

NB
M. TH
SABIE

**A EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY FROM AN
AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of**

**The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary
Ogbomoso, Nigeria**

**In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology**

by

**J. C. POOL LIBRARY
BAPTIST SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA**

Jeffrey Adebowale Salako

June, 1998

99070

ABSTRACT

The theology underlying the liturgy of the Eucharist has for long been conceived by the Church in Africa through the eyes of the Christian missionary who first brought the gospel to Africa. That this theology is foreign to the religious and cultural experience of the average African Christian is a fact that is responsible for the relatively insignificant impact which participation in the sacrament has on his or her spiritual life.

This writer is faced with the challenge of constructing a biblical and theological understanding of the Eucharist in such way as to make it more relevant to the concrete situation of the Church in Africa today. The Eucharist, when properly understood within the context of the African worldview, would take on a new significance.

In responding to this challenge the writer has examined briefly the theological basis for contextualizing the theology of the Eucharist as well as the African worldview. Thus, on the basis of this, a eucharistic theology has been developed that would be at once truly African and biblical. This contextual theology has certain implications for the overall spiritual growth of the believer as well as of the Church.

CONCLUSION

A. THE IMPLICATIONS OF A CONTEXTUAL EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY

This concluding chapter is divided into three parts. The first part will outline the implications of our quest for the personal spiritual development of the believer, Christian community, as well as for a collective ministry to those outside of the faith-community. The second part will attempt to summarize the major points of the study, while the third will provide a brief direction of further research into the field of this investigation, i. e. constructing a contextual theology of the Eucharist.

1. Implication for an Enhanced Personal Spiritual Growth of the Believer

The model of the Eucharistic theology presented in this study has a serious implication for the personal spiritual development of the average believer in the African Church. It ensures that she is in constant fellowship with the Lord with whom, in obedience, she regularly communes through a sharing together of the Eucharistic meal (cf. Luke 22:19). Because of the recognition of the fact that the Lord is spiritually present in a real sense at the Supper, there is a conscious determination on the part of the average Christian to live in wholeness of life in preparation to celebrate life with her Lord at the table (cf. Psalm 15). This awareness strongly impacts her day-to-day life through a devotional commitment to the moral and ethical teachings of the faith community as recorded in the Scriptures (cf. John 14:21-24).

The constant consciousness of the need to remain in favour with the Lord through a life of unreserved commitment to His will and purpose invariably spurs the believer on to a life of regular self-examination (cf. I Corinthians 11:28;

II Corinthians 13:5). This spiritual discipline is a vital basis for any serious Christian growth to take place. The deeply seated encounter with the Lord at the celebration of the Eucharist will no doubt intensify a sustained experience of an on going fellowship with the Lord. This has the tendency to be strongly reflected in all other areas of life- relationships with others in and outside of the community, attitudes to study, work and recreation and so forth.

Finally, the spiritual nourishment derived at the Lord's table may enable the believer to be consciously aware of a rich source of divine strength from which physical as well as spiritual strength could be drawn as and when needed. This is done through a genuine appropriation of the Eucharistic presence of Christ by faith (cf. John 6:1-15; Luke 24:13-35; Matthew 28:20b). This strength is efficacious for the healing of spiritual and physical illness, overcoming evil spiritual forces, and living a victorious Christian life.

2. Implication for an Enhanced Christian Community

The second implication of our argued position comes to bear directly on the need to improve the quality of community among believers, bringing about sustained unity at all levels of human intercourse. As each member of the community experiences definite growth in their personal spiritual lives, the logical result of this is that this growth takes on a corporate dimension. In other words, the quality and levels of interaction among fellow believers is enhanced.

When the community recognizes the genuine membership of all true believers, and on the basis of this, enters into a relationship of koinonia fellowship' with one another, a solid basis for a contagious church life is already laid (cf. John 13:35). A regular and uninhibited participation in the celebration of the Eucharist of all who genuinely belong to the faith-community further strengthens this bond of unity. This implies that no one, under the guise

of church discipline, may be regarded as a 'lesser' member of the community and on that basis excluded from the fellowship which serves to include, not exclude them i.e, Jesus lays emphasis on 'all' (cf. Matthew 26:27).

With the above in place, the body of believers will tend, more and more, to see themselves as one (cf. Romans 12:4; I Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 5:30). This is without prejudice to the presence, in the church, of others who are like Judas, since he (Judas) himself was not excluded from the meal (Luke 22:1-6, 21ff). This further implies that a genuine Christian community would seek constantly not only to forewarn one another of impending spiritual disaster, but also to restore back to fellowship (cf. Matthew 26:20ff, 31-35; 21:15-25).

Finally, a genuine sense of Christian togetherness is fostered by a regular assembling of the entire faith-community to fellowship with their Lord at his table through whom they are strengthened and sustained for their common mission. All disciplinary policies will then be conditioned upon this over-arching objective, so as to encourage, not discourage, this sense of oneness (cf. John 17:20-21).

3. Implication for a 'Concrete Witness' to the Unsaved Within the Faith-Community

Although a last implication, it is nonetheless a very important one. A witnessing ministry is carried out not only when the Church moves out to witness to unbelievers. This is only the beginning. It is also well known that our life within the community is equally a basis for any meaningful and effective witnessing, since each time we gather together at the Lord's table, we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:26).

When, upon the Church's outreach efforts, unbelievers come to fellowship with the believers, the Church's real witness is put to the test. The 'visitors' perceive an atmosphere of brotherliness and joyous celebration at the

