's detachment with production for the sake of convenient consumption. He writes: "We are invited to participate in this transcendence of the material world of production and producers. We are invited to buy products that miraculously appear on store shelves without inquiring into their origins."[71] Solomon also acknowledged this attitude is prevalent within American culture.

Unlike the other authors mentioned above, Cavanaugh does suggest an alternative narrative to that of consumerism. Recognizing there is no inherent evil within the material,

[71] Cavanaugh, loc. 479.

Cavanaugh points to a restlessness within humanity as the source of disparity. The consumer spends an inordinate amount of time and resources seeking to answer the questions of "what is a good life and what or who fulfills this desire?"; though, as Cavanaugh notes, the answer is either ambiguous or nonexistent. Consumerism seeks to satisfy the discontent with endless acquisition. This desire is natural, but misplaced. Conversely, the narrative of scripture speaks to this desire as an innate search for God. Fulfillment can only be found in transcending a desire for the material (not rejecting them) and viewing "them as participating in the being of God; but that view simultaneously causes us to look through and beyond things to their Creator."[72] He centers the satisfaction of humanity firmly within the narrative of scripture. It points beyond itself to the Other, which, though he does not use the terminology, is sacramental language.

Philosopher James K.A. Smith approaches the discussion from a different perspective. He begins with human desire rather than human consumption. Smith believes the longings of a person are expressive of their identity. While Descartes began with the fundamental statement of cognitive recognition as indicative of identity, Smith states this overlooks the power of habit. Knowledge and action do not always correlate. He observes the inconsistency as a result of impulse which is grounded in desire. Rather than embracing a reductionist narrative of humanity as purely cognitive beings, Smith invites a more holistic approach. Like Cavanaugh, he locates this within a biblical model. This desire is directed towards a *telos*, a fulfillment. He claims this is "to be oriented toward some sense of the good life is to pursue some vision of how the world ought to be."[73] Transformation of culture occurs, not only through this revisioning but in reworking one's habits. He continues: "In short, if you are what you love, and love is a habit,

---

[72] Cavanaugh, loc. 554.

[73] James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2016), 10, Kindle.

then discipleship is a rehabituation of your loves."[74] Imitation and practice reorient oneself towards this new vision of life. A misorientation of one's loves occurs when one absorbs the false narrative within cultural practices. Smith states a way forward is found in acknowledging the various liturgies of culture and immersing oneself in positively formational practices.

Smith notes there are cultural rituals and symbols which are constantly shaping the lives of people. These develop into unconscious habits and practices; longings concentrated within the narrative in which one is immersed. Smith argues that not only does language and symbols recount this narrative, but also the space in which is located. He writes:

> How do we learn to be consumerists? Not because someone comes along and offers an argument for why stuff will make me happy. I don't think my way into consumerism. Rather, I'm covertly conscripted into a way of life because I have been formed by cultural practices that are nothing less than secular liturgies.[75]

Restad had described the historical recognition and study of consumerism but could not explain its origination. Smith, on the other hand, attributes this to misdirected habit and desire immersed in alternative narratives. He illustrates by discussing the compulsion of technological dependence.[76] He says this is less about what is being viewed as much as why. He believes it is from an egocentric vision of life. Solomon ascribed this to negative consumer behaviors. Smith describes it as being involved in misdirected liturgies.

Maintaining religious language, Smith discusses consumerism as a gospel consisting of secular liturgies (rituals engaged in the meta-narrative). He proceeds to articulate several aspects of the consumerism narrative which have formed culture. First, he observes that within

---

[74] James K.A. Smith, 18.
[75] Ibid., 45-46.
[76] A person could walk into any restaurant and find most of the people on their cellular devices. Family conversations at home can be dominated by either discussions of social media or a lack of discussion due to spending time on social media. People do not know how to sit in silence or solitude, but rather seek companionship or entertainment from technology.

marketing, the consumer—consciously or unconsciously—notices a satisfaction associated with the product. These visual icons portray a narrative of happiness within the acquisition of the material. Immersion within this liturgy leads to the consumer believing their brokenness can be healed through consumption. Marketing often concentrates on a primal desire for friendship, happiness, love, etc., offering their product as a road to fulfillment. Smith believes this to be counter to the biblical narrative of *shalom*. Second, he notices a habit of criticism and competition within the narrative of consumerism. Certain self-images are presented as appropriate and become a standard by which all are judged. This leads to objectification and a debasement of others who do not conform. Third, consumerism offers itself as a remedy to life's shortcomings. It is presented as a therapeutic practice and a solution to one's problems or failures. The temporary excitement associated with acquisition is heralded as the aim of life, while menial tasks, responsibilities, and obligations are despised. One's purpose becomes trying to replicate the excitement as often as possible.[77] Similar to Cavanaugh, Smith recognizes consumerism's obsession with the new, necessitating the removal of the old. This liturgy of consumption becomes applied to relationships as well. Fourth, Smith discusses the detachment of consumers from production and transport. He echoes Cavanaugh's arguments here on the desire to consume overriding concern for others. Smith condemns the narrative of consumerism in favor of a biblical narrative of fulfilment found in God. He suggests a reorientation of one's practices and a conscious reordering of habits.

Solomon's approach to consumerism is pragmatically concerned. He hopes in an idealized relationship of consumer and marketer where a need is satisfied through a want (a specific manifestation of a need supplied by culture). He recognizes there are negative consumer

[77] The increase of internet shopping, or e-tailing, on websites like Amazon have illustrated this trend.

behaviors and, while lamenting their existence, does not offer an alternative. Endres and Panagopoulos discuss political consumerism as indicative of one's ideals. Consumerism is a means to an end, notably social change. Restad provides a historical account of consumerism and attempting to define a consumer. He acknowledges no such adequate definition is available. Unfortunately, he also does not outright condemn consumerism or attempt to characterize it as a positive or negative within society. Cavanaugh approaches consumerism theologically, noting its deficiencies to fulfill the biblical *telos*. Similar to Smith, he likens consumerism to a type of spirituality, though people would not recognize it as such. It becomes a way for people to find meaning within their lives and be identified for what they possess. One's worldview and interpersonal relationships are formed by their immersion and participation in the consumer culture. It becomes a kind of spirituality, one which is not compatible to the Christian faith. He does not advocate an end to capitalism; however, he is very skeptical of consumerism as a positive force. James K.A. Smith develops an existential argument against the narrative of consumerism by embracing an approach centered on reorienting one's desires and habits.

Consumer culture develops into a false liturgy, instructing and forming individuals towards a particular end. As James K.A. Smith observes: "If we are unreflectively immersed in the liturgies of consumerism, we will, over time, "learn" that the end goal of human life is acquisition and consumption."[78] This *telos* would direct individuals to endlessly shop, consume, and abandon for the sake of gaining more. Cavanaugh warns how this cycle comes at the expense of others. He details in his book, *Being Consumed*, the harsh and unfair conditions of international laborers who work for the sake of consumerism's wants and desires. He writes: "Most of us do not consciously choose to work others to death for the sake of lower prices on the

[78] James K.A. Smith, 86.

things we buy. But we participate in such an economy because we are detached from the producers, the people who actually make our things."[79] The exploitation of humanity is antithetical to the gospel, yet Christians become participants in the very culture which promotes it. These notions of objectivity, consumption, and self-gratification are important characteristics in understanding the negative influences of consumerism.

### ii. Vincent Miller's *Consuming Religion*

Located within community and comprised of people who are influenced by the surrounding culture, the church finds itself confronted with the positives and negatives of consumerism. Georgetown Professor of Technology, Vincent Miller, describes the church's role as engagement with consumer culture and commodification through education and empowerment of the laity. Miller wrestles with commodification, religion influenced by consumer desires, the origins of desire itself (both consumer and religious), religion within consumer culture, and the response religious traditions, including observation of the sacraments, may have to consumer culture. His original work, written in 2003, addresses some key difficulties within consumer culture of alienation (leading to selfish individualism), objectification, and disengagement. The following section will examine Miller's argument and bring it in conversation with present culture. This examination will allow the next section to identify how the characteristics of consumer culture remain and affect the church.

The initial definition Miller provides for consumer culture describes the prioritizing of beliefs and interpretations around use, while values and the foundation of beliefs are relegated.[80] In fact, Miller notes any critique of consumer culture often proves to be a benefit, owing to the

---

[79] Cavanaugh, loc. 483.

[80] Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, 2003, (repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1. "It is primarily a way of relating to beliefs a set of habits of interpretation and use—that renders the 'content' of beliefs and values less important."

nature of consumer culture to reframe any idea into a marketing technique. Miller balks at the use of consumer culture to describe the phenomenon entirely. He believes it to be too generalized a term referring to a capitalist society marked by high levels of consumption without naming the underlying condition. He prefers instead to discuss a "consumer society," a group of people where consumption establishes a unifying principle and identity. A society defined by consumption suffers a reorientation of ideals, traditions, symbols, and practices. Miller ascribes this to a commodification of culture whereby these characteristics are detached from their traditional contexts, leaving them without foundation.[81] These symbols, traditions, and practices become "useful," providing more meat for the insatiable grinder of consumption's marketing.

The commodification of culture took place over time through the 20th century, from Marxist thought, Frederick Taylor's labor management, Henry Ford's use of Taylor's practices, and the rise of the single-family home. Karl Marx believed one of the fundamental needs for government was to alienate its workers from their creativity. Men and women focused less on imagination and creation to production and efficiency. In fact, Marx introduced the idea of materialism and the gathering of goods to fill needs. The origins of the goods were unknown and unimportant. This encouraged ignorant and apathetic consumption. The introduction of Taylor's labor system and Ford's production revolution furthered this materialism. Previously, skilled labor was preserved, admired, and carefully bequeathed to an apprentice. Due to this shift in production, engineers became the holders of knowledge. Miller notes this lack of skilled work, combined with the exhaustion of the worker in the process of production, led to the home

[81] Miller, 32. "This results in the liquidation of cultural traditions whereby the elements they comprise (beliefs, symbols, practices, and so on) are abstracted from their traditional contexts and engaged as free-floating signifiers, put to decorative uses far removed from their original references and connections with other beliefs and practices."

becoming a place reliant on mass consumption.[82] Multiplying this effect led to a decline in traditions and beliefs being passed down to the next generation. The more options a consumer society provides, the less concerned a generation becomes about tradition. Miller suggests, therefore, this buffet of choices from commercial consumption result in identity formation and expression, ultimately leading to a weakening of religious traditions. Each family begins to view religious formation as an amalgamation of spiritual choices.

Owing to its use of detachment, consumer societies make use of religious symbols, traditions, and beliefs if they are of use for consumption. Miller notes specifically how religious music is often marketed and packaged for increased sales and consumption. The church itself is not immune to using the tools available in hopes of also seeing an increase. For example, the church often makes use of corporate media. However, Miller notes the implications as encouraging the laity to use the same interpretative practices and approach religious beliefs with the attitudes they use of the same media avenues and techniques within consumer society. Action and ideals are removed from interpersonal relationships to a disembodied virtual voice. Symbolism is reduced and everything is objectified becoming a means to market. Therefore, churches which are not High Church and lacking an emphasis on symbolism suffer particularly to the machine of commodification. This became most clear during the seeker-sensitive movements within Protestant traditions. Miller writes: "contemporary religion has been transformed into a narcissistic, therapeutic enterprise by generations of rootless 'seekers' who lack allegiance to religious institutions or communities."[83] Religion becomes a personal means to help someone feel better about life—a tool within the buffet of consumer options to attempt and

[82] Miller, 41. "This 'deskilling' had consequences that went far beyond the shop floor. Combined with the ever more complete exhaustion of the worker's energy in the course of the workday, it helped transform the home from a site of domestic production into a place increasingly dependent on mass consumption."
[83] Ibid., 85.

satiate an internal desire. Miller argues churches have done little to combat this cultural perspective. When the church encourages the use of mass media to communicate it not only finds benefit within their abilities, but subsequently undermine their hermeneutic and formation structures. In present culture, the church uses Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as means of communicating and connecting with people, however they are largely means of consumption, information, interpretation, and entertainment for culture. People often are selective and choose to view only what appeases their personal preference or they find interesting.

The fundamental problem to the church regarding consumer culture is the similarity of their understanding of desire. Miller describes their relationship not as antithetical but running alongside one another with different goals in mind. They do not find themselves on course for a head-on collision, rather consumer culture serves as a deflection of Christianity. Consumer culture does not wish to supplant beliefs. Miller describes it instead as a misdirection—an advertising term where commodities are marketed with the objective that they will fill a need or desire. However, Miller notes "Misdirection works by encouraging consumers to think of consumption as a way of enacting profound values and fulfilling serious desires. It is about the substitution of a practice, not the substitution of values."[84] It is a change in practices or, in theological terms, an alternative liturgy. Where the rituals of the church are meant to be formative, consumer culture would realign the symbols and practices of the church to fill its need for more. Consumer desire is defined by the seeking and never finding; it is a reinforcement of the idea that there is always more to consume. Traditional characteristics of identity and values are associated with commodities. When the product fails to produce the desired result, consumer

[84] Miller, 109

culture directs the consumer back to the market. Within this culture, religion can be disassembled and removed from their contexts and communities to be used for means of pleasure.

As consumer society continues to offer possibilities for identity formation, religion is drawn into these options. It becomes a buffet of options without a *telos*. The flexibility among such a religion furthers the consumption of ideals or values to construct an individualized religion that meets a need of the consumer. The difficulty with consumer desire is that it is never satisfied—unlike Christian religion which articulates a fulfillment of desire in God. Consumer culture is not about possessing but seeking. Where the church says, "here are our beliefs," consumer culture says, "here are options." Consumer desire projects these options in an endless pursuit of fulfillment which can only be found in more objects. Miller describes the "*telos*" of consumer culture: "Consumer anticipation is at heart a way of accommodating the endless repeat of the same, of finding pleasure in a world without hope."[85] The danger of consumer culture is its ability to subsume all cultures as means to an end: more commodities to be consumed. Where theology seeks to offer a counter-narrative to culture by remembering historical traditions, consumer culture subverts the narrative into something marketable. Miller describes the lack of ideologies within consumer culture in a capitalist society as a non-entity for theology to dispute. There are no concepts or beliefs for the academy to argue with logic-based formulations.

Miller's argument centers around a solution to the problems of consumer culture which cannot lie within theological constructs but in the realm of the ritual. A rediscovery of the theological imagination is important to countering consumer society's manipulation of daily life. One method of approach is through education. Miller's hypothesis is that consumer culture thrives on an uneducated consumer base. The less people know, the more likely they are to buy

[85] Miller, 132.

with no regard to the implications of their purchase—they buy to merely consume, hoping it fills a need (which as he has established throughout his work, consumption creates a vacuum that consumer society says can only be filled by more consumption). Education brings awareness to the process of consuming, breaking the cycle of endless, mindless consumption by introducing ethical choice. Miller says an educated consumer base will start to make choices based on other factors besides to fill a need. In altering the *telos* of consumption, the emotional rewards to consumption shift from the act of consuming itself. He argues that by establishing an alternative economy whose practices are more aligned with a Christian vision, consumption practices and values are transformed. He says: "Their success is measured not as miniscule enclaves amid regnant global capitalism but as meditative counter-practices that provide means for forming believers' imaginations against the logic of the commodity fetish . . ."[86] These newly adopted rituals of educated consumption are formative practices for the ethics and values of the consumer. The consumer becomes more aware of the origins and ethics of production, choosing to buy and boycott based upon a company's values. The cycle shifts to a process of desire, research, investigation, and purchase, whereby there is consumer responsibility.

The same practice of educating the consumer base can be applied to religious education. Miller argues for a renewed education of the laity in religious practices, rituals, and values, and beliefs. Rather than allowing consumer society to establish a person's identity, the church should be informing a person's character. The difficulty lies in the disposition of people's context, he writes: "Religious communities lack control not simply because they do not have theocratic authority over their society but also because believers are not socialized solely within religious communities. As in most times, the community shares most of its culture with people outside of

[86] Miller, 183.

the church."[87] People are informed by more cultural influences than the church alone. However, Miller proposes that an educated laity saturated by an informed liturgy can be transformed by the traditions and values of the church.

The main concern within his proposal is whether a church practices an informed liturgy. Miller's critique of the church concentrates on the composition and intent of the liturgy itself.[88] He argues for an empowerment of the laity, suggesting there has been a loss of agency for their own formation. Fearing a divide among the clergy and laity resembling the concerns of the Reformation, the laity should be invited to exercise their voice within their tradition. Consumer culture encourages people to take control of their own religious beliefs by demystifying religion and disassembling it for consumption. Religion should anchor agency within religious tradition, but also allowing for the laity to have input in the future. Miller cites the revisions of Vatican II which view the congregation as active participants in the prayer of the church rather than passive consumers receiving their religious needs from the celebrant. Laity agency is contingent on an education congregation, otherwise their ignorance of the practices, symbols, and values will be meaningless and misconstrued. The barriers to laity agency lie: first, within the structure of the church where the clergy and leaders have primary influence of the liturgy; and second, the lack of participation or willingness from the laity.

Consumer society has weaved its influence within the life of the church due largely to the fact that the church is comprised of more cultures than its own. People are exposed and affected by many narratives and cultures throughout their life. The most formative of these cultures are likely to be the ones they encounter the most. Consumer culture is everywhere within American

---

[87] Miller, 194.

[88] Miller's concern is directed primarily within his own tradition in the Roman Catholic church, however it can be applied to any congregation, even those identified as Free Church traditions.

society; therefore, the church must contend with this alternative economy and culture. The laity are often more willing to adopt a religious community that syncretize consumer culture and middle-class values. The cleric is viewed as the religious authority and the people are customers who are served. Miller argues for theological education of a literate laity, resulting in a liturgy or ecclesiology that allows the laity to be active participants of the liturgy and for their own formation. Unfortunately, this deepening of laity agency may find no willing participants. The cleric is then returned the agency for the liturgy and laity formation. Consumer culture has made this a likely possibility where a people are more comfortable with being given a choice rather than to create from within.

The solution offered for the problems of consumer culture are hardly a well-defined process for countering the effects of commodification within the church or society. Miller instead proposes educational reform and initiatives for the laity. One challenge to his premise, however, is the lack of desire laity may have in further education or adopting initiatives and practices which run counter to culture. The same could said for any theological or ecclesiological response from the church. Miller acknowledges a laity-centered response is not necessarily more likely to succeed than a cleric-centered one, although a response reliant on cleric response alone further deepens a passivity among the laity which consumer culture already reinforces. Miller also encourages the responsible use of media within the church, seeing great advantages for communication and teaching. As the last twenty years since the original publication of his work has evidenced, the balance of the internet's benefits or harm to the church is precarious. Miller could not have foreseen the influence and pervasiveness of media, particularly social media, within culture or the church. Rather than resisting consumer culture's effects, the church has embraced many of its tools and attitudes. Simultaneously, the negatives of commodification have

filtered within the cracks of a loose theological response. The primary dilemma with consumer culture is its lack of solid form within broader society. The effects can be observed, but the origins of them are harder to nail down. It is a systemic cultural anomaly that drives identity formation and pursuits of desire. Ultimately, consumer culture centers around a cyclic process of consumption and desire. The problems consumer culture poses to the church are important to identify for the sake of reforming Free Church traditions to resist its influences.

### *d. Elements in Consumerism that "Infect" Free Church Emphasis*

Regarding the background of consumerism discussed in the social sciences and theological responses, with regard to the New Testament biblical foundations and evolution of the Free Church tradition, Miller's critique provides a theological framework for discussing the theological response and development of Eucharistic Ecclesiology which occurs in the next chapters. This section addresses the challenges consumerism provides to the Free Church tradition and the competing narratives of the Eucharist and consumer culture.

#### i. Consumerism Challenges to the Free Church

There are three primary concerns with consumer culture Miller addresses which are relevant to the argument of this paper. Through its redirection of practices and disassembly of religious traditions, consumer culture can be identified by objectification, disengagement, and alienation. Objectification focuses on the use of something or someone by removing its intrinsic value. Disengagement removes any notion of a meta-narrative by focusing on one's own created narrative, which usually involves satisfying one's own desires. Alienation separates the person from community; there is no "we," only "I."

Religion scholars have noted the negative effects of individualism and consumerism in American culture. Timothy Gaines argues that Western philosophy adheres to an "ontology of individual fragmentation."[89] He says rationality has become the basis for morality, but it is entirely subjective: "This rationality is predicated on the exaltation of individuality, ontologically rending one person from another."[90] The pervading culture tends to influence congregational culture, mission, and values. Brent Peterson illustrates this point as he discusses a concern in Wesleyan churches where the experiences of an individual believer and their "works of grace" are prioritized and the communal dimension of the faith has been lost.[91] The shift in congregational culture has occurred slowly over the last forty years, but it has affected the values of the church. The church growth movement influenced much of pastoral leadership over this span. Though it was intended to highlight the need for spiritual growth, it quickly morphed into physical accumulation. Jeren Rowell notes: "as often happens when movements develop, the markers of this contemporary missionary project got reduced to what many called the ABCs: Attendance, Buildings, and Cash."[92] This led to Eugene Peterson calling pastors "shopkeepers," primarily concerned with customer happiness, attracting new customers, and enticing customers to greater financial support.[93] Considering this trend in pastoral philosophy, it is right to assume the values of church growth would trickle down into congregational life. Brent Peterson marks

---

[89] Timothy R Gaines, "Eucharistic Participation: Holiness as the Relational Shape of Christian Moral Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (2014): 95, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001972052&site=ehost-live.

[90] Ibid., 94-95.

[91] Brent Peterson, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology: A Community of Joyful Brokenness," January 2006, 0, https://nts.whdl.org/eucharistic-ecclesiology-community-joyful-brokenness-brent-peterson. "Part of my concern is that too often in Wesleyan evangelical circles we have so focused on individual experiences and quantifiable 'works of grace' that we have lost sight of the communal reality of our faith."

[92] Jeren Rowell, *Thinking, Listening, Being: A Wesleyan Pastoral Theology* (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2014), 57.

[93] Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1987), 2.

this as "Christian Individualism," where the church is more concerned about its own needs.[94] Individualism and consumerism in the church takes many forms: division over personal preference, exclusion of those who are different from the dominant group, or an emphasis on personal piety at the expense of communal responsibility.

Returning to Miller's concerns of consumer culture, objectification, disengagement, and alienation are problematic to the spiritual life of the church. They are a hindrance to spiritual formation and theological understanding. They shift the meta-narrative of scripture from God to humanity and from community to the self. Due to the character of consumer culture to break down religion into segments that can be commodified, the church's emphasis on intrinsic value and giftedness are at risk. Consumer culture tends to objectify anything and anyone because they are viewed as another thing to consume. The tendency towards more is never satisfied and value is placed only on use. Miller notes there is no time or motivation to develop attachments to any person, ideal, or thing. Intrinsic worth is of no concern because it cannot promote consumption.

Disengagement is not concerned with alleviating the troubles of others. The sufferings of people and the dangers in the world are inconveniences to seeking pleasure. The world is in a hopeless state and the only goal of humanity should be to seek more pleasure in it. In fact, consumer culture views "the other" and difference as entertainment and something to be used for one's own political or personal gain. Suffering is not ignored, but it is not sympathized for the sake of its own. Advertisements for charity works make use of pictures and video of suffering people or animals to inspire a person to give. However, the act of giving is often portrayed as making the giver feel better about themselves rather than for inspiring systemic change.

[94] Brent Peterson, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology," title page.

Alienation is important to consumer culture as well. It disintegrates attachments to community so that something can be marketed and consumed by the individual. Even within the realm of religion, spiritualities and theologies are offered as a buffet of choice for consumption. Individual identity and formation are treasured as the ideal value within society. There are no connections with tradition or commitment in personal formation. When one is dissolved of attachments, they can be offered the wisdom of the ages and of multiple cultures. Self-identity is offered as the only ideal which can be trusted, though it can never be fully grounded in any particular community.

Consumer culture and the church converge within the halls of the sacred gathering place. Culture rests in the seats or the pews within the minds of the people who are present to worship. Eyes and ears conditioned by society receive Scripture and interpret from an amalgam of perspectives. The church must grapple with the implications of consumer culture's influence on the life of the congregation and, as a result, itself. The narratives of consumer culture and the Gospel cannot coexist.

### ii. Competing World Narratives

Like mixing oil and water, the church and consumerism do not combine well. Consumerism which infiltrates the church, particularly the Free Church setting which has already relegated the sacraments in importance, alters the worldview and lifestyle of the individuals and congregation. Cavanaugh even notes: "It would be easy enough to assimilate the consumption of the Eucharist into a consumerist kind of spirituality. The presence of Jesus could become another kind of commodity to be appropriated for the benefit of the individual user."[95] The purpose and *telos* of a consumer culture is to advertise and acquire anything. The liturgy of the church, even

[95] Cavanaugh, loc. 596.

the place of worship itself, can become a product. Cavanaugh bluntly states: "The economy as it is currently structured would grind to a halt if we ever looked at our stuff and simply declared, 'It is enough. I am happy with what I have.'"[96] Contentment is not a characteristic of consumerism. The individual desires more and seeks one's own satisfaction in the search and acquisition of things. Miller's categories of the negative influences of consumerism help organize the theological critique of the Free Church tradition's disconnect in belief and practice.

Consumer culture operates by disassembling religion, removing it from its ties to tradition and values. The liturgy needs a foundation, or it becomes free-floating, settling down wherever the winds of culture take it. Likened to a hot air balloon that when it is tethered to the ground, it can rise high above the ground but always remain in proximity to where it started. However, when it is cut free from its foundation, it will float on the wind with an unknown destination. Commodification is not concerned with the destination or the foundation, only that it can keep a person floating around. As Miller observes, this emphasis leads to consumer's becoming alienated, disengaged, and things which were sacred, objectified. Consumerism dismantles the Free Church tradition's priority of inclusion, developing community, and recognizing the holiness of people. Instead, this cultural influence desires to dismantle religion and community for the sake of commodifying it. As the human sciences noted, human inequality and exploitation are markers of consumerism. It intends to subsume all sacred elements into a marketable package which feeds the cycle of acquisition. There is no *telos* beyond seeking more.

Contrary to this culture is the liturgy rightly observed. The Eucharist, and sacraments in general, were instituted as a means of participation. James K.A. Smith speaks to the edifying nature of the sacrament:

---

[96] Cavanaugh, loc. 524.

> The Lord's Table is a leveling reality in a world of increasing inequalities, an enacted vision of "a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine" (Isa. 25:6). This strange feast is the civic rite of another city—the Heavenly City—which is why it includes our pledge of allegiance, the Creed. In this communion our hearts are drawn into the very heart of God's Triune life. . . . The Lord's Supper isn't just a way to remember something that was accomplished in the past; it is a feast that nourishes our hearts. Here is an existential meal that retrains our deepest, most human hungers.[97]

The Eucharist becomes a means of grace, by which the individual and communal elements of the body of Christ are changed by the grace bestowed in receiving the Body of Christ. The inherent value of all things is affirmed within the sacrament. The Free Church movement intended to reconcile deficiencies it observed within the church prior to the Reformation by returning to a more participatory Eucharistic ritual. However, the Free Church became anemic and succumbed to the rise of consumerism and became susceptible to its influences.

Traditional Christian theology is counter to the characteristics of consumer culture. As Miller observed, the negatives revolve around themes of alienation, objectification, and disengagement. The alienating nature of consumer culture is due to its concern with the self and not community. The Eucharist is intended to be communal: one cup and one loaf of bread. It is observed within the gathering of the people and represents the body of Christ entire consuming the Body of Christ. Consumer culture also objectifies people and things for the sake of making them commodities. Within theology is the understanding that all people are inherently created in the image of God. Objectification diminishes the intrinsic value of people and all the created order. Consumer culture leaves no room for compassion if it is for the sake of helping itself and not for the acquisition of more. Consumer culture further encourages disengagement. There is no "other" for which one should be concerned. Within Scripture, however, Jesus speaks often about loving one another, caring for the outcasts, widows, and orphans. Jesus preaches and lives grace

[97] James K.A. Smith, 98.

and love to all. The preliminary responses in this paragraph suggest an alternative narrative, one that may well be sustained within the practice of Eucharistic spirituality undergirded by both the Wesleys' sacramental theology and the Eucharist. The full response, in the face of the challenges of alienation, objectification, and disengagement, appear in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE

## A WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

The incompatible relationship between consumer culture and the church merits a response to the negative effects consumerism has within the church. A straight theological rebuttal is important but is not enough on its own. Consumer society is symptomatic of a deeper cultural desire or dissatisfaction. Consumerism is defined as the commodification of people, values, or things for the sake of making them available for consumption. The desire of consumerism is to acquire, and the goal is always to seek more. The church must first theologically address the problems of consumerism, but then promote renewed vision and practices for life which consider a fuller version of holiness. This response will explore an understanding of Eucharistic theology from the perspective of John and Charles Wesley, the development and weaknesses in Nazarene Eucharistic theology which allow for consumerism's influence and describe a Eucharistic ecclesiology which can counteract the negative effects of consumerism. As Miller asserted, consumerism's tendency to create objectification, alienation, and disengagement are damaging to the church. The Free Church finds itself particularly vulnerable due to the lack of alignment in theology and practice. Though it began by addressing theological deficiencies in its day, the Free Church movement has allowed, in its free form liturgy, consumerism influences to infect its ecclesiology. This is not to say that a withdraw from free form liturgy to a formal High Church tradition is the answer. However, one way forward may be to reexamine Wesleyan Eucharistic theology and practice through its roots in Methodism, American Methodism, and the Church of the Nazarene. This will allow the

Eucharist to inform and renew Free Church ecclesiology into something more robust and capable of withstanding consumerism's influence.

### *a. Understanding Wesleyan Eucharistic Theology*

The Methodist movement sought to reform what appeared as a disconnect between worship and practice. The theological awakening brought by the rigor of the Wesleys spirituality stirred holiness movements throughout the world. Reclaiming an identity in a holy life, the Wesleys affirmed the edifying practices of the means of grace. Among these, John Wesley believed the Eucharist to be vital for the church. Renewing a Wesleyan Eucharistic theology proves important for addressing consumerism within the Free Church tradition.

#### i. Methodism and the Eucharist

John Wesley, the theological forefather of the Wesleyan-holiness movement, along with his brother, Charles, and the Oxford club, called the Eucharist the "chief means of grace." The Methodist movement, like the rise of the Free Church tradition, was a response to deficiencies in contemporary practice. The rise of Methodism within North America became a new denomination where certain sects slowly distanced from their Anglican roots as a formal written liturgy to adopt free form worship. These open practices embraced creativity, but also allowed for open interpretations on local levels where Eucharistic observance may have varied. John Wesley wrote: "If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for the strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity for receiving the Lord's Supper . . ."[98] His high view of the sacrament was not accompanied by a Roman Catholic understanding of transubstantiation, but

[98] John Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion (Sermon 101)," accessed August 21, 2019, https://nts.whdl.org/duty-constant-communion-sermon-101.

by his firm belief in the grace of the sacrament. Nazarene theologian, Rob Staples agrees: "The Eucharist may be understood as that means of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, to which we are invited for repentance, for self-examination, for renewal, for spiritual sustenance, for thanksgiving, for fellowship, for anticipation of the heavenly kingdom, and for celebration in our pilgrimage toward perfection in the image of Christ."[99] The Eucharist is not merely a memorial observance or a commodity, rather it is a channel of the grace of God into the life of the community of faith. Wesley believed it to be the "chief means of grace" precisely because it involves multiple aspects of the life of faith, including other means of grace, such as: reading of the Word, prayer, and communion with God and other believers. As Robert Martin explains, the liturgy and movement within the sacrament effects the reality it rehearses: communion with God and everything living thing.[100] It is important to understand a Wesleyan theology of the Eucharist and how it is a counternarrative to consumerism and a transactional view of the faith. The Eucharist, as a liturgical element, is formational in the life of the church.

John Wesley held a high view of the Eucharist, encouraging his Methodist followers to receive it as often as possible. He believed it was a necessity by the calling of Jesus and a requirement for the strength of the believer. He wrote: "If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for the strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity for receiving the Lord's Supper . . ."[101] He taught that obtaining holiness on earth and life in heaven was possible through the means of grace, one of which is the Lord's Supper. The elements demanded personal

---

[99] Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1991), 202.
[100] Robert K. Martin, "Toward a Wesleyan Sacramental Ecclesiology," *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 1 (January 2013): 29, https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-00901004. "The movement and pattern of the Lord's Supper, then, produces the very reality to which it refers: communion with God and all things in relation to God."
[101] John Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion (Sermon 101)."

examination, repentance, and a trust in God at the time of reception. It was never to be received lightly, but it was to be taken often.

John's brother, Charles, was a renowned hymn writer and theologian in his own right. His hymns often expressed great theological depth and insight. J. Ernest Rattenbury highlights the Wesley brother's belief in the Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper: "Their sense of the Presence of Christ was not of a hidden Christ, or of a Christ who underlay the bread which symbolized His body, but of a present, revealed, living Personality . . ." He continues by including Charles' Hymn No. 116:

> We need not now go up to Heaven
> To bring the long-sought Saviour down,
> Thou art to All already given:
> Thou dost ev'n Now thy Banquet crown,
> To every faithful Soul appear,
> And show thy Real Presence here.[102]

It was evident by the materials left from the Wesley brothers that they held a high view of the sacrament and its influence on the life of the believer through the Presence and grace of Christ. The Wesley's affirmed the historicity of Christ's crucifixion and celebrated it as well as any Zwinglian memorialist, but they also knew Christ was present in some mysterious way. God had appointed the observance of this sacrament as a channel of divine grace by the real presence of Christ.

John Wesley leaned upon Dean Brevint's treatment of the sacrament from *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, which Rattenbury suggests is instrumental to understanding Wesley's theology. This influence was important to Wesley and, subsequently, to Methodist theology. Brevint believes the Eucharist allows us to be partakers of Christ in a way other than hearing the

---

[102] J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley: To Which Is Appended Wesley's Preface Extracted from Brevint's Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice Together with Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), 57.

Word.[103] Wesley affirmed this understanding of the sacrament that it was more than a re-presentation or remembrance. Charles Wesley stressed this nature of the sacrament in No. 42 of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*:

> Fasting He doth and Hearing bless,
> And Prayer can much avail,
> Good Vessels all to draw the Grace
> Out of Salvation's Well
>
> But none like this Mysterious Rite
> Which dying Mercy gave
> Can draw forth all His promis'd Might,
> And all His Will to save.
>
> This is the richest Legacy
> Thou hast on Man bestow'd
> Here chiefly, Lord, we feed on Thee,
> And drink thy precious Blood.[104]

Charles believed this symbolic sacrament is more than just a figure but effective in its nature. Rattenbury summarized the belief of the Wesley brothers that the blood and water are viewed as means of justifying and sanctifying grace. John Wesley held the sacrament to be more than symbol but a means of grace.[105] Unlike the Moravians, who had a clear influence on the Wesley brothers, John and Charles felt that waiting on God's grace necessitated observing the means.[106] Charles wrote how the reception of the outward signs of grace allowed humanity to be irrevocably joined to Jesus' body, soul, humanity, and Spirit.[107] As can be inferred from this

---

[103] Rattenbury, 33. "The end of Holy Communion is to make us partakers of Christ in another manner, than only when we hear His word."
[104] Ibid., 25.
[105] Ibid., 39. "What seems plain here is that the blood and water were means both of justifying and sanctifying grace, as John Wesley claimed this sacrament to be—not only a symbol, but a means of grace."
[106] The Moravian Quietists felt a person should be still and wait for the grace of God to come.
[107] Rattenbury, 45. "We receive outward signs, Charles argues, so that body, soul, and spirit may be inseparably joined to Jesus in His humanity, body, soul, and Spirit."

body of evidence, the Wesleys believed a person should receive the Eucharist (as often as possible), and the Eucharist conveyed the grace of God through the presence of Christ.

Acknowledging their belief in its efficacious nature, how did the Wesleys think the Eucharist influences the lives of people? If it is the chief means of grace, then the Eucharist must bring some transformation. This sacrament, for the Wesleys, was a concrete channel of grace, though mysterious in its nature, God conveyed blessings upon its observation. The manifestation of this grace is found in the recipient and, most importantly, in Christ. The one who receives the elements observes the memorial and sacrificial nature of the sacrament. This honors the death of Christ and redemptive nature of his sacrifice. The sacrament also demonstrates the recipient's trust in the person and grace of Christ. The presence of Christ, though not distinctly present from the transformation of the elements, is mystically present to all who receive. The sacrament is not some empty sign, but effective means of grace, placing those who partake with those who have come before. John Bowmer explains how the Church, in participating in the Eucharist, "re-presents" Jesus' sacrifice in a way which the effects of it are made present. In other words, the Body of Christ (the church) offers the Body.[108] Those who partake are joined by all the Church with those who have been faithful to trust in God. The grace of God takes what is imperfect and redeems it into the image of his body, the body of Christ.

The Eucharist is not only a memorial, a remembrance, but an eschatological reality. Because John and Charles believed it to be a converting ordinance, they urged men and women to partake before conversion.[109] While some organized branches of Christianity excluded non-believers or non-members from receiving the sacrament, the Wesleys believed any measure of

---

[108] John Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre Press, 1951), 186. "In the Eucharist, the Church, as a corporate body of worshipping Christians, re-presents the sacrifice so that its effects become a present reality. It is His Body offering His Body."

[109] Ibid., 107. "that led the Wesleys so insistently to contend for its use by men and women before conversion."

faith should be welcomed. The real presence of Christ is in the sacrament conveying grace, both justifying and sanctifying, in order that those who receive the elements would receive the same Christ they re-present. The Wesleys believed Christ is present both in his sacrifice and in his coming. The Wesleys held to a realized eschatology where the Eucharist becomes a foretaste of the kingdom of God, while also reflecting the banquet of the Lamb described in Revelation 19. Bowmer refers to Dr. C.H. Dodd's treatment of the Methodist's eschatology: "we are neither merely recalling a story out of the past, nor merely expressing and nourishing a hope for the future, but experiencing in one significant rite the reality of the coming of Christ, which is both His coming in humiliation and His coming in Glory."[110] The kingdom of God calls for a new ethic and a new way of life. God's grace effects transformation in the life of the believer. The Eucharist, as part of Christian liturgy, calls for eschatological illumination: a realization that the sacrament does not just point to what is but actualizes what is to come.[111]

John Wesley wanted Christians to know the grace of God, especially the grace channeled through the means, was efficacious. As Dean Blevins notes, Wesley expected a change to occur with the holistic use of the Eucharist, as a means of grace, within both the life of the believer and their group. The grace conveyed realized holiness and righteousness.[112] Wesley viewed participation in the Eucharist as sacrifice of the recipient and of Christ. The believer offers up themselves as a sacrifice, reflecting the same humility as Christ, and receives Christ's life through the Holy Spirit. Egil Grislis describes this sacrifice as a continual offering of oneself to

---

[110] Bowmer, 184.

[111] See Brent Peterson, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology," 5.

[112] Dean G Blevins, "The Means of Grace: Toward a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (1997): 80, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001021005&site=ehost-live. "there was to be an outcome to the holistic use of the means of grace within the life of each person and group. Grace resulted in a life of holiness and righteousness."

God. This offering is regarded as one's identity and material possessions. Thus, the believer leads a life of holiness in anticipation of the heavenly life.[113] Wesley believed this repeated offering and receiving transforms the lives of believers through participation in the life and death of Christ. Wesley was adamant this transformation continued throughout life as the image of God is restored.[114] He also believed Christian holiness necessitated the empowering and purifying grace of God, accompanied by disciplines intended to nurture and reorient one's affections.[115] Additionally, the Eucharist serves as a reminder of a person's full salvation with the risen Christ guiding the journey.[116] The sacrament was considered by Wesley to be one of the ordinances of God for which a believer should be zealous. This passion and fervor is intimately tied with "works of mercy" and love. He wrote: "Let every true believer in Christ apply with all fervency of spirit to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that his heart may be more and more enlarged in love to God and to all mankind."[117] Wesley viewed the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, as a means of God's sanctifying grace which transformed a believer to ever-increasing love for God and their neighbor—a love which manifested itself in works of mercy.

ii. Methodism in America and the Decline of Sacramentalism

---

[113] Egil Grislis, "Wesleyan Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (May 1963): 108, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000687250&site=ehost-live. "As the Christian continually offers to God himself and all that is his, including his material possession, he leads a life that anticipates and is filled with the savor of the heavenly life."

[114] Wesley Tracy, "The Wesleyan Way to Spiritual Formation: Christian Spirituality in the Letters of John Wesley," January 1, 1987, https://nts.whdl.org/wesleyan-way-spiritual-formation-christian-spirituality-letters-john-wesley, 48.

[115] Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 201. "was dependent upon God's grace which empowers and purifies one's affections, but it was also integrally related to disciplines which nurture and reshape those affections."

[116] Ibid., 205.

[117] John Wesley, "On Zeal," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 1991), 470.

Undeniably, Wesleyan Methodism has had a significant impact on Protestant theology in America. The Wesley brothers have been influential through their hymns, teachings, small group dynamics, and polity. One characteristic of Wesleyan theology which appears to have weakened is the importance of the sacraments. Wesleyan and Methodist scholars have noticed a de-emphasis on the Eucharist in favor of a preaching-centered liturgy. This approach, accompanied by the revivalist movements, led to an individual-focused ecclesiology and soteriology, allowing space for consumerism and its influence to infect Free Church tradition.

Wesley emphasized his belief of the church being a community of the Word and Table, however the frequency of sacrament observation in America diminished.[118] Mark Mann identifies two problems which factored into this demise: geography and American Methodist leadership. With the gulf of the Atlantic Ocean between English and American Methodism, inconsistencies developed among the two sects. The divide was too great for consistent contact with John Wesley and, though still seen as the founder of the movement, his influence lessened upon the American colonies. The advent of the American Revolution further strained the relationship. Maintaining his Anglican roots, Wesley believed only ordained preachers could administer the sacraments. He also insisted the preachers would attend Anglican churches to receive the Eucharist themselves. However, the War of Independence created a disdain for all things English. As Mann observes, throughout the war there were few priests to oversee the sacrament, therefore, the worship of Methodists became preaching-centered.[119] Additionally, Mann notes American Methodists preference for extemporaneous worship over the formal

[118] Although this was in part to a lack of ordained clergy who could administer the sacraments.
[119] Mark H Mann, "Wesley, Word, and Table: The Rise and Fall of Eucharistic Practice in Early Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (2016): 63, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiGFE170206000115&site=ehost-live. "So, for the entire duration of the war, there had been few priests to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and Methodist worship by default became preaching-centered."

liturgical prayers. The cultural division which developed created a divide in the liturgies of Wesleyan and American Methodism.

The divide was further expanded through American influence. The second problem Mann identified was in the leadership of American Methodism. Wesley had ordained Whatcoat and Vasey as priests, or elders, and Thomas Coke to be the superintendent (bishop). Coke was instructed to ordain Francis Asbury upon his arrival to also serve as superintendent. Though Coke had an Anglican background and general agreement with Wesley's ecclesiology, Asbury became the prominent leader of American Methodism. Asbury did not hold the same ideals towards worship and the prominence of the Eucharist. Randy Maddox illustrates how this attitude became a trend throughout Methodism due to the new members of Methodist societies, many of whom originated from traditions that did not celebrated the Eucharist as often as Wesley prescribed.[120] Mann observes Asbury's concerns over the divisiveness of frequent communion and its impracticality. In fact, Asbury condensed Wesley's *Sunday Service of the Methodists*, the liturgical resource for the movement, from 314 pages to 37. Mann notes a major shift in Methodist sacramental emphasis due to these changes. In fact, he suggests within a year of Wesley's death the Eucharist was relegated from the "chief means of grace" to something of a special event observed once a quarter.[121] American Methodism did not forgo the sacrament altogether, but it had dropped from the weekly liturgy. The Eucharist was also limited to those official and in good standing. Mann laments the tragic shift of the sacrament from a means of

---

[120] Maddox, 202. "Many came to Methodist societies from non-conformist traditions that did not offer communion as frequently as Wesley recommended."

[121] Mann, 64. "No more than a year after Wesley's death (and likely linked to the fact that Wesley was no longer around to oppose this marginalization) the Eucharist had been demoted from the chief of the 'means of grace' to a 'special event' to be celebrated roughly once per quarter." Although celebrated less frequently, the idea of a devaluing of the sacrament is contested by some Methodist historians such as Lester Ruth. See Lester Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*, (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005).

grace—including that of conversion—to a means of overseeing discipline and Methodist membership.[122] Preaching became central to the American liturgy, and with the advent of revivalism, the altar call became the primary means of response.

The centrality of preaching extended into nineteenth century Methodism. Bowmer says Wesley's tradition of deep sacramentalism had been forgotten and the Communion services which had been so well attended were nonexistent.[123] Early Methodism had embraced the sacramental and evangelical. Bowmer contends evangelism is liable to emphasis the individual over communal worship and devalue the place of the corporate body within the life of faith. Wesley believed the corrective for this possibility was to underscore the value of the means of grace, particularly the Eucharist.[124] Rattenbury cites Wesley's death as a source of the decline in Methodist sacramentalism. He also notes the division of ordained and un-ordained preachers and the separation of Methodism from the established church. He believed the fundamental problem was in anything which undermined the corporate nature of worship.[125] As Mann and Bowmer have illustrated, the loss of the weekly Eucharistic participation left the church with only the Word. Slowly, communal worship became centered on the individual's response to the preached Word and one's response to the Word at the altar. This understanding remained through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. The renowned scholar Geoffrey Wainwright illustrates this by citing the decision of the 1971 World Methodist Council on the use of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. The council admitted: "the eucharistic development of the Wesleys

---

[122] Mann, 65. "The Lord's Table had been transformed from a means of grace and converting ordinance to a means of enforcing Methodist membership and discipline."
[123] Bowmer, ix. "rich legacy of sacramental devotion was lost and the crowded early morning Communion services, which were a feature of Methodism in the eighteenth century, became unknown."
[124] Ibid., 201. "Evangelism is always prone to emphasize the individual approach to God and to devaluate the duties and privileges of corporate worship. Wesley corrected this by stressing the means of grace, especially the Lord's Supper."
[125] See Rattenbury, 148-158.

and the hymns of Charles Wesley are no index at all to the place of Holy Communion in the life, thought and devotion of modern Methodists."[126] Despite the continued emphasis on the Word, however, Wainwright sensed a renewal in the 1980s towards Wesley's theology on the Eucharist and traditional liturgical worship.

### iii. The Church of the Nazarene and the Eucharist

Narrowing a theology of the sacraments to a Wesleyan Holiness context, the Church of the Nazarene sensed the need to return to a more wholistic understanding of theology. Attempting to renew their Wesleyan roots, Nazarenes wanted to embrace the sacraments with greater appreciation. By anchoring the Eucharistic liturgy within the *Book of Common Prayer*, the tradition favored accepting a more informed ritual of the sacrament. However, the belief within the church has not always found consistency in practice.

Greathouse and Dunning provide a summary of the Eucharist for the Church of the Nazarene. They define sacrament as a ceremony or reality which mediates the divine into human experience and conveying grace through participation.[127] They proceed to list three interpretations of how this grace is mediated. The first is what they call "sacramentarianism," where grace is conveyed through the sacramental action rightly observed, regardless of personal preparation or condition. The second view is that sacraments are merely symbols—only representations of divine reality.[128] Greathouse and Dunning reject these perspectives as independent positions. They offer a third alternative, a "mediating position," where the sacrament does not inherently mediate grace, but is more than a sign. They write: "Grace may

---

[126] Geoffrey Wainwright, Introduction to *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, by John Wesley and Charles Wesley (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), xiii.

[127] William M. Greathouse and H. Ray Dunning, *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology* (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 1982), 101.

[128] Their definition of symbol does not conform to that of Schmemann or Robert Jenson, a Lutheran theologian whose position will be discussed later.

indeed be conveyed contingent upon the faith of the recipient."[129] Turning to the Eucharist in particular, it functions two ways: as remembrance of Christ's salvific action and as proclamation of the availability of forgiveness of sins.

They further discuss the contested doctrine of the presence of Christ within the sacraments. They describe the positions of transubstantiation, Luther's consubstantiation, Calvin, and Zwingli's memorial observance.[130] Seeking to interpret their tradition, the Church of the Nazarene, within one of these historical positions, they discover it does not commit to any. Their only conclusion is the efficacy of the sacrament to maintain the memory of Christ's Atonement by observing it as a corporate reality.[131] They promote its regular observance as necessary to right Christian worship.

Unfortunately, their sacramental theology lacks substance or definition. They have difficulty in specifically naming what or how grace is conveyed within the sacraments; only that grace is mediated. Further, despite not accepting a particular doctrine on the presence of Christ within the Eucharist, their conclusions most resemble Zwingli. They do not claim the presence of Christ within the sacrament or its enactment of divine reality. The authors seem to relegate participation to receiving the sacrament and observance as proclamation of the Gospel. This sacramental theology appears insufficient compared to the fullness of Christian tradition.

Rob Staples provides a much fuller definition of sacramental theology within the Wesleyan-holiness tradition of the Church of the Nazarene. He prefaces his work by qualifying his writing as normative rather than descriptive. He did not believe it was feasible to explain

---

[129] Greathouse and Dunning, 102.

[130] Their summary of these positions follows closely with H. Orton Wiley's definitions in his *Christian Theology*, volume III, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1943), 157. Wiley, though, does point to an eschatological dimension of the sacraments in that the Eucharist is a "seal of the covenant of redemption" (206).

[131] Greathouse and Dunning, 109. "keep alive the memory of the Atonement and to make it contemporary reality."

various practices and beliefs within the tradition. His purpose instead focused on developing a vision of the sacraments as they ought to be in relation to the heritage of Wesley. He defines sacramental theology "as the theological perspective that see the physical as potentially the vehicle of the spiritual. . . . It is the perspective that sees matter not as essentially evil nor as the enemy of the spirit, but as a carrier of divine grace."[132] He qualifies by saying this does not mean salvific grace is available in the material, but that they can become means by which God's grace is mediated. This is the position of John Wesley where sacraments are "outward signs of an inward grace," a definition Staples uses throughout his text. The physical is a space wherein the spiritual may dwell. Staples equates this with the Incarnation where the Word was made flesh.

Observing the sacrament of the Eucharist is an act of remembrance. It is more than merely a token acknowledgement of Christ's death and resurrection. The Eucharist makes the "remembered real to us in the present."[133] The very real elements of the sacrament are metaphorically pointing beyond themselves to something greater. Expounding upon the nature of sacraments, Staples likens it to playacting and ceremony. Birth, marriage, and death are significant events in life, marked by ritualized ceremonies and memorials. Staples argues there are two important events in the life of a believer: the forgiveness of sins/receiving new life in Christ and growth in the life of holiness. These events are marked by the sacraments. The Eucharist functions in this way: "Let this act of eating and drinking represent our continual need for nourishment by the grace vouchsafed to us by Jesus Christ."[134] As opposed to somber or gloomy atmospheres of worship, Staples suggests the sacrament should be an occasion of celebration. It is a "supper" after all. Cautioning against frivolity, he does encourage a more

[132] Staples, 63.
[133] Ibid., 68-69.
[134] Ibid., 79.

robust interpretation of the Eucharist. He writes: "The Lord's Supper is also a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet in God's everlasting kingdom, and as such it should be a harbinger of that ultimate joy."[135] Once again, the sign of the sacrament points to something beyond itself, a reality made present—if only impartially. Cosmically, he wrestles with the notion of a sacramental universe. It is the idea in which the canonical sacraments are a concentrated part of a greater sacramental sense. Creation itself, said to be God's first book of revelation, is seen from this view as consecrated to point to the Creator rather than a historical redemptive work. Creation and Redemption are not two separate activities, but part of one act of the Divine. Staples suggests the reason Protestant sacramental theology has focused upon baptism and the Eucharist is due to their focus. He says: "Although there is continuity between nature and grace, the sacraments focus ultimately on grace, and speak authoritatively only to faith."[136] It is their relation to God's special revelation which decidedly marks them as sacraments of Protestant worship. Staples does leave open the possibility here for discussion.

Subsequently, Staples writes on identifying the meaning of a sacrament before moving to a description of baptism and a dialogue on the Eucharist. Protestant Reformers developed three criteria when determining the nature of a sacrament. The first is that it must have been established or initiated by Jesus. The second is it must contain a physical element (water, bread, and wine). Third, it must be attended by a biblical promise. In this promise is a requirement of faith and an understanding that the sign itself is not a sacrament. This is likely to dissuade false practice or an incomplete observance of the ritual.[137] It is more than eating a piece of bread or immersing oneself in water. It is by these criteria Protestants have rejected other suggested or

[135] Staples, 80.
[136] Ibid., 84.
[137] Ibid., 92-93.

adopted sacraments, such as: ordination, marriage, or foot washing. Despite discussing an openness in theological circles of expanding the number of sacraments, Staples worries this may trivialize the currently accepted sacraments. The sacraments are a means of grace, channels by which, through right observance, God conveys grace. They are more than indicators of God, they are "operative symbols."[138] Further, the sacraments function as safeguards of the biblical faith. Staples contends that the sacraments defend against the gnostic notion of a disembodied spirit. The doctrine of creation speaks of all being God, including the physical realms. They also counter a dualistic idea that God operates outside of time. The Incarnation of Christ most definitively proves God's working within history. The sacraments also guard against a pantheistic notion that all is God. Staples argues this belief diminishes God's transcendence. The existence of the sacraments as symbols proves the Otherness of God.[139]

Staples' discussion on the Eucharist specifically focuses on similar arguments already discussed. Where he differs, however, is by placing Wesley more in line with Calvin's theology on the Presence of Christ at the Eucharist. Calvin believed Christ's real body to be ascended (as attested by the Creeds). His Presence, therefore, at the Eucharistic ritual is spiritual in nature. This is to reject the notions of transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and memorialism. Wesley's belief has been described as the dynamic Presence of Christ, wherein this Presence is located with God's action rather than a bodily or local presence. He additionally describes the images of the Eucharist as thanksgiving, commemorating,[140] a sacrifice of self, fellowship of believers, and a foretaste of God's kingdom. For Staples, the Eucharist is the sacrament of sanctification, that is a means by which transformation of life can occur through its teaching and symbolic nature.

---

[138] Staples, 106ff
[139] Ibid., 116
[140] He prefers the language of commemoration over memorial.

Staples' description of sacraments as means of grace does not include Wesley's expanded definition. Wesley names various ways God communicates grace to the life of the believer. The question is whether this oversight was intentional. Though he does allow for the addition of sacraments, Staples disregards adding more for fear of trivializing the currently accepted sacraments. In Wesley's definition of the means of grace, we could say something operates sacramentally, though Staples would discourage the idea it could be a sacrament. He seems to go to great lengths to preserve the work of God's grace within exceptional events of the Christian life. This is suggestive of an attempt to substantiate his purpose of elevating the sacraments as more than a moment in the ritual and renewing an appreciation for their place in Christian worship.

Whether local congregations tend to adopt either Greathouse and Dunning's or Staples' interpretation is important for discerning the rise of consumerism within the tradition. Not that the earlier authors had poor Eucharistic theology, but their lack of description in the practical implications for ecclesiology and discipleship could lead to a more memorialized observance. Staples, on the other hand, outright rejected that interpretation to embrace a more sacramental perspective of the church. The free-form liturgy, characteristic of the Free Church tradition, has allowed local congregations to determine their liturgical structure and rituals, which consequently informs their theological and ecclesiastical identity.

iv. Eucharistic Theology in Wesleyanism and the Church of the Nazarene

John Wesley called for a holiness of heart and life. It was neither a faith relegated to the cognitive arena nor one simply of "good feelings." The life of faith is concerned with every aspect of a person's life. An emphasis on holiness is a belief in the redemption of all things for the glory of God. It is for this reason a renewal of sacramental theology in a Free Church setting

is needed. A Wesleyan theology of the Eucharist embraces a stronger formational and missional core, inviting a Free Church setting to resist consumerism's tendency to view the Christian faith as transactional and individualistic. The Eucharist by its very sacramental nature forms the believer and the community of faith, inviting them to join in the redemptive work of God. It is a movement outside of oneself into the Otherness of God.

Within the Wesleyan-holiness movement, and in ecclesiology of its own right, there has been a tension between the church as institution and the church as a life of Jesus. Martin rightly addresses this tension: "As communion in Christ through the Spirit is manifest among a people, there is church: a gathering that re-presents the divine life to some extent, right then and there. In this respect, church is not first an institution or community that secondarily strives to be godly. Rather, church is first godliness manifest in institutional form."[141] The church is first and foremost the people of God. Consumerism has not aided the church in discovering its own identity. However, the church, rather than being a building which can be marketed for faith, is the compassionate people of God.

This transformation, as stated throughout, occurs partly through the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. Martin further explains how this sacramental movement occurs through the liturgy. He finds a pattern within Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians, whereby the people gather, offer, share, and extend. Martin defines the gathering as bringing all that one is and has, in faith, to a God who promises to receive this offering and transform the people into the body of Christ in that moment.[142] It is the recognition of the limitedness of humanity and the acknowledgment of the sufficiency of God's grace. Historically, the offering was a contribution from all members

[141] Martin, 28.
[142] Ibid., 34. "We gather all that we are and all that we have with the promise that God will receive our offering and transform us into the body of Christ right then and there."

towards the Holy Meal. Everyone sacrificed to contribute to that which everyone would receive. Martin further notes on the offering as a bringing of all things in communion with other people as a necessary movement of worship, one which prepares believers for sharing life in Christ.[143] It is a communal act of surrender. The sharing follows this offering of the people. It reminds the believer of the compassionate life of Christ. Martin explains how Paul chastened the Corinthians, particularly the ruling elite, for approaching the Lord's Supper as another social meal. By relating the sacrament to the Roman society, the people furthered the disregard and mistreatment of the poor.[144] The Eucharistic act had become no more than a meal with friends. The sacrament, however, is a means by which the compassionate life of Christ is consumed and perpetuated by the community of faith. Finally, there is the extending, whereby the people are sent forth and blessed to further their communion in Christ to people beyond the threshold of the community of faith. Those who are outside are offered the Eucharistic banquet.[145] The movement of the Eucharistic liturgy invites the believer to a holiness of heart and life, where all that one has and all that one is becomes transformed by the grace of God.

The Eucharist cannot be confined to a memorialist interpretation if the church intends to preserve its efficacy as a sacrament and resist consumerism's influence. It is historically, narratively, symbolically, sacramentally, and eschatologically significant. Sweeden writes: "A cloistered eucharist is a contradiction of both its sacramental nature and liturgical function. The thanksgiving that is the eucharist engenders a full-bodied response to God's gifts. . . . The

---

[143] Martin, 35. "Offering all that we are and have to God in communion with others is one of the essential acts of Christian worship and life that prepares the way for sharing our lives in Christ."

[144] Ibid., 36. "Paul criticized the Corinthians (more accurately, the ruling elite) for treating the Lord's Supper as if it were a societally conventional meal. They had perverted the Lord's Supper into a typical Roman meal in which the poor were disregarded and mistreated."

[145] Ibid. "The Sending Forth and Blessing, then, extends our communion in Christ to others, especially those beyond the typical boundaries of our Christian community. We extend the Eucharistic banquet into the highways and byways."

transformation of the bread corresponds to the transformation of human work and the eschatological, forward-looking dynamic of the eucharist gives meaning to the bread and to the work of human hands."[146] The sacrament brings together the past (memorial/remembrance), the present, and the future (anticipation). Geoffrey Wainwright further highlights this eschatological nature of the Eucharist:

> But more important will be the fact that common participation in the one eucharist will allow the Lord creatively to bring us closer to the perfect peace and unity that will mark the final kingdom; for such a eucharist will be the occasion for the Lord to exercise the three eschatological functions of casting out from us in judgment what is amiss in us, of uniting us closer to himself in divine fellowship, and of joining us together in common enjoyment of his presence and gifts.[147]

The eschatological dimension cannot be overlooked, for it is the *telos* of the life of holiness. Contrasted to consumerism, which desires the acquisition of new things, the life of holiness desires and anticipates the redemption of all things. Wesleyan Eucharistic theology honors and values all dimensions of life. Certainly, this is not reserved to those in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition. Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas states: "What each eucharistic community, therefore, was meant to reveal, was not part of Christ but the whole Christ and not a partial or local unity but the full eschatological unity of all in Christ."[148] While other views of the Eucharist are reviewed in Appendix One, the full unity in Christ will not be divided by denomination, class, ethnicity, race, sex, or gender. It will not be characterized by economic status or education level. That which is fully Christ is represented by the Eucharistic community.

---

[146] Joshua R Sweeden, "Ordinary Practice as Ecclesial Holiness: Intersections of Work, Sacrament, and Liturgy," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (2014): 90, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001972051&site=ehost-live.

[147] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (Akron, OH: O S L Publications, 2002), 177.

[148] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 154.

### *b. Eucharistic Ecclesiology Addressing Consumerism*

Taking into considering a Wesleyan sacramental perspective, a Eucharistic ecclesiology may be formed for the Free Church traditions, specifically the Church of the Nazarene, which addresses the problems of consumerism within the church and society. This ecclesiology will specifically consider consumer's tendency towards objectification, alienation, and disengagement by refocusing the personal narrative around the biblical and Eucharistic themes of communion, community, and compassion. The first point will examine how a Wesleyan Eucharistic perspective can counteract the problems of consumerism. The second point will discuss the theological arguments for how this can counter consumer culture within the Free Church tradition.

#### i. Wesleyan Eucharistic Theology Counteracts the Influence of Consumerism

John Wesley believed the "means of grace" were channels by which God transforms the individual and the community of faith, and, of these "means," the Eucharist was considered primary. The Eucharist is more than an ancient ritual of the church. It is more than a recited or obligatory practice. The Eucharist is a sacrament, a sign in every sense of the word. It points to something beyond itself. It directs the believer to the heart and life of God and, as Wesley understood, serves as a sacred moment in the Presence of God. A Wesleyan theology of the Eucharist counters the pressures of consumerism and encourages believers towards a life of holiness.

A call for renewal in the church is a call towards reclaiming the traditional theology of Word and Table, which encourages and edifies a life of holiness. Neither is this to say a full reclamation of the *Book of Common Prayer* liturgy nor a weekly observance of the Eucharist is

the ideal solution. Where the preached Word alone has opened invitations for the grace of God to transform many lives, there is a sense among the church that this transformation has not taken deep root. If the individualism of culture is buried within the person and the believer does not allow the work of God to change it, then they will not experience the full transformation of the kingdom of God. The basis of this call to renewal is founded upon the Eucharist being the element of the church's liturgy which will, as one of the many important means of grace, effect this change through the power of the very grace it channels. Diane Leclerc observes:

> Persons brought up in the Wesleyan Holiness churches have generally not been well instructed as to the potential of the Eucharist as a means for the promotion of holiness. For them, the very normality, regularity, and ritualistic nature of the sacrament militates against such an understanding. The invitation to the Lord's Supper is not particularly heard as a call to holiness.[149]

The descendants of Wesleyan Methodism have neglected the encouragement of "Constant Communion" for the sake of freedom of worship. Randy Maddox, in fact, notices Wesley's insistence on the grace of God through the means as necessary for our ability to respond to that grace. Wesley "repeatedly denounced the folly of those who desire 'the end without the means' – i.e., those who expect growth in faith and holiness without regular participation in the means through God has chosen to convey grace."[150] A spirituality without practice is limited and unhealthy. Leclerc emphasizes Wesley's belief in the Eucharist as a means of grace. She further claims the means of grace are "the ways we connect with God and participate in our relationship with him. As we open ourselves to God, God pours his own life and the grace we need into our hearts. When that happens, we will change; we will be spiritually formed and transformed."[151]

---

[149] Diane Leclerc, "Finding the Means to the End," in *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, ed. Diane Leclerc and Mark A. Maddix (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 85, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=520033.

[150] Maddox, 196.

[151] Leclerc, "Finding the Means to the End," 85.

The Eucharist, as the chief means of grace, is also one way God transforms an individual ethic to a communal ethic. It is holiness in action. This can be viewed as communion (with God), community (Church), and compassion (Others) which directly counter consumerism's tendency toward objectification, alienation, and disengagement.

One of the many benefits the sacrament provides is its diverse voice. Rob Staples observes five images from the Eucharist which reveal its multifaceted meaning. The "Thanksgiving to the Father" emphasizes the festive nature of the sacrament. Unfortunately, since the Middle Ages it has been viewed as a solemn work of the church. Staples wants the church to reclaim this "thanks-giving" action for the works and promises of God. The "Commemoration of Christ" highlights the sacrament as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. The remembrance, however, is not just of who Christ was, but a remembrance of who Christ is now. The "Sacrifice of Ourselves" stresses the words of Paul in Romans that we should be a "living sacrifice." Our worship, Staples argues, is an offering to God. The "Fellowship of the Faithful" keys in on the Greek word *koinonia*, which means the fellowship Christians have as they are united in Christ. The Body of Christ become the body as it receives the Body. The "Foretaste of the Kingdom" accentuates the anticipatory nature of the sacrament. It points toward the Messianic Banquet. The Eucharist is a "first taste," but not a "full taste" of God's kingdom. It emphasizes the "already" and "not yet" nature of the kingdom of God.[152] It is in these themes we notice the values of Wesleyan-holiness sacramentality which find themselves expressed in the Eucharist.

The grace of the Eucharist can be found within the ritual. Holiness is viewed as Christ-likeness in Wesleyan-holiness theology. The values of holiness are the values which Christ

[152] Staples, 229-247.

exhibited and commissioned for the church. Remembrance offers perspective on the forgiveness of God. Jesus said: "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."[153] Paul also advised self-reflection in 1 Corinthians 11 before receiving the Eucharist. Any wrong should be righted and a proper attitude of worship should accompany the believer when receiving the sacrament. These scriptures, together with Staples' observations, promote the value of reconciliation. Similarly, they also point to the unification of the church. Staples emphasized the communal aspect of the Eucharist as one of its meanings. The Eucharist also encourages the value of kenotic compassion. Staples views the sacrament as an offering of the self. He writes: "In Wesleyan Theology, therefore, the Lord's table is a place where we can come and offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices,' thereby receiving sanctifying grace."[154] Further, Paul called the Eucharist a "participation in the body of Christ."[155] If we consider the Eucharist a remembrance of Christ's life and death, as well as, an anticipation of the kingdom of God, then we can view the Eucharist as promoting the compassionate life of Christ for the believer. This grace of reconciliation and forgiveness are vital in countering the effects of alienation within consumerism and promoting community in the life of the church.

The Eucharist informs the church of its calling and identity: affirming its communion with God, combatting objectification, affirming community, and living the faith out as compassion. As a sacrament it is more than a signpost: it is a channel of God's grace. The fundamental transformation required of all believers is impossible without the grace of God. The Wesleys believed God's grace was channeled through various means ordained for this very

[153] Matthew 6:14-17 NIV.
[154] Staples, 240.
[155] 1 Corinthians 10:16 NIV.

purpose. The Eucharist, they taught, was the primary or chief means of God's grace to the people. The very real presence of Christ in the Eucharist directs this grace onto and into the life of the believer. Subsequently, the church experiences a renewed sense of values and ethics. The rampant individualism of the culture is changed into a communal consciousness. The people of God, offering themselves through the sacrament, receive the life of God and the values of the kingdom of God. Brent Peterson celebrates this powerful means of grace: "The church is sent *by* and *with* the Holy Spirit to continue the doxological ministry of the incarnation. At the Table, the church is renewed as the body of Christ and is sent out to be Christ's broken body and shed blood in the world."[156] Preaching-centered worship can certainly make a similar claim, but it often is followed with individual response. Consider a renewal of Wesleyan-holiness liturgy where preaching leads to a response in the Eucharist. A response which focuses on the corporate nature of the kingdom of God. The life of the church, through regular attendance to this means of grace, will be consistently shaped by the values and grace of God. The individualism will give way to forgiveness and reconciliation. The body of Christ will experience unification as it receives the very body which calls it into existence. The people of God, in offering themselves as "living sacrifices," will receive the very presence of Christ whose call to and life of compassion saturated his ministry. It is time for renewal in the Wesleyan-holiness liturgy—a re-claiming of Wesleyan heritage. It is time for the people who herald the "call to holiness" to draw near to the Table where Wesley claimed God's grace would sanctify the lives of God's people, affirming their identity as God's children, not as objects. The grace to realize community and not live in alienation. It is also the grace to live the faith as a life of compassion and not be disengaged.

[156] Brent Peterson, *Created to Worship: God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*, February 14, 2012 edition (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2012), 176.

As liturgy informs daily practice, the Eucharist transforms the life of the believer to that of compassion. The work of the church in the corporate gathering extends to the work of the people in the world; it informs the life of holiness. Josh Sweeden observes a problem with under-emphasizing social holiness due to an over-emphasis on personal holiness and not on holy living through the corporate body of the church.[157] Referencing Alexander Schmemann's work, *For the Life of the World*, Sweeden remarks how liturgy "not only *informs* understandings of work, but is continuously *performed* through good work. In this way, liturgical practices are not abstract rituals confined to corporate gatherings, but extensions of the people of God into the world and in everyday life and practice."[158] The liturgy of the Eucharist, including the grace it channels and the values it proclaims, extends to the work of the people in daily life. The life of the people is invariably transformed by the liturgy of the church. The Eucharist, in particular, informs the work of the people and transforms it from ordinary to holy. Rebekah Miles observes through Charles Wesley's journals how the Eucharist shaped his work: "Both the Lord's Supper and the deathbed provided a place where the veil between the visible and invisible realms became thin, and both Christ and the communion of the saints were made powerfully present."[159] The Lord's Table becomes a powerful place of transformation—not just of the extraordinary cleansing of the heart, but in the daily practices of the people. Paul Chilcote affirms this formational work of the sacrament in shaping the desires of the heart. He says it "draws all the followers of Jesus into a community shaped by the cross and resurrection . . ."[160] It also "forms a missional community

---

[157] Sweeden, 79.
[158] Ibid., 84.
[159] Rebekah Miles, "Eucharist and Ethics," in *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*, ed. Jason E. Vickers (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2016), 204.
[160] Paul W. Chilcote, "Eucharist and Formation," in *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*, ed. Jason E. Vickers (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2016), 192.

for witness and service in the world."[161] Participation in the life of the church should necessarily include participation in the sacrament of Eucharist. This means of grace radically informs and transforms the life of the people.

This transformation of the life of the believer can be attributed to the Eucharist as an element of the liturgy. The rejection of consumerism can occur through the daily practices of the believer. Theologians have written and believed in the formational aspect of liturgy. James K.A. Smith recognized the pattern of imitation and practice, characteristics which are part of liturgy. In his study of rite involvement and its impact on community formation, Henry Frundt noticed the impact of liturgy in that development. He explains: "liturgy can initiate community because interests of belief which a geographical group ritually expresses can become the basis of conscious primary group experience. The need to prolong the primary group experience can in turn lead to social interaction."[162] The liturgy proves to be formative in community development, as well as in moral/ethical formation, as Edward Kilmartin describes. He discusses this process: "The phenomenon of liturgy may be described as the way in which the global perception of the life of faith that impregnates and structures the lives of individual believers and their life in common is expressed in their particular way of celebrating their new life in Christ."[163] Liturgy becomes a way of instructing and forming the life of the believer and establishing individuals together into community. Liturgical formation occurs partly through the presentation of the scriptural narrative. The Apostle Paul, in his New Testament letters, intimates how the sacrament presents the whole story of redemption and becomes a rehearsal of the life they are called to live

[161] Chilcote, 194.
[162] Henry J Frundt, "Rite Involvement and Community Formation," *Sociological Analysis (Worcester, Mass.)* 30, no. 2 (1969): 92.
[163] Kilmartin, "Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church," 527.

as a community of faith.[164] The liturgical action provides the opportunity for believers to be grounded theologically as the people of God. As Morgan writes: "It influences behavior, even when not perceived overtly, as a time of stopping and realigning one's identity with Christ and his teachings, especially in a contemporary world where times of personal reflection are rare. It cements relationships, both with God and his people."[165] This continual imitation and practice informs and transforms the believer. It becomes a pedagogy of the redemption narrative of scripture. This repeated action of the people becomes a means of grace to combat the effects of consumerism in the life of the church.

Sacraments are more than instructional, though. Preaching is often considered the informative element of the Christian liturgy, a dispensing of information, though as a prophetic element it is more than that. However, sacraments become complimentary to the ministry of the Word. As Gordon Smith writes: "The teaching-learning of the church is ritually articulated in the Lord's Supper: we have heard the Word, and now we receive the Word, allowing it to dwell richly within us (Col. 3:16)."[166] The sacramental dimension of the Eucharist functions more than just as an informative ritual. It is a culmination of the liturgy itself. Brinkman argues that the Eucharist functions in a soteriological, ecclesiastical, symbolic, and eschatological way. In particular as a symbol, the Eucharist brings "us in touch with the earth as God's creation. [The symbolic components] teach us how the earth is also included in God's salvation. And it is precisely the material aspect of the sacrament which confronts us with the 'hard' and 'realistic' aspects of Christ's death and resurrection. His life, death and resurrection are also a matter of

[164] Sampley, 935.
[165] Morgan, 455.
[166] Gordon Smith, 196.

flesh and blood. It touches our bodily existence in its centre."[167] The symbolic nature of the Eucharist affects our formation and actions. In fact, Richard Rohr argues that it has to change us. If the Christian liturgy does not speak to fundamental human existence, people will search for something which does:

> Liturgy will change lives and invite humanity to God when it addresses real life issues at real life moments in believable and credible symbols. Right now, our people have learned to create their own rituals and altars at Columbine, Oklahoma City, and ground zero. They have created wailing walls in Washington, D.C., and healing murals in every inner-city ghetto. There are monuments of remembrance in front of every city hall and rituals of joy and renewal by fringe groups on every spring and summer solstice. . . . People are inherently sacramental.[168]

Rohr has observed a sacramental nature to humanity which begs them to seek symbols of expression which help narrate their life. Ideally, Christian liturgy would be the end of their search. The Eucharist, as symbol, provides the framework by placing the believer into the narrative of the Gospel, giving them an identity beyond what consumerism would attempt to objectify as a means to its end.

The formational element of the liturgy brings about a reordering of the self and the church. It invites the believer to discover who they are in Christ, as well as orienting the church to realize their place as the body who consumes the Body. James K.A. Smith, challenging the false liturgies of culture, writes: "A more holistic response is to intentionally recalibrate the unconscious, to worship well, to immerse ourselves in liturgies that are indexed to the kingdom of God precisely so that even our unconscious desires and longings—the affective, under-the-hood ways we intend the world—are indexed to God and what God wants for his world."[169] This

---

[167] Martien E. Brinkman, "The Church as Sacrament of the Kingdom: A Reformed Commentary," *Exchange* 37, no. 4 (October 2008): 506, https://doi.org/10.1163/157254308X340422.
[168] Richard Rohr, "We Should Ask Why Few Transformations Happen in Church," *National Catholic Reporter* 38, no. 16 (February 22, 2002): 8.
[169] James K.A. Smith, 23-24.

reordering of the self is an awakening to the narrative of God. It is allowing oneself to be formed by the liturgy and to be a recipient of God's grace. Cavanaugh goes further to explain the differing narratives of Christianity and consumerism:

> In the Christian tradition, detachment from material goods means using them as a means to a greater end, and the greater end is greater attachment to God and to our fellow human beings. In consumerism, detachment means standing back from all people, times, and places, and appropriating our choices for private use. Consumerism supports an essentially individualistic view of the human person, in which each consumer is a sovereign chooser. In the Christian tradition, the use of material things is meant to be a common use, for the sake of a larger body of people.[170]

The formation which occurs is counter to the narrative of consumerism. Rather than consume and abuse, the Gospel calls the believer to seek the fulfillment of all things in God. While consumerism is individualistic, Christianity is compassionate and other-seeking. Dan Connors discovered this formational action of the liturgy, particularly in the Eucharist. He writes: "The sharing in his Body and Blood that unites me to Him and to everyone else, the Communion that sends me out to do as He has done . . . the liturgical ritual of the Church is helping to shape me into who I am and what I do, including the decisions I make, the way I deal with family, friends, and coworkers, and the sins I repent."[171] Sacrament as imitation and practice forms the life of the believer within the narrative of God's redemptive history.

This formation is not reservedly individualized; ultimately, it is a communal action. Cavanaugh reminds us how we participate in the Eucharist as a body. As individuals, we become part of a greater whole, moving away from ourselves as the center and placed in the larger context of a community of faith.[172] Morgan furthers his discussion by stating: "It is in this ritual meal that members most recognize their connection to others, which gives a sense of solidarity

---

[170] Cavanaugh, loc. 581.
[171] Dan Connors, "What Am I Doing Here?," *Catholic Digest* 71, no. 6 (April 2007): 50.
[172] Cavanaugh, loc. 603.

with the community as a whole and a sense of significance to individuals within that community."[173] As Frundt had discussed the characteristic of ritual to promote community development, so too does the Eucharist bring communal formation. It promotes unity and connection among the body of believers. Additionally, as Srikantha states: "inasmuch as this sacrament looks forward to the eschaton, it acts as a measure that shapes our reordering of things in the present with a view toward the future. The eucharist, as a measure of the church, highlights the fact that the church is a community brought together by the "primal events" of the death and resurrection of Christ."[174] The Eucharist serves to reorient the congregation in its place as the body of Christ. This occurs within the narrative of the Gospel, bringing the church to also become a participant in God's redemptive history.

This redemption occurs in part within the relationships of the body of believers. Bordeianu speaks to this unity which can occur by discussing the place of the Eucharist within Orthodox and Catholic relations. His contention is that:

> The unity between the Orthodox and Catholic churches will be a full reality only when they reestablish eucharistic communion between them. At that point, the eucharist would be both a sign of and a means toward greater unity: a sign, because there would be no more church-dividing theological issues between them, there would be a considerable degree of episcopal communion, and, most importantly, there would be a strong bond of love between the two families of the united church.[175]

The Eucharist is a common ground among Christian denominations. Though different theological interpretations exist, the sacraments themselves are characteristic of Christian liturgy. The Eucharist in particular is considered central to Orthodox and Catholic liturgy. Denominational relationships aside, Guyette believes in the Eucharist as a means of general

---

[173] Morgan, 449.
[174] Stephen Srikantha, "Semiotics and Daniel Hardy's Eucharistic Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 4 (2015): 636.
[175] Radu Bordeianu, "Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Retrieving Eucharistic Ecclesiology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 255.

Christian unity. He writes: "If we do now have to confess that our churches are sadly divided in their sacramental practices, based in part on differing interpretations of the sixth chapter of John, there is yet a very great potential for friendships that reach across these boundaries and divisions, if we are willing to embrace Jesus' command to love one another as we find it in John 15."[176] Despite the differences of human opinion and preference, there is still commonality in the narrative of God's love. The Eucharist reminds us of the love of God which has been, is, and always will be. Kilmartin remarks: "Individual sacraments, as functions of the life of the Church herself, actualize the sacramental reality of the Church. . . .The Church, as sign of the unity of God with humanity and the social instrument of that unity, expresses herself by actualizing her life of faith in preaching, liturgy, and service of the neighbor."[177] Communal formation occurs when the church allows itself to be instructed and transformed by its liturgical practices. Specifically, the sacraments call forth the people of God to be the people God has called them to be.

The Eucharist as liturgy and sacrament counters consumerism by: affirming the believer's identity and cultivating communion with God, developing community and resisting alienation, and by encouraging a life of compassion rather than disengagement. Liturgy itself is a formative work of the church and of the people, as further explained in Appendix Two. The Eucharist as an element of the liturgy functions as a formative work among the people. The ritual re-enacts the narrative of God's redemptive story. The movements and preparation within the ritual itself speak to the development of community and the necessity of reconciliation and forgiveness. The eschatological reality of the Eucharist encourages a life of compassionate

[176] Frederick W. Guyette, "Sacramentality in the Fourth Gospel: Conflicting Interpretations," *Ecclesiology* 3, no. 2 (January 2007): 235–50, https://doi.org/10.1177/1744136607073351, 248.
[177] Kilmartin, "Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church," 534.

living, an inclusion of the other and working towards justice. These graces within the Eucharist counter the consumerism narrative of acquisition, individualism, and apathy.

*ii. A Theological Response to Consumerism's Influence within Free Church Tradition*

The Eucharist functions in a variety of ways in the worship of the community which counters the influence of consumerism. It is an important element of the liturgy and provides a way forward for the Free Church. There is an apparent disconnect between theology and practice within local congregations as evidenced in the vignettes, Ellis' demographic study, and the recounts of denominational theology. The Eucharist can be a means of grace as it narrates the story of God, communicates the grace of God, and forms the people around the practicing of the ritual. Mark Allman notes the Eucharist contains many stories: the Jewish and Christian scriptures "tell of God's saving intervention in history; there are the stories of the liturgical ministers, which tell of how and why they came to their role of service and there are the stories from the assembly, countless tales of joy and suffering, triumph and failure. All of these stories intersect and parallel the story, the story of salvation though Jesus Christ memorialized in the Eucharist."[178] The story of God becomes interwoven in the stories of the clergy and the people, incorporating humanity into a larger narrative and affirming their sacred identity instead of objectifying them as does consumerism. The Eucharist, as narrative, invites people into the meta-narrative of God's salvation history. Morgan says: "Synchronically, the Eucharist serves to map the cosmic order providing a way in which to view the world. . . . Diachronically, the Lord's Supper provides an ontological framework to living. People find meaning when they connect

[178] Mark Allman, "Eucharist, Ritual & Narrative: Formation of Individual and Communal Moral Character," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 60, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000919913&site=ehost-live.

their narratives with that of a meta-narrative."[179] Additionally, she lauds the strength of the Eucharist to not marginalize the body over the mind. The sacrament accomplishes this by the liturgical acts which comprise it. The sacramental life embraces the mutuality of body and mind, recognizing God's grace in the everyday, as evidenced by the Eucharist. Recognizing the vital part the Eucharist provides in Wesleyan-holiness liturgy is key to the Free Church reclaiming its heritage and finding renewal.

The Eucharist has several movements to its ritual arc which counter consumerism's tendency to alienate believers and promote individualism: e.g., prayers of the people, passing of peace, offertory, and the Eucharistic prayer. Sister Heidi and Thomas Breidenthal address the significance of these liturgical movements within the Eucharist. The Prayers of the People is an opportunity to move outward from one's self: "It is harder for us to turn in on ourselves if we know ourselves to be participating in the prayers of the whole church in union with Christ."[180] The selflessness of this prayer prepares the believer to receive the Selfless One; in effect, it speaks to the communal nature of the Eucharist where consumerism would alienate. The Passing of Peace functions similarly, but more personally: "when we force ourselves to see the stranger, or to see the strangeness of those who are familiar to us, we see that our community really has no edges."[181] This action of the people is an act of forgiveness and love to the community. The Offertory includes more than a contribution of funds or the observance of bread and wine. Breidenthal writes: "the offertory is more particularly about offering ourselves, our souls and bodies, to God."[182] It is the offering of the self in worship to God. Simultaneously, "the offering

---

[179] Morgan, 451-452.
[180] Thomas E. (Thomas Edward) Bp Breidenthal, "Formation for Mission," *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 1 (2014): 153.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

of bread and wine puts us in the middle of the painful reality of our world and of humanity. That is what we trustingly offer to God so that he in his infinite love will accomplish the transformation of it through the Spirit . . ."[183] The worldly elements—fruits of creation and labor—are offered to God to be transformed from ordinary to sacred. These movements culminate in the Eucharistic Prayer and the reception of the elements. Sister Heidi writes: "In the eucharist God shares himself with us, enters into us, makes us one with him. He in us, we in him. Here we are at the heart of the mystery of the holy three-in-one God, at the heart of that which we as eucharistic/epicletic communities are called to make visible and to share: 'As there is one bread, so are we one body, for we all partake of the one bread.'"[184] The Eucharist weaves past, present, and future into one narrative of God's salvation. The people of God embrace and make visible this calling of reconciliation, unity, and hospitality. The Eucharist embraces the communal and speaks against consumerism's influence to diminish connectedness by alienating individuals.

The movements of the Eucharist are part of the greater grace of God in the sacrament to deny the objectification of consumerism and affirm the identity given by God. They comprise, what Schnell Rippentrop calls, "the sacramentality of life." She writes: "The sacramentality of life—the ways our lives flow from and return to God—is formed over the long haul through practices that form our ways of knowing and being in the world. . . Our awareness of sacramentality is not only cognitive; it's often a bodily awareness acquired through practices of a life lived leaning into the coming of God."[185] The Eucharist, as sacrament, teaches us to slow

[183] Sister Heidi, "The Celebration of the Eucharist: Some Consequences for the Formation of the Religious Life," *The Ecumenical Review* 38, no. 3 (July 1986): 294.
[184] Ibid., 295.
[185] Jan Schnell Rippentrop, "Ready for Communion," *Christian Century* 132, no. 17 (August 19, 2015): 31.

down, simplify, and experience the grace of God for all of life. It affirms one's identity as a child of God and not a cog in the wheel of consumerism.

The church, as intended, does not welcome the influence of consumerism and its tendency to alienate, objectify, or disengage. These characteristics are antithetical to the identity and mission of the church. In the context in the Church of the Nazarene, part of the Wesleyan-holiness heritage, there appears, within the free form liturgy, a lack of sacramental appreciation among local congregations. Additionally, the consumer culture evident throughout American Christianity, and Protestantism in particular, is also evident in the Wesleyan-holiness churches. The consumer culture is not consistent with the message of holiness. A Eucharistic theology of mission and formation compliments the holiness message. It moves the church to realize Gordon T. Smith's vision: "The church then is not an end but a means to the end, to worship Christ and to serve Christ in the world. As a community the church's vision and passion are toward the reign of Christ, both as it has already come and as it will come at the new creation. So their common life, in word and deed, is to witness as a sign to this kingdom."[186] The gathering of the people of God becomes more than just what is done on a Sunday morning. It is the conduit through which the community of faith is reoriented within the narrative of God's redemptive work, communing in the love of God. Further, it is the vehicle by which the people are sent into the world as participants of God's activity into a life of compassion and love toward others.

A life seeking spiritual formation within the Wesleyan-holiness tradition cannot ignore the efficacious nature of this sacrament to transform a life from disengagement to a life of compassion. The sacramental life needs each movement of God's grace. Grobien notes there is a process in the life of a Christian from hearing the word, which through the sacraments is

[186] Gordon T. Smith, 185.

embodied within the church, and lived through the life of worship and service to people. It is decidedly due to its nature of being embodied that the life of faith is lived out as a marker of the word of God.[187] The prophetic nature of the Word speaks to the ethical nature of the Kingdom of God, but the sacramental nature of the Eucharist calls us to embody it. The essence of the sacramental life is this embodiment which we first experience in the Eucharist. The eschatological nature of the Eucharist speaks to a new ethic of life. As Paul talked about the new life birthed through the grace of God, so the Eucharist brings to life a new creation in Christ. Michael Budde writes:

> The Eucharist is meant to bring to life and sustain a new people, unlike any ever seen in human history—one built on love and mutuality, forgiveness and other-regardedness. It is meant to make real the outrageous divine promise that coercion and self-interest, domination and subordination, are not the ways that God wants human community to be built and sustained; the eucharistically generated body of Christ is meant to be a foretaste of the Kingdom, a prototype that shows what God intends for all forms of human association when the Kingdom is fully manifest.[188]

God transforms the body of Christ (that is the Church) into its reality as the Body of Christ. By the grace of God, the people of God embrace their identity as children of God. Allman says: "Through Eucharist, the faithful become what they receive, namely the body and blood of Christ. They are not individually transubstantiated into the real presence of Christ, but collectively embody Christ's real presence in the world."[189] In short, as Budde remarks, it is the notion that the body of Christ becomes the Body of Christ. The Eucharist, through God's grace, brings to reality, though partially, what God has always intended for the Church. Allman compares this to

---

[187] Grobien, 156. "a movement or maturing in the Christian life that comes in hearing the word, being embodied through the sacraments in the body of Christ, and living out the Christian life of witness as worship and ethical service to others. The body becomes the place that bears the "marking" or "character" of the word of God. Because this word is embodied, it is also lived out."

[188] Michael L Budde, "Real Presence and False Gods: The Eucharist as Discernment and Formation," *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 285, https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12096.

[189] Allman, 60.

the *hagadah* of the Jewish Passover meal. It is a recalling of the larger narrative. He finds a similarity of the Eucharist to a meta-narrative, more than a verbalization of story but an inhabitation and participation through physical presence at the observance of the sacrament and full participation within the ritual.[190] As ritual, the Eucharist invites the people of God to rehearse the reality of the glorified Body. Because the sacramental life is an embodiment of God's grace, it requires an appreciation of the eschatological nature of the Eucharist. This grace of participation within the life of God is an adopting of a Kingdom ethic, a life of compassion and love for the other.

The eschatological nature of the Eucharist is characterized by the tension of the "already, not yet" Kingdom of God and further illustrates the efficacious nature of the sacrament to counter consumerism's influence. Geoffrey Wainwright says the Eucharist is the meal the baptized people of God enjoy as a taste of that which will be in the fulfilled kingdom of God. He confesses it is far from the consummated kingdom, but it lives in the hope of possibility. Further, he believes as the church hopes and anticipates through the liturgy and the Eucharist all which is promised, God will stir within those who have yet to embrace the kingdom a desire to partake in the same blessings enjoyed by the people of God.[191] The people of God are not to receive the sacrament lightly. It is more than mere performance. The Eucharist is not another piece of a worship service arrangement meant to entertain the people or satisfy some ecclesial obligation. It is a sacrament—a means of grace. Wainwright acknowledges the efficacy of the Eucharist. He describes the very real presence of Christ at the Eucharist which transforms the participant by

---

[190] Allman, 63. "Like a meta-narrative, so too Eucharist is not simply the verbalizing of a story, rather just as the participants inhabit the meta-narrative, so too the members of the assembly inhabit Eucharist through their physical presence at the celebration and through full, active and conscious participation in the ritual."

[191] Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 167. "so the church must hope and expect that through the words and actions of the eucharistic sign which it performs before the world, God will arouse in those who have not so far committed themselves to his kingdom the desire to share in the blessings of salvation."

grace as a promise of the glory to be shared with Christ in the fulfilled kingdom of God.[192] The people of God encounter the presence of God and progressively transformed into the fullness of the Body. When the people of God expectantly approach the Table, they cannot help but be changed. They become a symbol, a sacrament, of God's grace. Louis Weil says it is a profoundly mysterious encounter with the mystery of divine. It is a communally individual encounter with God.[193] The Eucharist cannot be only a remembrance of what Christ accomplished on the cross. It is more than a memory. Allman explains that as a memorial it also functions as a meta-narrative. The Eucharist is more than recalling a past event, rather it is a lens by which the people of God interpret their lives, a narrative through which they participate in salvation history. [194] It is formational as a means of character development and impacting decisions made through daily life. The people of God, by full and active participation in the liturgy (itself an assertion of the meta-narrative which is uniquely Christian) are not only inhabiting the salvation story but are find themselves formed by the same story.[195] The eschatological nature of the Eucharist informs and transforms the life of the believer. As a means of grace, it is a spiritual forming event in the life of the church. Further, people who embrace the sacramental as more than an isolated event discover the possibilities of God for all of life. This participation within the life of God through

---

[192] Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 152. "The hidden presence of the glorious Christ at the eucharist to change us secretly from glory into glory is therefore to be regarded positively as an effective promise of the glory we shall visibly share with him at his advent and in the final kingdom."

[193] Louis Weil, "The Shape of Liturgical Formation: Vertical/Horizontal, Horizontal/Vertical," *Sewanee Theological Review* 52, no. 1 (2008): 44, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001692546&site=ehost-live. "In the end it is profoundly mysterious: it is engagement with the mystery of God. . . . It is a corporate personal encounter with the Holy One."

[194] Allman, 67. "The power and significance of the memorial is not that it recalls a past event, but as a meta-narrative, it is the proclamation of the organizing story which the current assembly uses in order to interpret their lives and is the vehicle through which they participate in the history of salvation."

[195] Ibid. "forms their character and shapes the choices and decisions they make throughout the week. Through full, active and conscious participation in the ritualized-liturgical proclamation of the Christian meta-narrative, the faithful inhabit the story of salvation and form and are formed by the story."

the Eucharist and the liturgy of the church and embracing eschatological hope, speaks to the Eucharist's ability to counter consumerism's influence of objectifying, alienating, and disengaging.

The possibilities offered within the Eucharist are found within its significance as a symbol—"visible words" as Robert Jenson observes. The Eucharist speaks to more than a one-time event of the crucifixion. The Eucharist offers the people a life of holiness within its liturgy, symbolism, and actions. In the Free Church tradition, where practice and theology sometimes disconnect, the well-informed liturgy invites the church to a renewal of its theological roots. The ritual acts and eschatological narrative reaffirm the Eucharist's strength to counter the negative influences of consumerism. Where consumer culture objectifies, the Eucharist speaks to communion with God and a validation of the self created in the divine image. As consumerism alienates the self, the Eucharist promotes and forms spiritual community. When consumer culture disengages from a response to the pain of others, the Eucharist reaches out in compassion. This is the foundation for a Eucharistic Ecclesiology which is discussed in the next chapter, formed around the movements of the Eucharistic ritual, and organized as communion, community, and compassion.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY IN A FREE CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

The Eucharist as ritual and eschatological symbol is a response Free Church traditions need to resist consumer culture and renew their heritage as a theological response to contemporary challenges. The Eucharist as a disconnected movement within the liturgy is ineffective for spiritual formation. Celebrating the Lord's Supper was never meant to be a moveable piece from the life of the church, able to be inserted whenever the leader decides is appropriate. The Eucharist as symbol is a significant mediator of grace in the life of the people and, subsequently, in the life of the community. It strengthens relationships, identity, and vocation through its communication of the divine narrative and its practices. These practices make a difference moving forward and mitigate the negative influence of consumerism. The first section will discuss the connection between Eucharistic ecclesiology and spiritual formation as it pertains to the sacrament's grace to transform the life of believer and discount the effects of consumerism. The second section will outline how this forms a Eucharistic ecclesiology that overcomes consumerism through a description of Henri Nouwen's work on the four movements of the Eucharist and adopting a life of communion, community, compassion. The third section will revisit the vignettes and propose a different vision for the churches considering this alternative.

### *a. Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Spiritual Formation*

A renewed sacramental understanding of spiritual formation and the means of grace is required for Free Church traditions to effectively respond to the influences of consumerism. A

renewal of Eucharistic ecclesiology goes beyond understanding the movements of the ritual and its teachings to acknowledging the practices of the church as similarly holy. The Eucharist and other means of grace, communicate the divine and form a believer in communion with God, nourish communal life, and encourage compassionate living.

One example of an important practice within Christian tradition for cultivating communion with God has been prayer. John Wesley mentioned prayer as one of the means of grace. Further, William Willimon suggests the meal-time prayer as something efficacious. It reminds us how God blesses our lives through the ordinary means of food and drink. He writes: "The family dinner table becomes a place of divine-human meeting. The family meal becomes a kind of sacrament. We remind ourselves that God meets us in everyday life in such ordinary ways—ordinary bread, ordinary wine, ordinary people, ordinary conversation."[196] When we eat and drink, a variety of our senses are engaged. We are wholly involved in the process of absorbing this life-giving nourishment. Simultaneously, we may be transported through time and space to a memory: a person, place, or event of significance to our lives. This is the sacramental of the ordinary whereby we encounter the living God through our daily life.

Likewise, but even greater, is the means of grace we call the Eucharist. Where the ordinary elements are transformed into something greater, so too is the understanding of the believer becoming part of a larger story. Our receiving of these elements not only triggers a memory but gives us life-sustaining grace. Geoffrey Wainwright emphasizes this grace:

> We may consider that in becoming the vehicle of saving fellowship between God and humankind the bread and wine of the eucharist are granted, at least in a hidden way, fulfillment of the destiny after which the whole material creation groans (cf. Rom. 8:19-23). What is true of the inanimate creatures of bread and wine cannot be less true of the body of the man or woman who consumes them at the eucharist, and so we may be confident that the human body shares, and will continue to share, in an appropriate way

[196] William H. Willimon, *Sunday Dinner: The Lords Supper and the Christian Life*, (Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room, 1998), 15.

> in the personal obedience to a loving King in which the highest and ultimate destiny of humanity consists.[197]

The Eucharist communicates the divine to the ordinary. The sacramental life recognizes this relationship is not limited to the sacrament ritual but is possible through all of life. The Eucharist becomes a signpost of God's Kingdom, allowing us to recognize the grace of God in all things. Admittedly, this encounter is only partial. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians: "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."[198] Our experience of God in the present is not the same experience we will have of God in his fully-inaugurated Kingdom. This leads to another aspect of the sacramental life: embracing mystery. The Vogels write: "Mystery is an indispensable part of the sacramental. . . . even in a cultural context that often fails to value mystery, we are blessed when we open ourselves to the Mystery of God."[199] Part of the grace of the Eucharist is to form the believer to accept mystery. The liturgy, as the work of the people, is a rehearsal, or a remembering of the Presence of God which forms our life. As the Vogels write: "The Mystery is that God is Emmanuel (God-with-us) even when we are unaware of the Mystery. Sacramental living calls us to trust that God is greater than our experiences of God."[200] If a pastor can move from a concern about knowledge of God, effectively communicating that knowledge, and making informed decisions for the vision and direction of the church—though all important—to a sacramental life, then they can experience the One who qualifies the called. "Sacramental living moves us to live as sacraments of the Real Presence of Christ in our work and in our

---

[197] Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 185.
[198] 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NIV).
[199] Dwight W. Vogel and Linda J. Vogel, *Sacramental Living: Falling Stars & Coloring Outside the Lines* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1999), 136.
[200] Ibid., 140.

worship. All our being and our doing is Eucharist, an 'offering of praise and thanksgiving.'"[201] The life of faith must be more than cognitive recognition of God. It should be a sacramental experience of God which forms, shapes, edifies the life of the believer, cultivating communion with the divine.

As a means of grace, the sermon when accompanied by the Eucharist becomes a fuller expression of the divine narrative. Often identified within the Free Church tradition, the preached word is important and instructs us on the narrative of scripture and, more than that, it prophetically calls us out of where we are into God's narrative. But it does not always engage us holistically into that narrative. Not that the Eucharist cannot be abused or practiced poorly, but it is to say that it can and should be vitally important to the life of the church. Not to say that a right orthodoxy or orthopraxy would be the answer to the church's problems, nor to have righted the wrongs of the past; and it would be arrogant at best, and certainly false, to claim this proposal would have prevented the mistakes at the church or will correct a downward trend of attendance. What is being offered simply is an alternative narrative, which is what the Eucharist does in its most basic form: it is an alternative from the narrative of the world and the culture of consumerism, the transactional nature of faith which we do find in the church in this moralistic, therapeutic deism. The Eucharist grounds us into God's past, present, and future while also inviting us to participate in that reality as we gather and receive as a community. And then sent into enact that reality into the world around us. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ as we are then called to be the body and blood of Christ, incarnated Spirit of Christ into the world. Preaching is the Word in its prophetic nature and the Eucharist, as a complement to the prophetic Word, then enacts and symbolizes the call to live a life of sacrament and not just live a life of

[201] Vogel and Vogel, 149.

knowledge. If this were not true, evangelism would be just logical arguments desiring cognitive assent, rather than a whole life transformation—a worldview alteration.

The life of the church will undergo a similar transformation and grow to counter consumerism when it is changed as it continues to participate in liturgy and participate in the sacraments. Certainly, we can hope someone who enters the congregational life will in one service be miraculously altered in their way of life, and it can happen by the grace of God, but often we find it is the repeated practice, the repetitive exposure of the liturgy, which changes us. In part, it is why we even implore people to gather for worship, of why it is important to observe the Sabbath. Obviously, it is to acknowledge the God who created us, but if we leave that honoring God to one day a week for a couple hours, we fail to truly honor God with our lives. Corporate worship is, in fact, this liturgical action meant to form us, to recenter us as the people of God within the narrative of God's redemptive history and call us from our lives and places of work and family into God's life for us. It incorporates a sacramental lifestyle, not just for one part of what we might do a couple times a month, few times a year. It becomes a way of life, we become sacramental, we view the world through a different lens, we encounter people a different way. Our lives are lives of compassion, not one of acquisition. It is more than about the attendance or finances, more than accounting of people who are saved and sanctified under one's ministry, the number of baptisms performed, or the amount of times communion is served. It is the life we are living in the Spirit of God, by the grace of God, through the sacraments. This is not to say the Eucharist, in a weekly observance, will produce radical transformation in the church, but that by allowing ourselves to be formed by the liturgy of word and table, it will form us beyond the realm of cognitive expression of our faith to realize the sacrament is engaging us as a people and as a whole person. And when we allow the life of the church to become a

sacramental expression, we begin to see a change that results in a moving outward over moving inward, a giving up than gaining in. The Eucharist forms us in our communion with God, community with one another, and our compassion for others.

### *b. Eucharistic Ecclesiology Revealed in the Movements of the Eucharist*

Consumer culture thrives in an environment that is unfixed, unbonded, and capable of being marketed. The commodification of culture has allowed the negative influences of consumerism to run rampant and find their way into the life of the church. Objectification, alienation, and disengagement are antithetical to the Kingdom of God; unfortunately, they have either been largely ignored or, at worst, befriended for the sake of growth. Relying on Henri Nouwen's illustration of the Eucharist's four movements of chosen, blessed, broken, and given, a Eucharistic ecclesiology can counter the effects of consumer culture by illustrating that the life of the church should be centered around cultivating communion, community, and compassion. These three aspects of the spiritual life reveal a practical response to consumer culture.

#### i. Chosen, Blessed, Broken, Given

The four movements of the Eucharist were instituted by Christ himself at the Last Supper. Henri Nouwen has extensively discussed how these are reenacted with every ritual observance of the sacrament.[202] Jesus chose the cup and the loaf of bread as the means by which he would institute the Eucharist. He blessed the elements by giving thanks, as seen in Luke 22:17, 19 and then offered words of institution: "This is my body . . . this is my blood." Next, he broke the bread and gave it to the disciples. These four movements of the ritual are similarly

[202] See Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992).

reenacted in every observance of the Eucharist within Christian tradition in some form or another. Many traditions carry written liturgies for the sacrament containing these movements, though the breaking of bread is often intended to be metaphorical in traditions which use individual wafers. However, the use of individual serving elements can reinforce the idea of a personal spirituality, which consumerism seeks to accomplish through alienation.

It is interesting to note the correspondence between the four movements of the Eucharist and the life of Christ. Jesus was chosen by the Father to be sent into the world (John 3:16). He was blessed by the Father at his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist (see Luke 3:21-23 where the voice from heaven proclaims, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." NIV). Jesus experiences brokenness many times throughout his earthly ministry, for instance: the wilderness experience of testing in Matthew 4; his rejection in Nazareth, by the Pharisees, and some crowds; his betrayal, persecution, and ultimately, crucifixion. Jesus then gives his Presence to the disciples through his Spirit in the world in Acts 2.

It can also be said the four movements are symbolically indicative of the formation of the Church. The disciples were chosen (Gospel accounts of Jesus calling them to follow him); they were blessed (through his ministry/parables, Jesus' prayers of John 14-17); they were broken by his arrest and crucifixion; and they were given in the Great Commission, Acts 1, and at Pentecost when in Acts 2 they are empowered to speak. These are the same movements of the life of Jesus and the Eucharist in which we are to "remember" the Christ. As Alexander Schmemann titled his book, it is given "For the life of the world."

There is a final symbolic resemblance to the Eucharistic movements which is important for an understanding of the present church's response to consumer culture. The movements are also found within the life of every believer. We are chosen by God (created in the Divine Image);

blessed by grace (Prevenient, Justifying, Sanctifying); broken through hardships/suffering and dying to self; and given for the *missio dei* revealed in our vocation, giftings, and callings. The Eucharist as ritual rehearses the whole narrative of redemption in Christ, placing the believer within this story every time they participate in the ritual. Through observance, they discover their identity within the narrative of God's story. The Eucharist is more than a complementary piece to worship, it is a liturgy for life.

One important aspect of the four movements of the Eucharist which is often overlooked is brokenness. Consumer culture intends to provide a therapeutic solution to brokenness through seeking more within its use of commodification. However, the Eucharist provides an alternative to viewing human brokenness. Many traditions note the chosen elements, in fact some going to the extent of serving unleavened bread or wafers to be commiserate with the Passover celebration. They also are diligent in offering a blessing over the elements, referred to as the Eucharistic Prayer. The elements themselves are naturally given, or handed out, to the participants. However, the act of breaking the bread has largely been lost within Free Church traditions which have forsaken a single loaf in favor of individual wafers. The breaking of the bread is symbolic of the brokenness which Jesus endured at his crucifixion and can be argued through his hardships endured in his ministry. As has been stated, this movement can also be observed in the formation of the church. It would be remiss to disregard the connection to the life of the believer. The disciples experienced brokenness when Jesus was arrested and crucified. They lost their friend, mentor, and teacher. They lost their identity and purpose in life with his death. The Gospels recount of their fear and reluctance to continue his work, deciding to resign themselves to recovering some sense of their former life. However, they discovered a renewed hope in Jesus' resurrection. They found healing to their brokenness in the life of Christ. Jesus

spent time with them after his resurrection, forty days by accounts, as a time of healing and teaching. Peter, despite his denial, was asked three times, "Do you love me?" The disciples spent time with Jesus and time in prayer, waiting for what God was going to do. This time of healing from their brokenness allowed them to then be given at Pentecost.

The Apostle Paul likewise experienced the four movements in his life. He was chosen by God on the road to Damascus. In Acts 9, Paul (at the time known as Saul of Tarsus), heard a voice from heaven which is interpreted as Jesus, asking him why he was persecuting the Christ. He was chosen to no longer be a persecutor, but Paul the Apostle. Paul was blessed by the disciple, Ananias, who confronted the man who was an enemy and welcomed him as a brother. Paul experienced a great deal of brokenness throughout his ministry, recording many events in 2 Corinthians 11. He was given to the world, particularly as a planter of churches and purveyor of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The Free Church traditions overlook the breaking of the bread and often overlook brokenness in the church. They focus on the Gospel as a message which promises that being chosen is to remove people from brokenness and being blessed is to be healed from it. However, brokenness is still with us. There are still wounds from being broken. Like scars upon the body, the wound may not be fresh and may not hurt anymore but there are signs and a story behind the woundedness. This is a frequent theme within the writings of Henri Nouwen. He even talks about being a "wounded healer." Rather than neglecting the part of life which hurts, people should embrace their brokenness as a means to their healing. It means being vulnerable to one's own story as a source of healing for others. Nouwen recognizes that to be human means to be hurt. The ones who have hurt us the most are often the ones who are closest to us like our friends and family. They are the ones we have felt vulnerable enough to show our true selves and our

true feelings. We feel hurt when we do not feel accepted in the way we expected. Wounds can come from society as well when our contributions and efforts are not acknowledged or rewarded. Rather than allowing consumerism to usurp brokenness into its cycle of commodification, Nouwen says our wounds can be a source of healing to others when we allow ourselves to accept our wounds/brokenness and be given to others. He writes: "None of this brokenness will ever go away or become less. And still, embracing it and bringing it to the light of the One who calls us the Beloved can make our brokenness shine like a diamond."[203] His words are reminiscent of those in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." As Nouwen says, the woundedness experienced through our breaking can be a source of healing for others when we first allow ourselves to be healed by One who has called us and blessed us, being in communion with God. It is in this breaking that we can be given to the world as a sacrament.

Another important characteristic of the Eucharist which connects to these four movements is its identity as both Remembrance and Anticipation. This re-narrates the life of the believer, which is particularly beneficial in countering the narrative of consumerism. There is on a personal and corporate level acknowledgement and experience of what God has done and what God is going to do. There is grace within remembering and anticipating the actions of God, as well as within the ritual itself. The Eucharist is a memorial of the divine narrative of God's salvific work. It is a reminder of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It is also a celebration of the resurrected Christ and the work of the Spirit of Christ in the world and the church. Furthermore, the Eucharist is an eschatological reminder of the Banquet of the Lamb and God's final

[203] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 101.

redemption. The Hebrew concept of remembering is important to understand when considering what it signifies to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the Old Testament, God "remembers" the promise made to Abraham. The covenant between God and Abraham was and is an important relationship between the Hebrews and God. R. Alan Cole says the "Hebrew thought 'to remember' is 'to act'; this too is equally applicable to God or to Israel. . . . So, to say that God 'remembers' is to assert that he repeats his act of saving grace towards his people Israel again and again, and in this fulfils his promises, and shows his own self-consistency."[204] The idea of remembrance, therefore, is not just to recall a past event for the sake of nostalgia. It is an active practice which sets one in alignment of character and purpose based upon a past event which was significant in revealing one's identity. To remember in the Eucharist is to be reminded of the grace of God which has not changed and the character of God's people which is to be consistent. The Eucharist reiterates the commitment of God to salvation, to promise and fulfillment, and to redemption. Jesus said to the disciples at the Last Supper that they were to "remember me." In the Hebraic tradition, this meant his followers were to repeat his act of saving grace again and again, to see his promise fulfilled, and to show his self-consistency. The Eucharist is more than a ritual of nostalgia, it is, in a sense, the reenactment of God's redeeming work for the people. Receiving the sacrament in this way evokes more than a sense of gratitude or awe, it is to rightly reframe the identity of the people around this gracious saving work of God.

Similarly, the people of God in anticipation are reoriented towards the ultimate work of God in full redemption and realization of the Kingdom. This *telos* of the faith is important to the biblical understanding of vocation and identity centered around God, whereas consumerism would suggest acquisition and self-gratification. Robert E. Webber states: "This memory is

[204] R. Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008), 372, Kindle.

represented and disclosed at bread and wine to form us and so thoroughly shape our perception of life and the world that it empowers our living and inescapably and profoundly effects our living in union with Jesus Christ."[205] The whole story of God is enveloped within the sacrament: the "creation, incarnation, re-creation," as Webber notes. It is a foretaste of the supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. It is in the Eucharist that the people of God are shaped by the narrative of God. Webber argues that the mysteries of heaven and earth are represented by the bread and wine. They are a union of the divine and the natural, the supernatural with the ordinary. It is a sacred act in a sacred space among a blessed people within a sacred moment. Webber writes: "Bread and wine disclose the union we have with Jesus, which is not a mere standing but a true and real participation lived out in this life as we become the story of God in this world individually in all our ways and corporately as the people of God."[206] It is the purposes of God symbolized within the ritual, reenacted through the sacrament, and incarnated within the people of God. The Eucharist reimagines, reframes, reorients, and redeems the people of God within the grand narrative of God's saving work. The four movements of chosen, blessed, broken, and given are the means by which the Eucharist reenacts this narrative for and within the people. It is a salient reminder that when Jesus said "remember me," he may not only have been thinking of the cross but also the Banquet.

The acts of remembering and anticipating within the Eucharist are important in the framework of the four movements recognized by Henri Nouwen. It is also important in recognizing how it forms us as a people and counters the influence of consumerism within the church. Father Richard Rohr remarks how Jesus never instructed the disciples how to argue,

---

[205] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2008), 145-146.
[206] Ibid., 147.

justify, prove, or research any of his teachings. He simply said, "Take and eat . . . drink all of you." Fr. Rohr interpreted Augustine as saying, "you are what you eat and drink."[207] The difficulty with a faithful understanding of the Eucharist is that the theology behind the sacrament has become more important. Fr. Rohr writes, "We changed bread more than people, it seems to me." People have become so wrapped up in cognitive understanding rather than embracing the mystery of the sacrament. He continues: "Then we keep eating and drinking the Mystery until one day it dawns on us, in an undefended moment, 'My God, I really am what I eat!'"[208] The Eucharist forms the participants through reenactment of the divine mystery centered within the divine narrative. It is, as ritual, formative and, as sacrament, "visible words." It is a representation and re-creation of the people of God within their communion with God, community as the people of God, and compassion to the world.

### ii. Communion, Community, Compassion

A response to consumerisms negative influence of objectification, alienation, and disengagement can be found within the ritual of the Eucharist as the elements are brought as an offering and placed upon the table, blessed in the Eucharistic prayer, and broken as one loaf to the people. The people are themselves given—to embody the liturgy as the liturgy ("work of the people") for the world. The four movements of the sacrament are recurrently practiced with the church and viewed as a formational foundation to the spiritual life. Closely knit to this work is another concept which Henri Nouwen offered: communion with God, community together, and

---

[207] Richard Rohr, "Real Presence," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 24, 2018, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/real-presence-2018-07-24/. Fr. Rohr's paraphrase of Augustine's message to the newly baptized in his sermon 272. The quote is *estote quod videtis, et accipiter quod estis*, often translated as "Be what you see, and receive what you are."
[208] Ibid.

ministry/service to others.[209] Rephrased, these concepts can be recognized as communion, community, and compassion, which when unpacked provide a response to consumerism's characteristics of objectification, alienation, and disengagement.

a. Communion

Nouwen spoke of the journey inward being foundational in our identity as the Beloved one of God and nurturing communion with God. This journey redefines us and allows us to "move outwardly from solitude to community and ministry."[210] The inner development which occurs in communion with God is important for a healthy formation of the community of God's people who gather to worship and participate in the sacraments, and to then live compassionate lives of ministry and service to others. This is an outworking of a Eucharistic ecclesiology which counters consumer culture's influence of objectification, alienation, and disengagement.

The characteristic of objectification values use over giftedness given through God's communion with us. There is no inherent goodness or identity of any person or thing. Consumer culture views someone or something's value as distinctly tied to its marketability or consumability. If something or someone can be disassembled or used within the cycle of consumption, then it is valuable. However, this is counter to a biblical understanding of worth found in communion with God. Something is not valuable because of what it can be but for what it is. In the Creation account of Genesis 1, God said: "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness . . ." (Gen 1:26 NIV). Theologians have termed this the *imago dei*, the concept that human beings are created in the divine image—people are intrinsically valuable. Within the same

[209] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2010), loc. 220, Kindle.
[210] Ibid., loc. 124

account, God creates the earth, sky, sun and stars, and every living creature and prophetically announcing that they are good. All of God's created order holds value in and of itself.

Further, there is an understanding within eschatology that the Kingdom of God and earth are not so far apart. Contrary to reformed theologies which hold to an escapist view that the earth is bad and God's redemption plan is to carry worthy souls from it, Wesleyan eschatology (and other denominations of traditional Christian thought) believes in a redemption of the Created order to a place of rightness once again. The intrinsic value of all things will be realized once more through Christ's final restoration of all that has been wronged by sin. Within this Wesleyan eschatology is the understanding of the "already-not yet" Kingdom of God—interjected through the Incarnation of Christ and not yet fully realized. There are sacred places and sacred moments in which it is understood the Kingdom of God is near. This sacredness emphasizes the giftedness of the created order.

Celtic Christianity also held to a similar thought that the divine and secular were not always so far apart. They believed there were places on earth where the divine was quite near. They termed these locations as "thin places." Mary Earle writes: "The created order, from smallest particle to furthest star, is recognized as an active agent of God's own goodness and mercy. God's blessing, majesty, and creativity are revealed through earth, sea, sky, wind, plants, and creatures."[211] The divine and the earthly are interwoven rather than opposites. Esther de Waal remarks that even the seasons hold such truth to the Celtic people. They believed there to be four times a year, marking the seasonal change, which required a pause and a festival. She writes that November 1 is considered the "turning of the year." She says: "this is the thinnest time of the year, the time at which the veil between time and eternity can easily become

[211] *Celtic Christian Spirituality: Essential Writings--Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2011), 21, Kindle.

transparent."[212] The Celts believed such "thin places" to be moments and spaces where the divine was most near because they recognized that there is value and worth to all things, attributed by the divine nature within all things.

Henri Nouwen believed strongly that the blessing spoken over Christ at his baptism is also the same blessing spoken over every individual. He believed the intrinsic value of giftedness was directly related to being the "Beloved" of God. In fact, for Nouwen, to journey through one's woundedness meant to place it under this blessing. No person or society can assign value or worth based upon a person's appearance, possessions, or contributions. Worth can only be given by God. The Celtic perspective of thin places, Wesleyan eschatology, the *imago dei*, and Nouwen's understanding of being the beloved, runs counter to consumer culture's characteristic of objectification, supporting the Eucharist's message of giftedness.

The Eucharist reveals that even the most ordinary of things are chosen for a divine purpose. There is a sacredness in the mundane and simple. Philosopher John Duns Scotus wrote about the "univocity of being," or the idea that one can talk about things of earth and God with the same voice. Richard Rohr summarizes Duns Scotus' belief that "God is Being Itself." Rohr writes: "This eliminates any clear distinction between the sacred and the profane, because Christ existed in matter from all eternity (Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 1:3–11), ever since God decided to materialize and reveal who God is through creation."[213] God's divine Presence is within the Eucharist and the ordinary elements because God's Presence is revealed within everything. Continuing his summary of Duns Scotus, Rohr writes: "we are to love things in and as themselves, to love things for what they are, not for what they do for us. . . . we come to

---

[212] Esther de Waal, *To Pause at the Threshold: Reflections on Living on the Border* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001), loc. 340, Kindle.
[213] Richard Rohr, "God Is Being Itself," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), May 20, 2020, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/god-is-being-itself-2020-05-20/.

universal meaning deeply and rightly through the concrete, the specific, and the ordinary, and not the other way around."[214] The ordinary elements of bread and wine describe the relationship of the earthly with the divine. They are means by which God communicates grace and an identity of giftedness. Ordinary means become instruments of extraordinary grace.

Inherent giftedness runs counter to consumer culture's emphasis on placing value with usefulness. Objectification is not compatible with Eucharistic doctrine or ritual. Human beings are valuable due to their identity as God's chosen, beloved ones, created in the *imago dei*. Professor of Social Work and shame researcher, Brené Brown discusses the effects of not believing in one's own giftedness. She says people often try to numb or ignore the inner voices of their true self. Comparing oneself to another over appearance, possessions, and contribution is more about conformity and competition than inner worth. Brown argues that comparison is the thief of joy and stunts creativity. Rather than believing there are creative people and those who are not (born from comparison), she says all people are creative in some way. In fact, she writes: "The only unique contribution that we will ever make in this world will be born of our creativity."[215] It is from one's own giftedness, experiences, and graces that they are creative people. If people are created in the *imago dei*, of the Creator God, then it is only natural that they too are creative. Without creativity, people become mindless, numb automatons going about their routines and being a part of the cog of culture. On the other hand, the Eucharist teaches that through communion with God the ordinary is valuable and full of potential.

b. Community

[214] Richard Rohr, "Loving Things in Themselves," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), October 5, 2022, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/loving-things-in-themselves-2022-10-05/.
[215] Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, 2010), 125, Kindle.

Community, rather than living in alienation, is viewed as important to the life of the individual, especially in spiritual formation. The Eucharist is not observed individually, but within the context of the Christian community. In the institution of the sacrament, Jesus gathered the twelve disciples in the upper room. It was within the intimate environment of community that Jesus said they are to "remember me." Consumer culture aims to alienate people from community because it thrives on giving the self what it needs. It is not concerned with benefiting community but only having the individual seek out satisfaction through commodities. However, the Eucharist says the spiritual life is nurtured in community.

Community has been important to the church since the beginning. Jesus did not send the disciples out on their own but together. In Luke 10:1 it says, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (NIV). This is repeated in Mark 6:7 where they are sent out in pairs, given authority over unclean spirits. Within the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples are gathered in Acts 2 and share their resources among themselves so that no one was in need. It is apparent through Scripture that God's design is for the people of God to be in community.

The idea of togetherness in the spiritual life has roots throughout history. St. Benedict established twelve religious' communities in 530 C.E. and wrote the *Rule of Saint Benedict* which later in the Middle Ages was adopted by religious groups who founded the Order of Saint Benedict. Esther de Waal writes that St. Benedict believed in a vow of stability, "someone who does not go wandering off, either literally or metaphorically. He is firmly rooted in this place, in himself."[216] It was important to St. Benedict that monks should live the spiritual life together. Within the Old Testament and Tabernacle worship, the people of God set up their nomadic

[216] de Waal, loc. 524.

community around the Tabernacle where God's Presence settled among them. Later, Celtic communities were among those that built their homes around the place of worship. Worship was the center of communal life, and everything revolved around it. The community as rightly understood could not exist without a foundation of worship to God.

The Eucharist teaches the importance of the whole over the one, community rather than alienation. This runs counter to selfishness, shame, and fear which are hallmarks of comparison and characteristics of consumer culture. These characteristics are indicative of alienation which aims to separate the one from the whole. Relationships become tools to satisfy one's own needs and desires. However, the Eucharist celebrates relationships and their edifying nature for the spiritual life. Brown talks about the need for sharing life with a trusted other. She writes: "We have to own our story and share it with someone who has earned the right to hear it, someone whom we can count on to respond with compassion."[217] She says there is strength when someone is received with compassion and acceptance. It allows the individual to accept themselves and extend self-compassion. Further, she writes: "Until we can receive with an open heart, we are never really giving with an open heart."[218] Community teaches us about ourselves as individuals as much as it teaches us about living life together.

The church has taught the importance of community through the sacraments. In the Roman Catholic tradition, confession is vital to the spiritual life. People are called to confess their wrongdoings, to repent, and receive grace. The person confesses to the priest who stands in the place of Christ and offers absolution, reconciling the person to God and the Church. It is an important sacrament for the communal life. Though it is not practiced withing the Free Church

[217] Brené Brown, 13.
[218] Ibid., 29.

traditions, it begs the question: can we be the true church if we cannot be true to ourselves or true to one another? Confession is a breaking of the self and choosing to be vulnerable.

The Eucharist furthers the work of confession by requiring reconciliation among the people. In the New Testament, the disciples were to prepare themselves for receiving the sacrament by making sure there were no wrongs between one another. In 1 Corinthians 11:28, the church is asked to "examine yourselves" before observing the sacrament. The precedent for this examination comes from the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:23-24. He says: "if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" (NIV). It is with a reconciled heart that one can rightly receive the graces of ritual observance. This emphasizes the importance of communal relationships within the sacraments. Richard Rohr reiterates that the "Eucharist is an invitation to socially experience the shared Presence of God, and to be present in an embodied way. . . . Jesus didn't want his community to *have* a social ethic; he wanted it to *be* a social ethic."[219] It is important to understand that the Eucharist is an invitation to all people to partake of the body of Christ. It is a communal gathering of people from all backgrounds, positions of authority, races, gender, and cultures. It is a gathering of diverse people who are identified by the One they honor in the sacrament. Nouwen says, "The table is the place of intimacy. Around the table we discover each other. It's the place where we pray. It's the place where we ask: "How was your day?" It's the place where we eat and drink together and say: "Come on, take some more!" It is the place of old

[219] Richard Rohr, "The Shape of the Table," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 22, 2018, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-shape-of-the-table-2018-07-22/.

and new stories."[220] The Eucharistic table is the place of greatest intimacy because it is the place of reconciliation and grace. It fosters community and nurtures the spiritual life as a life together.

c. Compassion

Compassion is the outwork of communion with God and life together in community. It is the place where creativity is shared, and the social ethic is lived out. Consumer culture through objectification and alienation does not acknowledge the value of "the other," rather it seeks to disengage the individual. People and things are valuable for their usefulness to a person. Commodification is about acquiring and possessing, not giving. This characterizes disengagement—prioritizing the needs and desires of the self over any other. Richard Rohr describes this as a "meritocracy," where "I put in and I get out." A person's contributions and efforts are only given when something of value is rewarded in return. This is counter to the "gift economy" of the Gospel that teaches, because forgiveness is unconditional and free, people should freely give of themselves and their resources.[221] The Eucharist emphasizes a life of compassion where one lives in embodied service towards the other.

The Eucharistic elements are brought to the table as representative of the free offering of Christ's own body and blood. Jesus was offered for the world and the Eucharist is offered to the world. The people of God partake of the Body of Christ to become the body of Christ. As Nouwen stated, the Eucharist is given to the people as Jesus was given, and the people of God are then given to the world. It is a calling to live a compassionate life for the sake of the world. Giving of oneself begins by acknowledging there is grace within the ordinariness of life that communicates the divine. It is affirming the giftedness of creation which comes from cultivating

---

[220] Henri J.M. Nouwen, "The Table Is the Place of Intimacy," *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), February 21, 2022, https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/the-table-is-the-place-of-intimacy-2/.
[221] Richard Rohr, "Gospel Economy," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), November 24, 2019, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-gospel-economy-2019-11-24/.

communion with God. Jean Pierre de Caussade described a practice called "the sacrament of the present moment." He wrote: "The activity of God is everywhere and always present, but it is visible only to the eye of faith."[222] He believed the divine is always making itself known, revealing God through every moment and every living creature. God is revealed in the most ordinary of places, yet they are just as extraordinary as those which happened in Scripture. Ultimately, the mysterious nature of God is most revealed within the Eucharist. De Caussade writes: "For both reason and faith tell us that God's love is present in every creature and in every event, just as Jesus Christ and the Church inform us that the sacred body and blood of God are truly present in the Eucharist."[223] The development of the interior life, communion with God, reveals the divine nature at work in all things. Becoming aware of the Presence of God within daily life, ordinary means, allows one to participate in the divine life.

Worked out through the social ethic of the Christian community, a compassionate life flows from the understanding that God's love is at work in and through the Church to the world—not solely there, as it is present in all of life, but it is especially at work within the Church through the Eucharist. It reaffirms the value of living in community rather than alienation. It encourages forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of life. This social ethic, which in part is revealed in the Eucharist, becomes the impetus for living a compassionate life instead of in disengagement.

The Eucharist elements of bread and wine are ordinary means by which God mediates extraordinary grace, illustrating the sacramental life of being chosen, blessed, broken, and given. It teaches people to recognize the grace within the ordinary. Rather than look for magnanimous

[222] Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 36.
[223] Ibid., 48.

efforts and inspiration, the Eucharist reminds us that the ordinariness of us is the most creative and best offering we can make to the world. It further teaches us to recognize the other. Thomas Merton had an epiphany in Louisville, KY which awoke to him the embodied presence of God's love in the world. He writes: "I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers."[224] Merton realized he did not live a separate existence from humanity, although he resided in a sequestered monastic life. He knew within his very being that he was part of everyone else—one body and one cup of life. He continues: "Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes."[225] Merton saw in each of those people the divine—the embodied Christ, the sacramental nature. He saw what Nouwen called being the beloved. The Eucharist reveals the Other for who they truly are, the body of Christ, whose Body is partaken in the sacrament. This realization compelled within Merton a desire to reveal to each person their true identity, to encourage communion with God. The Eucharist compels the church to live in community and be the body so they can reveal through compassion to others their identity as children of God.

### *c. Vignettes Returned*

Developing a Eucharistic ecclesiology which outflows into a life of communion, community, and compassion is efficacious in countering consumer culture and strengthening spiritual formation. This ecclesiology provides a way forward in resisting consumerism within

[224] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image, 2014), 153.
[225] Ibid., 155.

local congregations and nurturing the spiritual life of the church. Returning to First Church of the Nazarene and City Community Church, it is fair to position both churches within the Free Church tradition which have been influenced by consumerism. Neither are high liturgy, nor are they considered a sacramental congregation, that is placing central emphasis on receiving the sacraments. The Eucharist is not observed regularly and does not define the identity of either congregation.

First Church is concerned with maintaining tradition and working outside of the walls of the building only for the sake of bringing more people into their worship gathering. This is indicative of the church growth movement and consumerism's tendency to center on the self. The focus is on what has been done, what has worked, and on what they have liked, even alienating people who do not conform to this model. The Presence of God is located within nostalgia. They are remembering but not anticipating what God is doing, being disengaged from embodied compassion. On the other hand, City Community Church has reinvigorated their enthusiasm by adopting new music and façade to their ministries. An outward reshaping of their "brand" has also led to a refocus on their ministry goals. They are not held to how things have been done in the past but look to make new connections within their city. One is to wonder, though, if Webber was right and their awareness of the Presence of God is located within the music. There is a mis-location of Presence, and an emphasis on music that speaks to God rescuing people from brokenness or difficult times. It is a focus on what is offered, that is, objectifying an element of worship for the people rather than focus on to what they are being called.

Both congregations have been inward focused on their desires and preferences. They view evangelism highly but practice their outreach in different ways. Their identities of

traditional and contemporary revolve around their music and practices. Neither are well-grounded in a holistic approach to life in communion, community, and compassion. If, however, they were to adopt a Eucharistic ecclesiology, would their identities or practices change? It would be arrogant to suggest such change would be immediate or apparent for some time. Cultural change is neither very easy nor quick. First Church might begin to see a shift from focusing on nostalgia as primary to Christ as the center, fostering communion with God. Their communal life would be less about what has always been done and more on cultivating their relationships and life together in community. Their outreach would not focus on getting people within the doors and more on embodied compassion through loving without expecting a return. City Community would begin to see the Presence of God within all aspects of life and not only the high-energy or zealous moments, discovering the giftedness of the ordinary within communion. Their life in community would see depth and vulnerability in their discipleship groups, rather than superficial acquiescence to ideas or strategies. Their outreach would be less concerned with how many people are reached to compassionate care, showing a person they are truly acknowledged and loved.

Both congregations could see a break from consumerism's influence to an increase in creativity and freedom of expression. They would not be bound by arbitrary traditional design, but organically ministering in ways that are edifying to the congregation and the larger community. A change such as this would require a time of breaking, a sacrifice of old ideas and well-intentioned, but misguided purposes. They would begin to see the other person as more than a means to an end but the very purpose of their calling. The Eucharistic life teaches that God is the center, community is essential, and compassion is a one-sided investment. Finances and attendance would no longer be viewed as markers of success. The building and traditions of the

church are means of grace but not the ends of grace. A Eucharistic ecclesiology edifies the life of the people of God through communion, community, and compassion which nurtures the spiritual life of the believer and the church as a whole. Further applications and implications of this ecclesiology are discussed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# APPLICATION AND IMPLICATIONS

A Eucharistic ecclesiology is formational for the life of the church and vital for countering the negative effects of consumer culture. A life of being chosen, blessed, broken, and given is foundational for the development of an ecclesiology that emphasizes communion, community, and compassion. The Eucharist is a means of grace which blesses in the ritual and informs individual and communal life for holistic spiritual formation. This ecclesiology necessarily will alter the current paradigms of Free Church traditions for the better. The applications and implications of such an alternative narrative will impact spiritual formation practices, clergy education, and laity participation. Within spiritual formation, a Eucharistic ecclesiology affirms the spiritual disciplines in nurturing communion with God, focusing specifically on solitude and silence as ways to reject the objectification of consumer culture. It also affirms the importance of community and belonging in the life of the church against alienation. Further, a Eucharistic ecclesiology counters disembodiment by promoting an embodied compassion through service. The implications of a Eucharistic ecclesiology extend from spiritual formation to clergy development who, as leaders of local congregations, are subject to and impressed to address consumerism within the church. This can occur through clergy education, support, and altering ecclesial paradigms of hierarchy. These implications can positively impact the laity by renewing the Free Church's goal of laity participation to include creativity within the liturgy and empowering them in the *missio dei*.

## *a. Eucharistic Ecclesiology for Spiritual Formation*

Spiritual formation is central to the life of the individual and community and Eucharistic ecclesiology. The Eucharist helps to redefine the purpose and practice of spiritual formation within Free Church traditions by placing the importance on developing communion with God, community together, and compassionate living. Rather than through the objectification of consumerism, communion with God is developed through personal spiritual disciplines, such as study of Scripture and prayer. However, two overlooked but essential disciplines are solitude and silence. Church growth often focuses on increasing congregational numbers, which often results in a like-minded, homogenous group, alienating people from community to individuals. The Eucharist, though, teaches about belonging in life together. Compassionate living has often been viewed as doing something for a return-on-investment, giving of time and resources for a particular goal that hopefully results in reciprocated time and resources, consumer transactions likened to a disembodied existence. The Eucharist symbolizes a sacrificial life embedded within the life of the church and embodied through compassion and service.

i. Inner Development through the Disciplines of Solitude and Silence

Eucharistic ecclesiology affirms the identity of the believer as God's child and cultivates communion with God. Through spiritual formation and the disciplines of solitude and silence, a believer can find renewal in the Eucharistic movements of being blessed and called. Consumer culture thrives on a multitude of voices and options to instill objectification. When a person is confronted with so many choices, they feel a sense of freedom. Although, they may not realize they are, in fact, prisoners of the culture. The choices they are being given may not be the best, but because they are offered, they believe them to be the only ones available. When one is given a single option, they feel coerced, manipulate, constrained, or oppressed to accede to it. However, two options give a sense of freedom of choice. They no longer feel obligated to a

single option. Give them multiple choices and they feel like royalty with the world at their fingertips. What if, though, the options are poison to their soul? They welcome the choices and never think twice that an alternative exists.

Consumer culture offers many things, marketed as good, and inherently unharmful. The crucial practice of consumerism is not the acquiring of things, but the continual desire for more that is never satisfied. The objectification, alienation, and disengagement which grow from it are dangerous to the church and the spiritual life. Consumer culture does not offer alternatives to commodification, but they do exist. Practices in spiritual formation for the development of communion with God have been around for centuries. Two of the most neglected practices in current culture are solitude and silence. They are also two of the most helpful in countering objectification.

Solitude is viewed as the practice of being alone and silence as being quiet. The disciplines are difficult to observe within present culture because hardly anyone has time to be alone and certainly there is plenty of noise. This is a false perspective on the rich disciplines which are often held together. In reality, they are a state of mind and heart—a stillness and assurance of one's own identity. Richard Foster writes: "If we possess inward solitude we do not fear being alone, for we know that we are not alone. Neither do we fear being with others, for they do not control us. In the midst of noise and confusion we are settled into a deep inner silence."[226] Ultimately, solitude is to be in silence—an act and state of listening, as Foster describes. The two disciplines are inseparable as to be in solitude is to be listening for the voice of God to speak. Foster writes: "The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear.

[226] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 96-97.

. . . we learn when to speak and when to refrain from speaking."[227] They teach a person when to be still and calm the inner voices and the urge to speak aloud. They reveal the inner nature and open oneself to a dialogue with their Creator.

In solitude, a person is no longer the critic or the judge but a receptor of the divine voice of love. This voice speaks to the self and to the other. A person learns to hear love and forgiveness, to embrace them for themselves, and then to offer them to others. Dallas Willard writes: "In solitude we find the psychic distance, the perspective which we can see, in the light of eternity, the created things that trap, worry, and oppress us. . . . we confront our own soul with its obscure forces and conflicts that escape our attention when we are interacting with others."[228] Spiritual disciplines reveal one's true nature and identity, both the good and the bad. In life, people often "numb," as Brené Brown describes, the self to protect our fragile ego from the inner voices. People shield their emotions behind a wall of logic or distraction. Solitude and silence painfully tear down that wall, brick by brick, to reveal the naked self and expose it for what it truly is. Consumer culture would rather partner itself with the process of distracting because therein lies a cycle of unending pleasure-seeking and mindless wanderings, diverging one from seeking an identity in God and maintaining their objectification. There is little truth in the numbing and shielding, only masks and lies.

Solitude and silence are instrumental for the spiritual life because they were practiced by Christ himself. Jesus modeled a pattern of spending solitary time with the Father. The Gospels contain several accounts where Jesus went off by himself to pray.[229] This is the purpose of

---

[227] Foster, 98-99.

[228] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1988), 161.

[229] See Luke 4:1-2, 14-15; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12-13; Luke 22:39-44; Mark 6:30-32; and Matthew 14:1-3 as six examples when Jesus chose to spend time in solitude so he could more effectively hear the voice of the Father. Jesus chose to go off by himself to pray during these important points within his life and ministry.

solitude itself. Merton wrote: "Solitude has to be objective and concrete. It has to be a communion in something greater than the world, as great as Being itself, in order that in its deep peace we may find God."[230] It is in solitude one realizes God has been with them for their entire life. It is in solitude one realizes they have always had everything they have ever needed to live. Silence gives space to filter the words which have attempted to create reality, words which have distorted, confused, and divided. Silence brings to light that there is something in the seemingly nothingness. One finds truth "between the silence of the world and the silence of God."[231] It is in solitude one can trust they are who they were created to be and are gifted in ways that are unique to their identity as God's beloved child. This is the giftedness of life, the Eucharistic choosing of the ordinary by the Creator to be extraordinary means of grace.

ii. Ecclesiology as Belonging in Community

The Eucharist reveals truth of the self and truth of humanity's giftedness whereas consumerism defines people as objects. The goodness of all things and the necessity of community are witnessed within the ritual. God redeems that which was created good yet distorted by sin. Well-intentioned Christians have understood the benefits of living in community, but simultaneously made it unlikely to ever belong to that community. Rules, regulations, ideals, and so-called "social ethics" have placed barriers on church membership—the "real" test of belonging. If a person regularly worships with a congregation but is not a member due to some church rule or code of conduct, are they considered to truly belong? Perhaps they are considered imposters or "members-in-waiting." The Eucharist, however, is offered because it is the symbolic offering of the body of Christ who was offered to all.

[230] Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956), 81.
[231] Ibid., 83.

Regulations have been imposed upon who may or may not receive the Eucharist as well, whether considered for the good of those who may improperly receive or for the protection of the community to which it is observed. Unfortunately, though much has been done within the church to protect and insulate it from outside influences, consumer culture has found its way inside the doors of the building and the hearts of those who attend.

The Eucharist is about belonging. The elements are chosen by Christ, blessed in thanksgiving, broken in ritual, and given for the benefit of those who are disciples. Free Church ecclesiology, on the other hand, appears to place belonging to the community after they are broken of their selfish ways: they are chosen by the Spirit, blessed in being offered the message of salvation, and broken in personal repentance. The Eucharist reveals a much different journey of spiritual formation. People are chosen by God, blessed by their Creator, then broken in formation, and given to the world. It was never intended for people to only belong to a congregation once they have completed rigorous theological exams and background checks for any sign of heretical or behavioral hypocrisy. This is not to minimize or ignore proper instruction or accountability, for both are needed within the church. However, it is to say that one should not be excluded from the gathering to worship. The Eucharist welcomes all to the table to receive the body and blood of Christ. John Wesley believed the sacrament to even be salvific. Whether it is worth consideration that the grace mediated within the ritual is justifying is not as critical as whether it is a grace of belonging.

People are spiritually formed over a lifetime of discipleship. This formation happens within personal communion with God and within community. It is within community where a person is held accountable for their thoughts, words, and deeds. They are confronted with worshipping alongside people who do not hold the same political notions, opinions on world

events, or communal ideals. Richard Rohr states the most revolutionary social act Jesus consistently made was to eat with diverse people in diverse ways. Jesus often communed with people who were oppressed or excluded from the power structures of the temple and the synagogue. Unfortunately, the church came to observe Jesus' table fellowship as the closed reception of the Eucharist. Rohr writes: the "ritual itself came to redefine social reality in a negative way, in terms of worthiness and unworthiness—the opposite of Jesus' intention!"[232] He argues that the current, exclusionary practices of the Eucharist observance are more in line with Pharisaical interpretation of Levitical Holiness law and the separation of clean and unclean. It indeed appears that the church is more concerned with who does not receive than who is welcomed to the table. Free Church tradition has wrongly emphasized believing over belonging.

The Eucharist offers the bread and wine as a ritual sacrifice of Christ for the world. It is not meant to be hidden or protected. It is meant to be received within and allow the grace of God to shape the hearts and minds of those who are present. There is a salient point to be made over improper reception, as Paul instructed the Corinthian church, but that can be argued as a commentary on the community's failing and not on whether an individual should be excluded. The Eucharist offers a new social ethic, a "bigger, inclusive table," as Rohr phrases it. The Eucharist is either effective in shaping and spiritually forming the lives of those who receive it, or it is not. The sacrament, properly observed within a responsible community of faith, is a means of grace. The Eucharist speaks to the belonging in community and the formation within that community of the lives of those who observe it.

### iii. Embodied Compassion and Service

[232] Richard Rohr, "A Bigger, Inclusive Table," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 23, 2018, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/a-bigger-inclusive-table-2018-07-23/.

The Eucharist observes the life of Jesus given for the world, observed by the church which is then given for the world. It is the Body of Christ offered so the church can be the body of Christ. The church becomes the embodied presence of God in the world. Consumer culture threatens a compassionate lifestyle by disengaging a person from the world. The consumer mentality is what can I get out of it and not going to give anything. It removes a person from the liturgical life of the church to inject them into a cycle of consumerism. Disengagement is disembodiment. A Eucharistic ecclesiology believes in the formation of the individual and community through the means of grace of liturgy, sacraments, and personal devotion. Both the liturgical practice within communal worship and the liturgy after the liturgy are integral to cultivating a life of compassion.

The liturgy itself within Free Church traditions is preaching-centered. Preaching is considered the most important act within the weekly gathering of the church and the primary function of the clergy. Prominently, within these worship gatherings, a frequent response to the preaching is offered as an altar call or a similar opportunity for repentance and salvific acceptance. This position poses a theological question for the church: is the liturgy for evangelization or edification? If the liturgy is intended to be God-centered, then allowing space for the work of transformation to occur by the grace of God should be more important than statistics of conversions or attendance. Preaching is in reality a very limited role despite its applied value by Free Church traditions. Within this ecclesiological approach, the congregation are expected to invite people to a service in hopes they will feel conviction of sin and respond to the invitation to receive salvation. This implies a person will find appeal in the music or sense an emotional connection or cognitive awakening within the preaching. Spiritual formation is relegated to the realm of cognitive assent or emotional appeal of the service.

Eucharistic ecclesiology focuses on an embodied compassionate life. It is holiness lived out in love-driven relationships. John O'Donohue writes: "Human presence is a creative and turbulent sacrament, a visible sign of invisible grace."[233] The life of the people of God are a Eucharist offering given to the world for the sake of the world. Nouwen writes that our participation in the Eucharistic life brings hope to the world and is compassionate living. He says: "The world does not recognize the light that shines in the darkness. It never did; it never will. But there are people who, in the midst of the world, live with the knowledge that he is alive and dwells within us, that he has overcome the power of death and opens the way to glory."[234] The Eucharistic life of the people of God is a light in the darkness, a symbol and sign of redemption. It is the embodied Kingdom of God lived out within and for the world.

The liturgy after the liturgy is the work of the people after the work of the people within the worship gathering. As people are formed within the weekly gathering, they are to live out compassionate, Eucharist embodied lives within the world. Remembrance within the sacrament informs this life by connecting to the promises within the New Testament and the traditions of the church, as well as in anticipating the hope of the Kingdom of God through a realized eschatology. It is deeply connected with the theme of Passover, traditionally thought to be the season in which Jesus instituted the Eucharist. The deliverance of God's people in Passover connects with our own deliverance. As Nouwen writes, we should be concerned with deliverance from oppression and our contribution to it. For the Israelites, their remembrance of the Exodus made a difference going forward. The wrote songs, created oral traditions, and instituted ritual cultural customs which have been handed down for generations. Their deliverance made a

---

[233] John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara* (New York: Harper, 1997), xvi-xvii.
[234] Henri J.M. Nouwen, "A Hidden Hope," *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), October 28, 2022, https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/a-hidden-hope/.

difference. Nouwen believes the Eucharist informs the live of the believer that they too should see a transformation. He says: "Celebrating the Eucharist requires that we stand in this world accepting our co-responsibility for the evil that surrounds and pervades us."[235] The church has rarely accepted a responsibility for violence, dissension, gossip, jealousy, or hypocrisy within the world or a desecration of natural resources and the environment through its works of compassion and service. John Dear says that Jesus offered himself and did not offer for the spilling of another's blood and breaking of another's body. Rather, Jesus says "Give your lives nonviolently for others, as I have done for you. This is the best way to remember me. . . .at every Eucharist we join his nonviolent campaign . . . to pursue his vision of a world where no more bodies will be broken and no more blood will be shed."[236] An embodied Eucharistic ecclesiology chooses justice and life over violence and oppression. It seeks to be eco-friendly and environmentally conscious for the sake of God's created order, for it sees the blessedness of all living things.

A renewed ecclesiology would focus on a discipline of loving service. It would cultivate creativity to offer to the world. It would freely give of its resources with no expectation of return. John Wesley preached that people should "earn all they can," "save all they can," and "give all they can." His own life illustrated an overwhelming generosity.[237] Consumer culture thrives on an economy of scarcity—if things are required for satisfaction but there are few available, then people should hurry to acquire them. Scarcity breeds fear, for wealth and power should be protected from those who want them. The Eucharistic table speaks of abundance and generosity. Rohr writes of a new economy: "Neighborliness means that our well-being and what really

---

[235] Henri J.M. Nouwen, "Choosing a Life of Contrition," *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), October 15, 2022, https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/choosing-a-life-of-contrition/.
[236] John Dear, "The Eucharist's New Convenant of Nonviolence," *National Catholic Reporter*, March 20, 2012, https://www.ncronline.com/print/blogs/road-peace/eucharists-new-covenant-nonviolence.
[237] Kenneth L. Carder, "John Wesley on Giving," Resource UMC, 1997-2003, https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/john-wesley-on-giving.

matters is close at hand and can be locally constructed or produced."[238] It is a vision of Acts where the people of God had no need among them for all were willing to share. It is an eschatological vision of the banquet of the Lamb where all gathered and there is plenty. The Eucharist informs the life of the church in a renewed economy and a compassionate life where generosity and belonging are participation in the Kingdom of God.

### *b. Implications for Clergy Development*

Spiritual formation is a vital aspect of the Christian life, inherently a process of God's grace forming a believer and a community into God's ultimate future. God has designed for this process to take place in community. The established guide of this community called the church is the clergy. At the forefront of liturgical responsibilities and theological teaching within the local congregation, the clergy experience and contest consumerism within the religious community. As abundantly illustrated within psychological and ecclesial circles, there are demands and struggles experienced by clergy and a subsequent effect on the church's formation. Not without hope, there is a path forward to counter alienation, objectification, and disengagement through the sacramental. Burns and Cones identify one aspect of contemporary Eucharistic practice which proves detrimental to the church: "A liturgy in which the Great Thanksgiving over bread and wine is proclaimed at a great distance from the body of the assembly and set apart from them by physical barriers does not create a ritual picture of an assembly gathered around God's table,

[238] Richard Rohr, "Departing the Consumer Culture," *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), November 26, 2019, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/departing-the-consumer-culture-2019-11-26/.

led in a common action by one of its members."[239] The question raised is whether the symbolic nature of space creates a distance in formation. As already attested, the Eucharist is more than a performance. Speaking from the Orthodox tradition, John Zizioulas writes: "Precisely because of the identification of the eucharistic community, into which one is ordained, with the worshipping community before the throne of God, ordination is not something of a temporal nature but of eschatological decisiveness."[240] The office of clergy is important in the ritual and meaning of the Eucharist. As sacrament, the Eucharist informs and forms the life of the people. Zizioulas continues: "The ordained person becomes a 'mediator' between man and God not by presupposing or establishing a distance between these two but by relating himself to both in the context of the community of which he himself is a part."[241] The office of clergy stands in the gap for the people of God, not by creating distance—whether physical or otherwise—and subsequently alienating, but by relating God to the people and the people to God.

The role of clergy is not to create an experience for the people and thus objectify the liturgy or dismantle it. Neither the preached Word nor the Table become the responsibility of the clergy. Louis Weil comments: "The point is quite simply that the liturgy is God's action. This is where I have experienced the most egregious examples of the trivialization of the liturgy, where the rite has been so weighted down by the personal agenda of the presider or of other planners that I have felt there was no room for me to find a place for my own "self" as a participant."[242] When the clergy becomes a manipulator of the ritual, it no longer functions as sacrament. This

---

[239] Stephen Burns and Brian Cones, "A Prayer Book for the Twenty-First Century?," *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 4 (2014): 657, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001996593&site=ehost-live.

[240] Zizioulas, 234.

[241] Ibid., 230.

[242] Weil, 46.

manipulation may be well-intended personal preferences or a result of private study, but if it distorts the ritual in any way than intended, it is still detrimental to the liturgy. Granting the grace of God is greater than one person, it should be noted how Weil's experience of this sacrament was affected by the role of the clergy. Weil cautions, however, the clergy's function is more than reciting from a written liturgy, such as the *Book of Common Prayer*. He says: "The rites require a program of formation not only for future clergy, but for the whole people of God, so that liturgical celebrations in our parishes will be rooted in the realities of our people's lives but also join them in the centuries-old chorus of praise of the Holy One who is both the source and summit of our prayer."[243] The source of this formation is both cognitive and experiential within a contextual framework of both the culture and Scripture. As previously argued, the church needs both held in tension to realize the full potential of God's grace in spiritual formation to combat the effects of consumerism.

Historically, through the early church, Middle Ages, Reformation, and contemporary Christianity, great leaders of the people of God have attended to a multitude of spiritual disciplines, cultivating communion with God. They have never limited their formation on reading the Scriptures, praying, and corporate worship alone. Simplicity, solitude, fasting, contemplation, celebration, and the like have all found their way into the lives of the saints. Steven Porter commends the lives of these people and their impact on the church. Drawing from the life of Dallas Willard, he then posits how the lives of future leaders will be shaped. Specifically, he notes:

> Future thought leaders of the spiritual formation movement will need to be: personally acquainted with Christ and his kingdom resources; deeply called to labor with God's people "until Christ is formed in you"; grounded in a profound understanding of the ways of Jesus; and well-positioned as an authority in the broader culture. But why does the

[243] Weil, 47.

> spiritual formation movement need thought leaders? Don't we have the theology and theory—the thought—more or less down? Don't we need practitioners of formation more so than theoreticians of formation?[244]

He acknowledges the necessity of theory and practice, where one can contemplate God and also serve God. Fundamentally, he believes future leaders in the church will have an experience of God for themselves. Clergy must have more than knowledge of God, they must be a tangible sign of God's grace. Consequently, there should be a renewal of clergy through the sacramental life. Dwight and Linda Vogel define sacramental living as "taking everyday life seriously and discovering ways the church's worship intersects and penetrates our daily journey."[245] They are concerned with the liturgy after the liturgy: what happens Monday through Saturday. Often in life, clergy are concerned with their knowledge of God and communication of that knowledge. However, the Vogels caution: "Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we may be so preoccupied with what we know that we are unable to see. . . . When we limit the truth to our way of seeing, we often fail to receive the many surprises God offers us each day."[246] The sacramental life encourages the believer to find God in the everyday, mundane aspects of life. A renewed paradigm of clergy development, considering Eucharistic ecclesiology, should focus on a redetermination of clergy values, personal care, and leadership structuring.

The role of pastors has been delineated within Scripture, particularly the New Testament after the organization of the church by Christ and through Pentecost. The letter of 1 Timothy 4 clearly describes how Timothy is to conduct himself as an ordained leader within the church. He is given the tasks of preaching, teaching, the reading of Scripture, and the responsible use of his

---

[244] Steven L. Porter, ed., "The Future of the Spiritual Formation Movement," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 12, no. 2 (November 2019): 176, https://doi.org/10.1177/1939790919869524.
[245] Vogel and Vogel, 9.
[246] Ibid., 17-18.

gifts. Furthermore, he is charged with being trained to be godly.[247] Education and spiritual formation are central to the development of a leader of the church of God. Paul also gives address to the elders in Ephesus, recorded in Acts 20:28-29, that they should be as shepherds caring for their flock, alert for any sign of a wolf who might deceive the people. Traditionally, pastors are viewed as theologians-in-residence, counselors, teachers, preachers, and priests. The role of a shepherd has often been extended to being a gatekeeper, protecting the flock from any harmful theological idea or person who would be of bad influence. Without oversight or accountability, the gatekeeper is left with personal discretion or bias over what idea or person should be allowed within the flock. It is a double-edged sword, both necessary for congregational care and formation as ordained within Scripture, and a slippery slope where personal ideologies, biases, or prejudices claim authority.

To further complicate this dilemma, leadership paradigms within the church changed during the church growth movements, seeker-sensitive eras, and the rise of mega-churches. Pastors became viewed as visionaries who held the key to ecclesial success, plans to bolster numbers and enlarge facilities for the sake of the Gospel. The pastor became viewed within secular organizational structures as a CEO.[248] Leadership books and resources abounded as pastors searched for ways to replicate the successes of their peers. Although there have certainly been commendable works done within this paradigm, it has largely been detrimental to clergy. The pastor became placed on a high pedestal from which any fall was considered deadly.

Within Free Church traditions, pastors have been valued for their abilities to preach, lead a congregation, cultivate relationships, and be impeccably upright in behavior. A Eucharistic

[247] See also the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, sections 502ff and 534ff on the pastoral role.
[248] See again Rowell's discussion.

ecclesiology is an embodiment of Christ, just as clergy are expected to be like Christ. At first glance, this might suggest pastors should be kingly: gatekeepers and authoritarians. However, the kenosis hymn of Philippians 2 reveals a much different picture of Christ: who "made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant . . . becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7-8 NIV). Pastors should be humbled and not exalted. They should embody the Eucharistic life by attending to the sacrament of the ordinary, cultivating solitude and silence, building up community through confession and forgiveness, and living a compassionate life. Henri Nouwen writes:

> I have never experienced so deeply that the true nature of priesthood is a compassionate-being-with. Jesus' priesthood is described in the letter to the Hebrews as one of solidarity with human suffering. Calling myself a priest today radically challenges me to let go of every distance, every pedestal, every ivory tower, and just to connect my own vulnerability with the vulnerability of those I live with.[249]

The life of the shepherd of God's church is not intended to be a position of authoritarian rule, theological indoctrination, ideological or political lobbying, or exclusionary gatekeeper. The pastor is meant to be a spiritual guide—an ecclesial *anam cara* or soul friend—a mediator of the sacraments, and an interpreter of Scripture.[250] As Nouwen states, the pastor should be vulnerable of their pain and struggles, not shunned for their humanness. Too many pastoral failures and burnouts are a result of over-pressure and unrealistic expectations by both the congregation and their leader. A renewed development of clergy should focus on the mental health, personal spiritual formation practices, and a reordering of expectations. Free Church traditions ought to

[249] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 45.
[250] See John O'Donohue's work of the same title for reference. A pastor is not meant to replace a true "soul friend" or spiritual director but can be a model in practice of one who is spiritually attuned and walking alongside another through the spiritual life.

provide resources and funding for clergy mental health—within denominational structures and the local church.

A distinct transformation of ecclesial paradigms is also required of Free Church traditions. Just as Christ humbled himself, so too clergy should not be placed upon pedestals or "ivory towers," as Nouwen said. A Eucharistic ecclesiology is not a top-down leadership structure, but one where the laity are empowered and restored agency for their own formation. It is a reversed paradigm, where no longer clergy are considered the most important person within the local church, but the community of faith is given prominence. Pastors are not celebrities, CEOs, authoritarians, or elites—a Pharisaical perspective of ecclesial leadership. Rather, the pastor is a supporter, functioning in ordained roles, for the edification of the church in the *missio dei*.

### *c. Laity Participation and Creativity within the Liturgy*

The re-formation of ecclesial paradigms within a Eucharistic ecclesiology that counters consumerism should also focus on the role of laity in their responsibility for spiritual formation, the life of the community, and partnership in the *missio dei*. Renewing the initial goal of the Free Church tradition to remove clergy and laity barriers within the liturgy, a Eucharistic ecclesiology affirms the giftedness of laity within the worship act. The Free Church tradition sought to dissuade a "professional" liturgy of and for the clergy by introducing elements such as hymnody, testimonies, corporate Eucharistic ritual, etc. If clergy are not to hold the prominent position within the life of the church, then the laity will need to be empowered and given agency for their own spiritual formation and development within the life of the community. Far from removing

the role of the clergy in the communal life, a re-formation seeks to re-position the clergy within their scriptural role as priest and prophet.

One important aspect of laity life is their individual spiritual formation as communion with God. Beyond mere cognitive acquiescence to the faith, laity should be responsible for cultivating their own spiritual formation. Clergy are guides to spiritual formation practices and should be models of their implementation. Laity should hear and see the benefits of a life devoted to the means of grace, particularly those not practiced communally. Study of scripture, prayer, solitude, and silence are important spiritual disciplines for spiritual formation. Laity should be resourced and instructed on the significance of these practices, even exposed to the lives of the saints in whom these practices were often demonstrated. The church should illustrate how a personal life of communion with God cultivates a healthy community of faith and flows into a compassionate lifestyle. John Wesley and the Methodists did not intend to establish a new denomination but organize layers of support and accountability. Free Church traditions have tended to avoid such level of personal involvement for fear of being intrusive or offensive. Church growth is not aided by offended people, yet church health is a result of responsible vulnerability and personal renewal. Laity should be given opportunity and commission to take ownership of their own spiritual formation to nurture communion with God.

A second aspect of laity development is concerned with the church as a worshipping community. In Free Church traditions, laity are often excluded from either participating or developing the liturgy. Instead, the church functions to exclude the gifts people offer as if only "experts" can influence the liturgy. Brand and image are of high importance for visual appeal and attracting potential members. What is promoted is a version of the church that does not correlate with reality. The church is a community of faith, but it is in truth a community of

humanness: a community of weakness, mistakes, and woundedness. As Nouwen teaches, the Eucharistic life is a breaking of the body and drinking from the cup of suffering. It is not withholding the truth of humanness or disregarding the scars and weaknesses of the people. The church celebrates excellence—and rightly should strive for all manners of godliness—but in doing so, it simultaneously makes a pariah out of anything less. Laity involvement within the liturgy will be messy, but so is the Gospel and the Eucharist. A lack of laity participation also disregards the giftedness of the people. As much as it can be messy, it also adds to the beauty of the liturgy when the people of God are given opportunities to use their gifts.

A third aspect of laity development is encouraging the creativity of the people as participation in the divine life and mission. A compassionate life within Eucharistic spirituality engages the imagination of the laity-empowered for others. It honors their God-given identity as beloved creators of good things. The church has at times limited compassionate works to those approved by ecclesial leadership or those that fit into a specific ideal of ministry. Unfortunately, compassionate works within Free Church traditions have been provided with the subtext of an outreach opportunity. In other words, the church organizes an event in hopes of a return like people in the seats on a Sunday morning. Compassionate living within a Eucharistic life is a giving away of the self—including resources and gifts—for the sake of others. There is no return expected or desired, only a life given for another as heart meets heart and life touches life. Nouwen says that the Eucharist reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus who took the cup of suffering upon himself. Jesus died so that all would have life. He gave himself for humanity to live in community, to become a sign of the Kingdom come, to partake in a foretaste of the eternal banquet. In the Eucharist, the people of God participate in the life and death of Christ to become the blessed people who, despite their vulnerabilities and suffering, are a community of the new

covenant. Creatively engaging the world through their talents, by accepting their giftedness, and formed into community, the people of God living the Eucharistic life are a sign of Christ.

Restoring laity agency is essential in acknowledging the place of the ordinary within the sacramental life. Clergy are not the sole holders of the mystery of Christ. In fact, by elevating pastors, the church has done them a disservice. Nouwen says: "When we lift the cup of our life and share with one another our sufferings and joys in mutual vulnerability, the new covenant can become visible among us. The surprise of it all is that it is often the least among us who reveal to us that our cup is a cup of blessings."[251] The Kingdom of God is for the "least of these," and far be it from the church to forego the Eucharistic life for the sake of an idol like public perception. Consumer culture thrives in competition, scarcity, and alienation. It disengages and objectifies for the sake of consumption. The endless cycle of self-obsession, self-critique, and shame is a breeding ground for consumerism. The Free Church traditions need to renew their concept of spiritual formation and ecclesiology centered around the Eucharist, a life of communion, community, and compassion. When the church embraces the Eucharistic life, it will see life transformation, stronger and committed communities of faith, and compassionate living which gives of itself for the sake of the world. Life change and a revitalization of humanness is what is at stake. The Eucharist embodies for the people of God who they have been called to be. It is a life of being chosen, created in the divine image. It is a life of being blessed, called the beloved of God. It is a life of being broken, confronted with one's own woundedness. It is a life of being given, renewed by God through grace to use one's gifts for the *missio dei*. One is not ashamed of being wounded, for the Eucharist speaks to life out of suffering.

[251] Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*, 69.

### *d. Conclusion*

The Free Church tradition has suffered under the negative influence of consumer culture. There has been an influx of objectification, alienation, and disengagement, which has often been observed as individualism and a lack of participation. The church requires a renewal through Eucharistic ecclesiology that empowers communion, community, and compassion. Such a work within the Free Church will reclaim its purpose of engaging the congregation and clergy in mutual participation within the liturgy and compassionate living. Attending to a Eucharistic ecclesiology can rediscover the place of spiritual formation within the sacramental life. It also could lead to a transformation of clergy development, including but not limited to, supporting clergy mental health and altering ecclesial paradigms. Further, it could lead to an empowering of laity creativity and compassion within the liturgy of the local church and the *missio dei*. Hardly would this be exhaustive of the possibilities of a Eucharistic ecclesiology, but it can be indicative of the change which might occur by faithfully attending to and more fully appreciating the means of grace which is the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist provides a counter to the effects of consumer culture by introducing the sacramental life within the movements of the ritual itself, its function as a symbol, and through its sacramental place as a means of grace by which the Presence of God works within communal and individual life.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


"A Common Response to the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church Regarding the Ravenna Document 'Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority' by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 54, no. 1–4 (Spring-Winter 2009): 302–10. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=66961891&site=ehost-live.

"Address of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59, no. 1–4 (Spring-Winter 2014): 445–49. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=103675496&site=ehost-live.

Allman, Mark. "Eucharist, Ritual & Narrative: Formation of Individual and Communal Moral Character." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 60–68. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000919913&site=ehost-live.

Barclay, William. *The Lord's Supper*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Billings, Bradly S. "The Disputed Words in the Lukan Institution Narrative (Luke 22:19b-20): A Sociological Answer to a Textual Problem." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 507–26. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=23025342&site=ehost-live.

Blevins, Dean G. "The Means of Grace: Toward a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (1997): 69–83. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001021005&site=ehost-live.

Bordeianu, Radu. "Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Retrieving Eucharistic Ecclesiology." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 239–65.

Bowmer, John. *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*. London: Dacre Press, 1951.

Breidenthal, Thomas E. (Thomas Edward) Bp. "Formation for Mission." *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 1 (2014): 147–54.

Brinkman, Martien E. "The Church as Sacrament of the Kingdom: A Reformed Commentary." *Exchange* 37, no. 4 (October 2008): 497–507. https://doi.org/10.1163/157254308X340422.

Brown, Brené. *The Gifts of Imperfection*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, 2010.

Brown, Clair. "Why Over-Consumption Is Making Us Unhappy." Psychology Today. Accessed May 1, 2019. https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/buddhist-economics/201803/why-over-consumption-is-making-us-unhappy.

Budde, Michael L. "Real Presence and False Gods: The Eucharist as Discernment and Formation." *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 282–99. https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12096.

Burns, Stephen, and Brian Cones. "A Prayer Book for the Twenty-First Century?" *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 4 (2014): 639–60. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001996593&site=ehost-live.

Carder, Kenneth L. "John Wesley on Giving." Resource UMC, 2003 1997. https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/john-wesley-on-giving.

"Catechism of the Catholic Church - The Sacrament of the Eucharist." Accessed December 13, 2018. http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm.

Caussade, Jean-Pierre de. *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. New York: Doubleday, 1975.

Cavanaugh, William T. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire.* Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2008. Kindle.

*Celtic Christian Spirituality: Essential Writings--Annotated & Explained*. Woodstock Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2011.

Chilcote, Paul W. "Eucharist and Formation." In *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*, edited by Jason E. Vickers, 183–202. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2016.

Cole, R. Alan. *Exodus*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008.

Connors, Dan. "What Am I Doing Here?" *Catholic Digest* 71, no. 6 (April 2007): 44–51.

Dear, John. "The Eucharist's New Convenant of Nonviolence." *National Catholic Reporter*, March 20, 2012. https://www.ncronline.com/print/blogs/road-peace/eucharists-new-covenant-nonviolence.

Drury, John L. "Christology and Eucharist." Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry.* United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016.

Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Expanded. New York, NY: Image, 1987.

Ellis, Christopher J. *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition*. London: SCM Press, 2004.

Ellis, Dirk. *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016.

———. "The Relationship Between Liturgical Practice and Spirituality in the Church of the Nazarene with Special Reference to John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection." Andrews University and Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2012.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Eastern Orthodoxy | Definition, Origin, History, & Facts." Accessed December 13, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eastern-Orthodoxy.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978.

Frundt, Henry J. "Rite Involvement and Community Formation." *Sociological Analysis (Worcester, Mass.)* 30, no. 2 (1969): 91–107.

Gaines, Timothy R. "Eucharistic Participation: Holiness as the Relational Shape of Christian Moral Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (2014): 93–106. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001972052&site=ehost-live.

Greathouse, William M., and H. Ray Dunning. *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology*. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 1982.

Grislis, Egil. "Wesleyan Doctrine of the Lord's Supper." *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (May 1963): 99–110. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000687250&site=ehost-live.

Grobien, Gifford A. "Righteousness, Mystical Union and Moral Formation in Christian Worship." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 77, no. 1–2 (January 2013): 141–63. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001953469&site=ehost-live.

Grundy, Christopher. "This Is My Body: Violence against Women and the Ritual Formation of Men in Communion." *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 93, no. 1 (2003): 13–24.

Guyette, Frederick W. "Sacramentality in the Fourth Gospel: Conflicting Interpretations." *Ecclesiology* 3, no. 2 (January 2007): 235–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744136607073351.

Heidi Sister. "The Celebration of the Eucharist: Some Consequences for the Formation of the Religious Life." *The Ecumenical Review* 38, no. 3 (July 1986): 286–96.

Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Jenson, Robert W. *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

Kilmartin, Edward J. "Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church." *Theological Studies* 50, no. 3 (September 1989): 527–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/004056398905000306.

———. "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium." *Theological Studies* 55, no. 3 (September 1994): 405. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=9411284740&site=ehost-live.

Leclerc, Diane. *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2010.

———. "Finding the Means to the End." In *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, edited by Diane Leclerc and Mark A. Maddix, 74–86. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=520033.

Linnane, Brian F. "Human Sexuality and Eucharistic Community: The Politics of Participation and Exclusion." *Theology & Sexuality: The Journal of the Institute for the Study of Christianity & Sexuality* 5, no. 9 (September 1998): 64. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=5600544&site=ehost-live.

Maddox, Randy L. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Mann, Mark H. "Wesley, Word, and Table: The Rise and Fall of Eucharistic Practice in Early Methodism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (2016): 54–67.

http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiGFE170206000115&site=ehost-live.
*Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2017-2021*. Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017.
*Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene*. Los Angeles: Nazarene Publishing Company, 1908.
Marine, Robert A. "Making the Most of Religious Education Using Literature and the Arts To Enliven the Message!," April 1997. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED411050.
Marsh, Abigail. "Could A More Individualistic World Also Be A More Altruistic One?" NPR.org. Accessed May 1, 2019. https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2018/02/05/581873428/could-a-more-individualistic-world-also-be-a-more-altruistic-one.
Martin, Robert K. "Toward a Wesleyan Sacramental Ecclesiology." *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 1 (January 2013): 19–38. https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-00901004.
"Mental Health Myths and Facts." MentalHealth.Gov. Accessed May 1, 2019. https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts,
McIntosh, Mark. *Mysteries of Faith*. Vol. 8. The New Church's Teaching Series. Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 2000.
McRay, John. *Paul: His Life and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2003.
Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York: Image, 2014.
———. *Thoughts in Solitude*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956.
Miles, Rebekah. "Eucharist and Ethics." In *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*, edited by Jason E. Vickers, 203–22. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2016.
Miller, Vincent J. *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. 2003rd ed. repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
Morgan, Janine Paden. "Emerging Eucharist: 'This Is His Story, This Is My Song.'" *Missiology* 39, no. 4 (October 2011): 445–57. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001867472&site=ehost-live.
Neale, David A. *Luke 9-24: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. New Beacon Bible Commentary. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 2013.
Nouwen, Henri J.M. "A Hidden Hope." *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), October 28, 2022. https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/a-hidden-hope/.
———. *Can You Drink the Cup?* Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996.
———. "Choosing a Life of Contrition." *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), October 15, 2022. https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/choosing-a-life-of-contrition/.
———. *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.
———. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. Edited by Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird. New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2010.
———. "The Table Is the Place of Intimacy." *Daily Mediations: Henri Nouwen Society* (blog), February 21, 2022. https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/the-table-is-the-place-of-intimacy-2/.

O'Donohue, John. *Anam Cara*. New York: Harper, 1997.
Ohki, Hideo. "The Formation of an Eschatological Eucharistic Community: An Issue for the Protestant Church in Japan." *Mid-Stream* 24, no. 3 (July 1985): 227–39. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000949849&site=ehost-live.
Pennington, O.C.S.O., M. Basil. *The Eucharist: Wine of Faith Bread of Life*. Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 2000.
Peterson, Brent. *Created to Worship: God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*. 2/14/12 edition. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2012.
———. "Eucharistic Ecclesiology: A Community of Joyful Brokenness By Brent Peterson," January 2006. https://nts.whdl.org/eucharistic-ecclesiology-community-joyful-brokenness-brent-peterson.
Peterson, Eugene. *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1987.
Pew Research Center. "Religious Landscape Study: Members of the Church of the Nazarene," 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/church-of-the-nazarene/.
Porter, Steven L., ed. "The Future of the Spiritual Formation Movement." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 12, no. 2 (November 2019): 173–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/1939790919869524.
Rattenbury, J. Ernest. *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley: To Which Is Appended Wesley's Preface Extracted from Brevint's Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice Together with Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. London: The Epworth Press, 1948.
Restad, Penne. "The Third Sex: Historians, Consumer Society, and the Idea of the American Consumer." *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 3 (2014): 769–86.
Rohr, Richard. "A Bigger, Inclusive Table." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 23, 2018. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/a-bigger-inclusive-table-2018-07-23/.
———. "Departing the Consumer Culture." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), November 26, 2019. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/departing-the-consumer-culture-2019-11-26/.
———. "God Is Being Itself." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), May 20, 2020. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/god-is-being-itself-2020-05-20/.
———. "Gospel Economy." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), November 24, 2019. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-gospel-economy-2019-11-24/.
———. "Loving Things in Themselves." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), October 5, 2022. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/loving-things-in-themselves-2022-10-05/.
———. "Real Presence." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 24, 2018. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/real-presence-2018-07-24/.

———. "The Shape of the Table." *Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation: From the Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), July 22, 2018. https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-shape-of-the-table-2018-07-22/.

———. "We Should Ask Why Few Transformations Happen in Church." *National Catholic Reporter* 38, no. 16 (February 22, 2002): 8.

"Roman Catholicism | History, Definition, & Facts | Britannica.Com." Accessed December 13, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism.

Rowell, Jeren. *Thinking, Listening, Being: A Wesleyan Pastoral Theology*. Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2014.

Ruth, Lester. *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005.

Sampley, J. Paul. "1 Corinthians." In *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, X:771–1003. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2002.

Schmemann, Alexander. *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Translated by Paul Kachur. First edition. edition. Crestwood, N.Y: St Vladimirs Seminary Pr, 2003.

Schnell Rippentrop, Jan. "Ready for Communion." *Christian Century* 132, no. 17 (August 19, 2015): 30–33.

Schwanda, Tom. "Evangelical Spiritual Disciplines: Practices for Knowing God." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 10, no. 2 (2017): 220–36. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiAZI180131001559&site=ehost-live.

Senn, Frank C. *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.nts.edu/ehost/detail/detail?nobk=y&vid=4&sid=e48c8415-e7be-4e27-ab72-ea3bd27fcc1b@sessionmgr103&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ==#AN=528105&db=nlebk.

Smith, Gordon T. *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2010.

Smith, James K.A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2016.

Smith, Matthew. "Does 'Rugged Individualism' Undermine Mental Health?" Psychology Today. Accessed May 1, 2019. https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/short-history-mental-health/201809/does-rugged-individualism-undermine-mental-health.

Solomon, Michael R. *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*. 12th ed. Hoboken: Pearson, 2017.

Srikantha, Stephen. "Semiotics and Daniel Hardy's Eucharistic Theology." *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 4 (2015): 629–36.

Staples, Rob L. *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1991.

Sweeden, Joshua R. "Ordinary Practice as Ecclesial Holiness: Intersections of Work, Sacrament, and Liturgy." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (2014): 78–92. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001972051&site=ehost-live.

Tau, Kyle. "A Wesleyan Analysis of the Nazarene Doctrinal Stance on the Lord's Supper." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (2008): 101–22.

http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001687745&site=ehost-live.

*The Book of Common Prayer*. Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press, 2019.

"The Longer Catechism of The Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church • Pravoslavieto.Com." Accessed December 13, 2018. http://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/eng/Orthodox_Catechism_of_Philaret.htm#ii.xv.iii.i.p41.

Tracy, Wesley. "The Wesleyan Way to Spiritual Formation: Christian Spirituality in the Letters of John Wesley," January 1, 1987. https://nts.whdl.org/wesleyan-way-spiritual-formation-christian-spirituality-letters-john-wesley.

Vanderbilt University. "Indicators of Despair Rising Among Gen X-ers Entering Middle Age," Science Daily. Accessed May 1, 2019. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190415200249.htm.

Vickers, Jason E., ed. *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*. United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016.

Vogel, Dwight W., and Linda J. Vogel. *Sacramental Living: Falling Stars & Coloring Outside the Lines*. Nashville: Upper Room, 1999.

Waal, Esther de. *To Pause at the Threshold: Reflections on Living on the Border*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. *Eucharist and Eschatology*. Akron, OH: O S L Publications, 2002.

———. "Introduction." In *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, by John Wesley and Charles Wesley, V–XIV. Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995.

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2008.

Weil, Louis. "The Shape of Liturgical Formation: Vertical/Horizontal, Horizontal/Vertical." *Sewanee Theological Review* 52, no. 1 (2008): 33–47. http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001692546&site=ehost-live.

Wesley, John. "On Zeal." In *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 1991.

———. "The Duty Of Constant Communion (Sermon 101)," December 31, 1969. https://nts.whdl.org/duty-constant-communion-sermon-101.

Westerfield Tucker, Karen B. "Eucharist and Ecumenism." Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry.* United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016.

White, James F. *A Brief History of Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

———. *Introduction to Christian Worship*. 3rd ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

Whitely, Rob. "Is an Increase in Individualism Damaging Our Mental Health?" Psychology Today. Accessed May 1, 2019. https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/talking-about-men/201707/is-increase-in-individualism-damaging-our-mental-health.

Wiley, H. Orton. *Christian Theology.* Volume III. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1943.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. New York: HarperOne, 1988.

Willimon, William H. *Sunday Dinner: The Lords Supper and the Christian Life*. Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room, 1998.
Wright, N.T. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004.

## APPENDIX ONE

Other Views of Sacrament

Theologian and Yale Divinity School professor, Willie James Jennings, discusses the need for theology to embrace an imaginative role to seek a deeper grounding where people of all identities and backgrounds live and belong together. He bases his discourse on the idea that Western Christianity suffers from a "diseased social imagination."[252] He describes this as theology's inability "to see the profound connections between an embrace by very different people in the chapel and theological meditations articulated in the classroom, between connecting to the earth, to strangers, and to the possibilities of identities formed and reformed precisely in and through such actions."[253] The fundamental root cause of this disassociation is found in colonial expansion and Christianity's subservience to it. Jennings says the Church claimed the position of host, believing itself to be the proprietor of all spaces it walked, which included a demand among the native people groups to conform to its cultural and societal forms.[254] This authoritative stance is what further prohibits the Church from making space for conversation. Jennings refrains from advocating transformation in regard to reconciliation, partly because of its misuse within Western Christianity. Often, positions advocating for peace and espousing God's reconciliation are speaking from a position of power, in which their visions are ideological self-reflections. In contrast, Jennings hopes to join a conversation for a cosmopolitan citizenship. He believes that a global citizenship would reimagine all cultural interactions as signs of a people who develop a sense of belonging and activism that transcends both political

[252] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), introduction.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid. "owner of the spaces it entered, and demanded native peoples enter its cultural logics, its ways of being in the world, and its conceptualities."

and national boundaries and ethnic/racial identities.[255] His vision is certainly an idealized hope for a more reflective and faithful community.

Jennings work is characterized by three parts: displacement, translation, and intimacy. He recounts narratives of conquest, submission, and suffering. He laments Christianity's normalization of the slave trade, of its culpability in the suffering, dehumanizing, and sale of human persons within the Atlantic slave trade. This displacement becomes integrated within a Christian identity. This displacement distorted not only the narrative of creation but also the Christian imagination. The histories and narratives of native peoples are lost within colonialism, when Christian intellectuals sought both to safeguard their positions and bring education and reform to a subjected people. Jennings further illustrates this as he discusses the work of translating the Gospel. He notes there were some who translated the Gospel into native language and culture, while others sought to bring the native peoples into colonial existence. However, at the heart of it, these men often viewed the world through the eyes of colonialism and hoped for a progression of the native people into a civilized society. They believed they offered these "heathen" people the way to their salvation. As time passed, Jennings notes, the world could not move past a particular view of the world. Christianity was no exception. He criticizes the church for not embracing the full Christian imagination. The church embraced the colonial power and its segregation mindsets rather than embracing the biblical understandings of a unified people.[256] The colonialist times viewed transformation through death and domination, while a renewal of the Christian imagination requires the ability to see the other, opening oneself to people and the

[255] Jennings. "Such a world citizenship imagines cultural transactions that signal the emergence of people whose sense of agency and belonging breaks open not only geopolitical and nationalist confines but also the strictures of ethnic and racial identities."

[256] Ibid., chapter 5. "The Christian imaginary that is emerging out of colonialist power naturalized segregationalist mentalities and thereby denied one of its most basic and powerful imaginative possibilities, the deepest and most comprehensive joining of peoples."

land as revelations of God's divine nature. Jennings calls for a Christian imagination that no longer views a Christian identity above one's context, experiences, or world, rather an imagination which views all things as a great part of a bigger whole.

Jennings' assessment of Western Christianity's lack of social imagination is likely well-founded. In fact, the concern of consumerism is connected with a failure in Western Christianity to view the world outside its walls. Jennings' research and historical recounts through a theological lens provide a greater depth. His concern, however, is primarily connected to race and the theological developments which consented to subjugation and segregation. Recent events and movements[257] have exposed the continued racial inequality present in American society. Jennings does seem to argue for a theological and social revisioning of society without mention of worship or missional practices. A primary concern would be a theoretical reimaging of the world without practice. As James K.A. Smith discussed, habits are formative, being at times more transforming than intellectual exercise. Regardless, a wholistic revival of the Christian imagination is needed.

The Roman Catholic Church is the most influential branch of Christianity in the West, containing the largest membership of any Christian group combined.[258] It is fair to address their theology of the Eucharist as they have influenced the theologies of Christianity, including through difficulties such as the schism with the Eastern Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the separation of the Church of England. Roman Catholicism believes in the transubstantiation of the elements, as the Catechism states: "In the *institution narrative*, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the

[257] i.e. Black Lives Matter.
[258] "Roman Catholicism | History, Definition, & Facts | Britannica.Com," accessed December 13, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism.

species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all."[259]

Pennington describes the sacrament as a sacramental memorial, where the life of Christ is not only brought to mind but is made present. The sacrament "re-presents," makes present, the sacrifice of Christ, so that it is ever edifying the people. He writes: "In the Eucharist we have a powerful force, an infinitely powerful force to draw together, heal, and integrate our dispersed thoughts and desires, energies and projects. The sacramental, ritual gathering invites us to begin to open ourselves to and cooperate with the grace of unification."[260] For Catholics, as Pennington describes, the Eucharist as a *"memoria"* makes the realities of God present now, as much as there when Christ died for the world. It is this "eternal now," where "the whole created reality is now present." Pennington describes the Eucharist as an eternal declaration of love. The Father sent the Son incarnate to be offered as the greatest sacrifice and act of love creation has ever witnessed, which abides as God's forever present.[261] For Roman Catholics, the presence of Christ is physically present in the Eucharist from the moment of consecration, and this Presence speaks to the life of the people.

The Eastern Orthodox Church originated from the Great Schism in 1054 C.E. The Schism resulted from linguistic and cultural differences, likely tied to the political and geographical separation with the Roman and Byzantine Empires.[262] Despite this division, the

---

[259] "Catechism of the Catholic Church - The Sacrament of the Eucharist," accessed December 13, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm.
[260] M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., *The Eucharist: Wine of Faith Bread of Life* (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 2000), 7.
[261] Ibid., 60-61. "The greatest act of love in all creation is that act whereby the Son of God, become man, a part of our creation, offered to the Father and ours the greatest thing in all creation, his own human life. The supreme act of love, historically taking place on Calvary, abides ever in God's NOW, at the summit of all that is creation."
[262] "Eastern Orthodoxy | Definition, Origin, History, & Facts," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed December 13, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eastern-Orthodoxy.

theology of the Orthodox Church is similar to Roman Catholic. Specifically, to the Eucharist, they also believe Christ is "mystically present." The catechism of the Orthodox Church states:

> In the exposition of the faith by the Eastern Patriarchs, it is said that the word transubstantiation is not to be taken to define the manner in which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord; for this none can understand but God; but only thus much is signified, that the bread truly, really, and substantially becomes the very true Body of the Lord, and the wine the very Blood of the Lord.[263]

In the Divine Liturgy (Mass for Roman Catholics), the elements are consecrated and become the body and blood of Christ, offered to the people of God. Alexander Schmemann writes: "The eucharist . . . [is] the very manifestation and fulfilment of the Church in all her power, sanctity and fullness. Only by taking part in it can we increase in holiness and fulfil all that we have been commanded to be and do."[264] Partaking of the Eucharist is ingesting the very Presence of Christ who calls the people to be the body—fulfilling the calling placed on the church.

Alexander Schmemann is considered one of the most prominent Orthodox scholars. His writings on the Eucharist are viewed as important contributions to study on the sacrament. Thought by some to be the pinnacle of his work, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, unpacks the Divine Liturgy and comments upon the significance of the sacrament for the Church. He begins by observing a crisis within the Church in regard to sacramental appreciation, connection, and its implications for life. He cites the problem: "Issues relating to economics, politics, and psychology have replaced a Christian vision of the world at the service of God."[265] He finds a disconnect between the liturgy of the Church and the life of the world. He believes the

---

[263] "The Longer Catechism of The Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church • Pravoslavieto.Com," accessed December 13, 2018, http://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/eng/Orthodox_Catechism_of_Philaret.htm#ii.xv.iii.i.p41.
[264] Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur, First edition. edition (Crestwood, N.Y: St Vladimirs Seminary Pr, 2003), 24.
[265] Ibid., 10.

Eucharist is an intersection between the two worlds, proving they are not two separate entities but are one. He writes: "I do believe that precisely here, in this holy of holies of the Church, in this ascent to the table of the Lord in his kingdom, is the source of renewal for which we hope."[266] For Schmemann, the renewal of the Church is not found in a discovery of something new but in a return to its original vision. Throughout the text, he unfolds the liturgy of the sacrament, commenting on its importance for this renewal.

The gathering of the people commentates on the need for the assembly of believers as a community. Schmemann notes a trend towards individualistic worship, emphasized by the receiving of the Eucharist in personal cups. He claims theology has relegated the Eucharist within Western scholasticism. Worship has been reduced to mere moments, rather than a movement. Schmemann argues that the Eucharist is the fulfillment of the Church, rather than a single liturgical act. A possible origin of this reduction is due to the lack of symbolism within the Church. The Eucharist is at once a revelation of the world and a reorientation toward the eschatological nature of God's kingdom. The modern understanding of symbol is that it is a replacement for something it resembles. However, the original understanding of symbol is that it participates in the reality it represents because that reality cannot be manifested in any other way.

Schmemann further argues how the faith community is not an escape from the world. He says this separation is, in fact, for the sake of the world. He writes: "We separate ourselves from the world in order to bring it, in order to life it up to the kingdom, to make it once again the way to God and participation in his eternal kingdom."[267] The Church is called to live in unity and love, a reflection of the divine, realized in the sacrament. Schmemann contends this unity is lost,

[266] Schmemann, 10.
[267] Ibid., 53.

as is the symbolic power of the Eucharist, when contemporary theology prefers to translate the liturgy into modern language. He writes: "Theology is left with nothing to say and itself becomes apostasy."[268] Rather than reinterpret the Church in light of the world, life is reinterpreted through the liturgy of the Church. The Church is not an organization or a doctrine but an encounter with the kingdom of God.

Schmemann's contention is the loss of identity within the Church which can be restored through participation in the Divine Liturgy. He is less interested in restructuring the liturgy or translating it to contemporary culture. His discussion on the formative nature of liturgy—as a movement rather than a moment—is important. His wholistic concern with the sacrament is refreshing. However, within Wesleyan tradition, there is a tendency to diverge from his conclusion in that the liturgy should not be made available within contemporary language. This is one of the major contributions of the Protestant Reformation. Admittedly, there can be something lost if the liturgy loses its integrity for the sake of pandering to the masses. Here, Schmemann contributes to the discussion on consumerism's menace of making something available to temporally satisfy. The liturgy, for Schmemann, is timeless and symbolic of something greater than the material. The kingdom of God is not in opposition to the material, rather the world finds its fulfillment within the kingdom of God. Schmemann can help one understand there should be a renewal of the sacrament in a Free Church context in which adopting a High Church liturgy is not viable.

The difficulties in a unifying theology of the Eucharist lie in the understandings of the presence of Christ and whether there is an "open table." The four main differing interpretations of the presence of Christ—the theology of Jesus' words, "This is my body"—are represented

[268] Schmemann, 149.

among the Christian expressions. Either one takes a literal view of the elements becoming Christ's body (Roman Catholic and Orthodox position), a real presence around but no transformation of elements (Lutheran), a memorialist (Zwingli promoted this understanding), or a Calvinist view of spiritual presence.[269] Can these interpretations ever coexist? One would wonder if Christian tradition can overcome years of cultural and theological disagreements. Kilmartin expresses the challenges of transubstantiation interpretation: "The average Catholic synthesis, which assumes the objective presence on the altar, asks how the historical redemptive work which took place in space and time could have become 'eternalized.' But this question jumps the gun by assuming the fact of the sacramental objective presence of the historical sacrifice of the cross."[270] Many Protestants would agree there is a lack of biblical evidence, in the New Testament letters, to substantiate this interpretation of the Eucharist. They would consider the Roman Catholic position to be centered on philosophical rather than theological debate.[271]

Another, already briefly discussed, challenge to the Eucharist is the concept of an "open table." The Eucharistic theologies of some groups forbid participation except by the baptized—those that have been initiated and ritually accepted into the community of faith. However, it has been the tendency of some Protestant traditions to welcome all who profess belief in Christ.[272] The question of open communion extends to exactly who is permitted at the table. Brian Linnane argues for an open table due to its efficacious nature: "the propensity to exclude may, in fact,

---

[269] Staples, 212.
[270] Edward J. Kilmartin, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium," *Theological Studies* 55, no. 3 (September 1994): 405-57, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=9411284740&site=ehost-live, 438.
[271] Staples, 213-215.
[272] Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, "Eucharist and Ecumenism," Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry* (United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016), 280.

undermine the Eucharistic community's potential for effective counter-cultural witness. . ."[273] This invitation, he argues, should extend to those of "non-normative life choices."[274] The Ravena document outlined the foundational theologies of each church to be complimentary.[275] This resulted in the 2014 meeting of Pope Francis with the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church. In his address to the Orthodox church, the Pope communicated the desire for communion. He said: "Such communion will always be the fruit of that love which "has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (cf. Rom 5:5), a fraternal love which expresses the spiritual and transcendent bond which unites us as disciples of the Lord."[276] Unity in the church can be found in the Eucharist. John Drury writes: "For the practice of the Eucharist has one center: Christ himself, the crucified and risen one. I am seeking to highlight the importance of Christ's resurrection precisely in order to highlight the importance of Christ himself, who must be alive to occupy the living center of a living practice."[277] If Christ is the center, then all of the other theological concerns are peripheral. The one thing that could divide the church may also be the one thing bringing unity to the people of God.

---

[273] Brian F. Linnane, "Human Sexuality and Eucharistic Community: The Politics of Participation and Exclusion," *Theology & Sexuality: The Journal of the Institute for the Study of Christianity & Sexuality* 5, no. 9 (September 1998): 64-83, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=5600544&site=ehost-live, 82.

[274] Ibid., 69.

[275] "A Common Response to the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church Regarding the Ravenna Document 'Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority' by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 54, no. 1–4 (Spring-Winter 2009): 302–10, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=66961891&site=ehost-live.

[276] "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59, no. 1–4 (Spring-Winter 2014): 445–49, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=103675496&site=ehost-live, 447.

[277] John L. Drury, "Christology and Eucharist," Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry* (United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016), 55.

Christopher Grundy provides an alternative to the positive language attributed to Eucharistic practice. In his article, "This is My Body: Violence Against Women and the Ritual Formation of Men in Communion," Grundy entertains feminist critiques of the sacrament in order to determine the role it plays in objectifying women and acts of violence upon them. He specifically notes the works of Marjorie Procter-Smith and Pamela Cooper-White. The feminist critique is that the sacrament, like Scripture, may be inspired by the Divine but is hardly liberated of human, particularly male, influence.

Turning to the sacrament itself, he critiques the language of the Eucharistic ritual within the *Book of Worship of the United Church of Christ*. His argument is that in presenting the elements the language of "this is my body" and "this is my blood," does more than provoke remembrance. The presider, likely male, uses his authority, words, and actions to structure the worship environment.[278] This culminates in suggesting the generation of a symbolic human body. This body is then broken and poured out through the sharing of the bread and the cup. This action is described as "symbolic violence." He writes: "The language of Jesus' self-giving may point beyond the ritual environment, but the immediate referent is the visible and audible symbolic violence being done by the presider."[279] Subsequently, the assembled are invited to participate in this ritualized violence as they "take and eat" and "take and drink" of the broken body and poured out blood.

Grundy notes the critique is concerned with the modeled violence present in the ritual. The presider's language repeatedly defines the elements as a symbolic body. The people are

---

[278] Christopher Grundy, "This Is My Body: Violence against Women and the Ritual Formation of Men in Communion," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 93, no. 1 (2003): 13–24, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001424423&site=ehost-live, 16. "is also at work, structuring an environment through spoken word and action."
[279] Ibid., 17.

presented biblical narratives which minimize the violent language. Following these functions, they become participants in this violence to the symbolic body, validating the language and actions of the ritual. He writes: "All that the rite asks on a basic level, is that the participants cooperate with a structured environment in which they act in ways that witness, validate, and physically engage in the tearing, pouring, distributing, and consumption of something that the structure designates as Jesus' body and treats as an object."[280] The feminist critique, therefore, is how the sacrament condones objectification of the human body and ritualized violence. As behaviors are often informed by habitual practices, they argue this ritualization alters the participant's behavior (particularly male actions). The sacrament joins other societal systems which degrade women and promote violence of men against women. Grundy concludes with a call to reevaluate the ritual language and action in light of feminist concerns. This does not result in the abandonment of the Eucharistic practice, but he feels it does necessitate the influence of women.

One should not be quick to dismiss the concerns of the feminist critique. It might be better served to defer their concern, however, to a different focus. Feminism is largely concerned with the biblical and theological development within patriarchal societies. It is well-established how the clerical office is male-dominated, due in large part to the theological leanings of certain traditions. It is possible their concern may be less pointed if there was a female presider. The language of the liturgy certain connotes violence, though it centers this language upon Christ and symbolically upon the elements which represent the body of Christ (though this would be different in a tradition which adopts transubstantiation). The feminist critique focuses their concern upon violence against women, but their premise could be expanded to include racism,

[280] Grundy, 19.

homophobia, and xenophobia. Undoubtedly, there should be intentional effort to communicate and practice a faith which is equitable and loving. This does not exclude a review of the rites and rituals of the Christian Church in light of the kingdom of God for the sake of loving our neighbor.

The liturgy became individualized, focused upon the conversion of the listener. The communal nature of the meal was lost. However, Senn notes: "Appealing to ancient practice and contemporary need, liturgical renewal sees the Eucharist as the summit of the liturgical life of the church and the source of Christian mission in the world."[281] As Christians seek to rediscover the lost meanings of the liturgy, particularly in the Eucharist, they are rediscovering the truth it proclaims for life. Senn characterizes the early church gatherings as having been: "socially revolutionary, including slaves and masters, patrons and clients, at the same table eating and drinking the same fare, as befits their common baptism into the one body of Christ."[282] The communal and egalitarian nature of the Eucharist is indicative of the kingdom it calls people to live in. It is indicative of the Person it represents/ becomes as a sacrament—a "visible word."[283]

Robert Jenson, a prominent Lutheran Theologian, described sacraments as "visible" expressions of God's word. He describes a sacrament in this way: "His [God's] self-communication in one way or another attaches to itself that "visible" reality that stands out there over against our subjectivity; and then that self-communication comes to us with that reality to be itself an external, "visible" word. Just so God truly addresses us; just so he speaks to us from outside us. God's word is a word with a bath or a meal or a gesture."[284] This understanding of a

---

[281] Grundy, 30.
[282] Ibid., 7.
[283] Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 3.
[284] Ibid.

sacrament as self-communication in reality is not found in Lutheran theology alone. Allowing, of course, for variances in the perceived Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the whole of Christian theology sees a "communication" taking place in the sacraments. Mark MacIntosh, an Episcopalian priest, writes:

> In Christ's self-offering . . .God draws the whole creation more and more into correspondence with the Trinitarian offering of God's own life. . . .What we are trying to imagine is a pattern of life in which the whole creation offers itself to God through the free and loving offering of the human community of persons—a self-giving community that the church represents and draws the world into, so that it becomes attuned to the Trinitarian self-giving of God.[285]

God offers the God-self to humanity in the Incarnation—God and humanity coming together. The divine is once more given to people at Pentecost. Jesus instructed the disciples (as previously iterated in Luke 22) to "remember" him by this sacrament of Eucharist. It is the "body" and "blood" of Jesus, the divine, presented in earthly form, the bread and wine. Whether one believes in transubstantiation or consubstantiation or as memorial only, what cannot be denied is the sacred act of the Eucharist is more than just a ritual. It prophesies into the life of the community and the believer.

[285] Mark McIntosh, *Mysteries of Faith*, vol. 8, The New Church's Teaching Series (Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 2000), 161.

## APPENDIX TWO

Liturgy and the People of God

The liturgy of the Church was always intended to be multi-dimensional. The very definition of liturgy, as commonly understood, is "the work of the people." Spiritual formation becomes a response to the revelation. Commenting on the teaching of Fr. Ashkar, Robert Marine writes: "the Liturgy and the Catechism lend themselves to the experience of ascending the mountain with the Lord, experiencing a transfiguration based on our identity, relationship and communion with God, neighbor and self, and living that vision in our daily lives unto fulfillment in the kingdom of God eternally."[286] The liturgy becomes an experience of worship as it simultaneously is a knowledge of worship. Janine Morgan writes: "At the cognitive level, rituals organize experiences and inform beliefs; in terms of affect, they shape the experiential life of the community; evaluatively, rituals provide a basis for ethical and behavioral standards."[287] Experiencing the liturgy involves a process of learning our identity as the people of God, interpreting our world, shaping our actions, and edifying our relationships. Spiritual formation occurs as a process of partnering with the grace of God through the liturgy and works of piety: both cognitively and experientially. The sacramental life evolves out of these experiences as a recognition and relationship with the divine in all aspects of life.

Even full-time ministry, the ordained leadership of the body of Christ, should be more than learning about God and communicating this knowledge to one's congregation. The clergy cannot overcome their basic humanness. William Willimon says as much: "Every time your stomach growls and you feel pangs of emptiness, it reminds you that you are a creature

[286] Robert A. Marine, "Making the Most of Religious Education Using Literature and the Arts To Enliven the Message!," April 1997, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED411050, 11.
[287] Morgan, 446.

dependent upon the gifts of the Creator and the gifts of others. You may have achieved much in life that is worthwhile and enduring, but you have not overcome your basic human need for food and for love."[288] Every minister comes to a point of emptiness. As the earlier research illustrated, an increasing number of clergy are not satiating this hunger and so they leave, hoping to find the answer outside of formal ministry. Although a unified theory of clergy departure may not exist, or a subsequent solution, Tom Schwanda gives us a glimpse of an alternative:

> It is also significant that outside of the current expansion of evangelical Anglicanism with their strong sacramentalism there is less appreciation for the Lord's Supper than the first two centuries of evangelical spirituality. It could be argued one reason for Anglicanism's increased membership is due to the spiritual hunger of those who long for deeper intimacy with God including a more serious appreciation for the Lord's Supper.[289]

One consistent deficiency in evangelical Christianity is the lack or underdevelopment of a sacramental theology. Specifically, the Eucharist, being reduced to a Zwinglian-type memorialism, has lost its significance as a means of grace. As Schwanda suggests, it may be time to reconsider the place of this sacrament in Christian spiritual formation. Rediscovering the importance of the Eucharist leads one to begin the step into the sacramental life.

---

[288] William H. Willimon, *Sunday Dinner: The Lords Supper and the Christian Life* (Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room, 1998), 67.

[289] Tom Schwanda, "Evangelical Spiritual Disciplines: Practices for Knowing God," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 10, no. 2 (2017): 220-36, http://ezproxy.nts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiAZI180131001559&site=ehost-live, 235.