The Church as a Eucharistic and Prophetic Community in India: A Theological Exploration into the Challenges and Implications of a Eucharistic Ecclesiology Based on the Early Church and the Statements of the Indian Theological Association (ITA)

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A Dissertation
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Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology

By
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ABSTRACT


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May 2018

Dissertation supervised by Dr. George S. Worgul, Jr.

Theological trends change from time to time to make the faith more meaningful and relevant to the contemporary context. To an extent, the Second Vatican Council, by its commitment to two concepts, “ressourcement” and “aggiornamento,” succeeded in this mission in the last century. The communion ecclesiology of the Council, which has its foundation in the sacrament of Eucharist, shows that the centrality of the Eucharist in the Church cannot be overlooked, because the ecclesial body of the Church is built up by the Eucharistic body of Christ. Any Eucharist-centered ecclesiology is prophetic and eschatological by nature. The “Eucharistic” and “prophetic” dimensions of the Church are not exclusive as they are seen today. Rather, these are intertwined and mutually fulfilling. This was seen very strongly in the Church of the apostolic times, and this thrust continued in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Though there are different models of ecclesiology, the Indian Church is in need of regaining the Eucharistic ecclesiology so that it can be more “prophetic” in India and face its challenges.
courageously. Even five decades after the Second Vatican Council, the teachings of the Council have not brought about many changes in the Indian Church. Though the Church tries to be involved in social issues, clericalism or hierarchism still adversely affects the Indian Church today. The Indian Theological Association’s indigenous ecclesiology serves as a mirror on the Indian Church, reflecting both the face of the Indian Church and the face of the country. In these reflections, the Church can engage herself in the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial context of India. I argue that if the Indian Theological Association would emphasize the centrality of the Eucharist in its indigenous ecclesiology, then its ecclesiology would be more prophetic and appealing to the Indian Church. In the pluralistic context of India, it would help the Indian Church to be challenged in its way of life and to become truly the Body of Christ and a prophetic witness to the nation.
DEDICATION

My MCBS confreres who have dedicated their lives to Eucharistic ministry
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Being a member of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS), it has been always my pleasure and enthusiasm to learn more about the sacrament of Eucharist and to be challenged by it. My doctoral program and especially my research on the Eucharistic ecclesiology at Duquesne University was a pilgrimage blessed with divine providence and human assistance. This research was an intense period of systematic learning and personal insights in my life. As I make the finishing touches on my dissertation, I thank Almighty God for guiding me with his wisdom and blessing me with wonderful scholars and benevolent people around me to make this research possible.

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<td>AA</td>
<td>Apostolicam Actuositatem</td>
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<td>AAS</td>
<td>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</td>
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<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Ad Gentes</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEM</td>
<td>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBCI</td>
<td>Catholic Bishops Conference of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Catechism of the Catholic Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Caritas in Veritate</td>
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<td>DC</td>
<td>Dominicae Cenae</td>
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<td>DH</td>
<td>Dignitatis Humanae</td>
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<td>DM</td>
<td>Dialogue and Mission</td>
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<td>DV</td>
<td>Dei Verbum</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>Ecclesia in Asia</td>
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<td>EE</td>
<td>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</td>
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<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Evangelii Gaudium</td>
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<td>Evangelium Gaudium</td>
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\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{SC} \quad \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}
\item \textit{SCar} \quad \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}
\item \textit{SRS} \quad \textit{Sollicitudo Rei Socialis}
\item \textit{WCC} \quad \textit{World Council of Churches}
\end{itemize}
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Vatican Council II’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, says that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life,” and it is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the members of the Church “manifest in a concrete way that unity of the People of God” (*LG* 11).¹ This statement, which sums up the indissoluble relationship between the sacrament of Eucharist and the Church, underlines that the Eucharist penetrates the “origin,” “being,” and the “destiny” of the Church. Apostles and the early Christians, who took the Lord’s Supper into their hearts, gathered in house churches for prayer and the Lord’s Supper. Celebrating the Eucharist, the early community told the story of what Jesus said and did on the night he was handed over and, at the same time, this helped them to examine what they do and ought to do when they celebrate the Eucharist.² When the followers of Christ began to grow in number their assembly was called “*ekklesia* of God,” i.e., the Church.³ Thus, the “being” i.e., the nature of the Church was determined in the context of the sacrament of Eucharist. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper also was a time to proclaim their faith in the second coming of the Lord. Thus, they anticipated their destiny in the Eucharistic celebration, i.e., a foretaste of their participation in the eschatological kingdom. Eugene LaVerdiere’s words that to know the Eucharist in the New Testament and the early Church, one has only to look at the composition and actual life of the Church and, vice versa, to know the Church, one has only to look at the

¹ The Eucharist as the foundational sacrament of the Church very often recurs in the documents of Vatican Council II. The Council, which teaches that “no Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist” (*PO* 6), brings to forefront the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church (cf. SC chapter 2; SC 2, 6, 47, 48, 56, *LG* 3, 7, 26; *PO* 5).


way it celebrates the Eucharist, explains this relationship between the Eucharist and the Church in the history.

During the Middle Ages and the modern time, the Church gave emphasis to the “how” of the Eucharist that explained the nature of the Eucharist instead of the “why” of the Eucharist that explained the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church, which had been the concern of the Fathers of the Church. In the twentieth century, Henri de Lubac, “a modern father of the Church,” tried to regain the faith of the Fathers of the Church in the Eucharistic ecclesiology. Going back to the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the history of the Church of their times, de Lubac reasserted that “Eucharist makes the Church.” This idea is typical of the liturgical theology of the Orthodox Church, and theologians like Nicholas Afanasiev and John D. Zizioulas have upheld this concept throughout their writings in contemporary times. Drawing spirit from Vatican Council II’s commitment to ressourcement, this relationship between the Church and the Sacrament of Eucharist has been undergoing vehement discussion in the years since the Council. The Council’s upholding of the communion ecclesiology, which is founded on the sacrament of the Eucharist, has also contributed in this endeavor both in the ecclesiastical and theological circles. Thus, it has impacted ecclesial documents, sacramental theology, ecclesiology, and the contextual theologies that gave emphasis to theological praxis.

The Church witnessed the development of various contextual theologies after Vatican Council II, and it challenged theologians “to leave their temple of sanctuary” to embrace the

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4 LaVerdiere, 187.
insecurity in their contexts. This was also true with the Indian Church. For Indian theologians, for whom theologizing “is making one’s faith come alive, meaningful, and contextual,” this was also a challenge. Though the discovering of the presence of the Divine in the concrete Indian life situations was not an easy task, the Indian concept of Divine Presence, *Isha vasyam idam sarvam* (this whole world is fully pervaded by God), was a great encouragement for their theological endeavor. The inception of the Indian Theological Association (ITA) was the result of such an attempt to theologize in the Indian context, proper to the situations of India. ITA, from its very beginning, has tried to theologize in a manner specifically relevant to the Indian context. The yearly statements of the ITA that deal with the cultural, social, economic, political, religious, and ecclesial realities are real expressions of its commitment to contextualization.

0.1. The Background of this Study

This research is an attempt to delineate the importance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in general and its importance in the Indian Church in particular. Various factors have influenced me to make this research on the relevance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in India. Two important factors among them are my educational journey and two questions that struck me on this journey. First, during my theology course (B.Th.) in the seminary, I had the chance to take a number of courses on the Eucharist and my B.Th. thesis was an exegetical study on 1 Cor 10: 1-22 and 11:17-34, in which the Pauline concept of the Eucharist is unveiled. This helped me to think

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7 Ibid.


9 Here onwards, Indian Theological Association will be abbreviated as ITA.

10 Paul makes a dialogue between the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the Corinthian Community and their way of life and present the Lord’s Supper as a challenge to examine their way of life.
how important is the sacrament of Eucharist in the Church, not only in her constitution, but also in the social, cultural, and ecclesial context. My thesis of the Licentiate Degree (L.Th.) was “Eucharist: A Sacramental Call to Perfection,” which was an attempt to present the importance of the Eucharist in the salvation history. Another factor that influenced the selection of my topic was my licentiate course in theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshethram, Bangalore, where I had the privilege to attend the classes of a few professors who are prophets of the contextual theology in India. They were members of the ITA and they emphasized that Indian theologians must try to theologize making use of Indian categories instead of using theology imported from Christianity in the West. I was also privileged to teach a course, “Social dimension of the Eucharist” in our seminary that helped me to explore the social application of the Eucharist in the context of the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Secondly, two questions greatly inspired me to get into this endeavor. Few years ago, a priest friend who had been doing his master’s degree in theology shared an experience with me. He had a conversation with his professor on his topic of interest. Being a member of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, he expressed his wish to conduct research on the sacramental aspect of the Eucharist. The professor’s response was a question: “Does your religious order face any existential crisis?” Another question I had to face personally was during the presentation of my seminar paper on the Catholic Social Teaching. My topic was “Social Commitment and Sacramentality of the Church: A Eucharistic Perspective of Social Action.” My professor asked me why I picked up the sacrament of Eucharist, which is a sacrament of division in the Church, to show its relationship with the social action. From my background of the understanding of the Eucharist these questions encouraged me to study more about the importance of the Eucharist in the ecclesial life.
0.2. The Issue Under Consideration

There has been a high emphasis on a Eucharist-centered life and the Eucharistic ecclesiology in ecclesiastical writings and documents after Vatican Council II. Though the focus of the communion ecclesiology of the Council is maintained in these documents, they are not free from the hold of triumphalism and hierarchical authoritarianism. On the other hand, in the wider theological circle, baptismal ecclesiology has been given more emphasis with an ecumenical interest and the Eucharistic ecclesiology is not given appropriate attention. However, the emergence of local theologies in the second half of the twentieth century emphasized the theological praxis taking the cultural, social, and economic life of the people seriously. These theologies, which also played an important role in bringing the teachings of Vatican Council II to the local level, considered the sacrament of the Eucharist as a prophetic symbol challenging the life of Christians. Though the contextual theologies emphasized the practical or the living aspect of the Eucharist, they are also not without limitations. One of the major limitations of these contextual theologies, especially Liberation Theology and Feminist theology, is that they try to concentrate on the earthly realities without giving appropriate attention to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. In Christian understanding, the reality of life is more than social and temporal and embraces the world hereafter to which the Eucharist mysteriously points.

In many respects, the communion ecclesiology of the Council, which has its foundation in the sacrament of Eucharist, seems to be an ideology in the Indian Church. The Church in India seems to be highly institutionalized upon a triumphalist base, when hierarchism and clericalism have divided “the people of God” into “administrators” and “administered.” Instead of the institutionalized Church, ITA which is committed to theologize in the cultural, social, economic, political, and ecclesial context of India. ITA envisions an indigenous ecclesiology for India. In
its vision, the Church must be prophetic rather than institutional. ITA believes that the context of the Church in India has certain similarities with the early Church, which had to face a difficult time of transition. ITA recognizes the fact that the present day ‘crisis,’ which we see in the Church in India, as a minority group among many religions, “has some of the characteristics of the struggle of the infant Church, predominantly Jewish, even Judaistic, when it discovered that the Spirit was at work also among the Gentiles.”\textsuperscript{11} ITA believes that discovering the mysterious presence of Christ in India or the divine presence in other religions of India, in line with the teaching of Vatican Council II, will help the Church in India to respect the secular nature of the country and to work for the welfare of the people of India.

However, one deficiency in the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA, which is concerned about the importance of the prophetic function of the Church, is that it does not give due attention to the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist, which was a typical character of the early Church. The Church, which is founded on the Eucharist, is called to become a Eucharistic-centered community in the world in its structure, vision, and witness. The model of the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles, having a life centered on the Eucharist with sharing and concern for the brethren (cf. Acts 2:46; 4:32), has been cherished as an ideal community for Christians of all ages and serves as a mirror to look into and be transformed. The most important particularity of the early Church was the interconnection between faith and life, which impacted and determined the theology of the early Church. In the first three centuries, in which the early Christians had a liturgical theology as “theologia prima,” the Eucharistic

celebration was an expression of the life of the Church, and thus, the history of the Eucharist, the most important liturgical act of the Church, could be seen also as the history of the Church.

The life of the early Christian community shows that Eucharist and the prophetic mission of the Church cannot be separated, because the sacrament of the Eucharist entrusts every Christian with a prophetic mission which is to be carried out in his/her life. This research explores the challenges and implications of a Eucharistic ecclesiology in India based on the early Church and the statements of ITA. It also addresses the deficiency of the Eucharistic element in the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA. In India, the land of numerous religions, the Church is called to become a Eucharistic community by witnessing a Eucharistic way of life. The statements of ITA that deal with the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial realities in India, invite the Church to be involved in these issues with prophetic valor. ITA takes a prophetic role in this regard and tries to give a Eucharistic face to the Church in India by inviting the Church to engage in self-criticism and to be involved in the social issues, so that the Church can be a sacrament of Christ in India.

0.3. Methodology and Research Question

The methodology employed in this research is inter-disciplinary. This is an analytical, critical, comparative, thematic, and contextual study of the Eucharistic ecclesiology with particular emphasis on the Indian Church. This research is also historical, scriptural, literal, and sacramental. The first chapter is an historical, literal, and analytical study of the institution narratives, the early Church, and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. It shows the importance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in the early Church. The second chapter is a literal and analytical study of theological retrospection in Vatican II and the factors that led to it and the
aftermath. A thematic and critical study of the post-council documents and contextual theologies enrich this chapter. The research becomes specifically contextual in the third and the fourth chapters. The third chapter is an analytical, contextual, and critical study on the characteristics of ITA and its yearly statements which point to an indigenous ecclesiology. A comparative and critical method is pursued in the last chapter to sketch the differences and similarities between the ecclesiologies of the early Church and the ITA. A critical and a thematic approach to the context is employed to present the challenges of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in India. Finally, a study of the context with particular emphasis to the implications of a Eucharistic ecclesiology is made in order to reach appropriate practical suggestions and conclusions.

The central question of this research is: what is the present significance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, which was the central characteristic of the early Church and which had a theological retrospection in the documents of Vatican Council II, and how does it enhance ITA’s prophetic vision of the Church in India, in the context of the socio-economic inequalities, plurality of religions, cultures, Churches, and Rites in India? There are other questions that are addressed in each chapter on the way to the completion of this project. These questions unveil the objectives of the research step by step.

The first chapter “Church as a Eucharistic Community: An Experience and Witness of the early Church” is an attempt to answer the question: how do the institution narratives and the texts on the Eucharist in the New Testament explain the life of the early Church as a Eucharistic community? This chapter also tries to answer what is the teaching of the Fathers of the Church on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church? It is a thematic exploration of the biblical foundations of the Eucharistic ecclesiology and how they are related to the life of the earliest Church. The discussions on the institution narratives and their liturgical contexts and
ecclesiological meaning, the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul’s concept of the Body of Christ and *koinonia* which implies a concern for the members of the Body of Christ set the background for how the Church in the first century understood that sharing the Eucharist united her to Christ. They set foundations for the future understanding of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, i.e., the Eucharistic communion builds the Church. The chapter also analyses the writings of the Fathers of the Church in the first five centuries to show the indissoluble relationship between the Eucharist and the ecclesial life. They are indications of how the Church in the early centuries valued Eucharistic ecclesiology.

The major question addressed in chapter two “Church as a Eucharistic Community: A Theological Retrospect in Vatican Council II” is: how did the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church re-emerge Vatican Council II? It also addresses the following questions: what are the factors that led to the communion ecclesiology of the Council? How did it influence the ecclesial life in the following years of the Council? Attempting to answer these questions, the research begins with the renewed interest in the study of the Fathers of the Church in the twentieth century, which had a great impact on the study on Eucharist and Ecclesiology. Henri de Lubac, who reasserted the belief of the Fathers of the Church that Eucharist builds up the Church, played a significant role in this theological retrospection. This chapter also presents the Eucharistic ecclesiology of two Orthodox theologians, Nicholas Afanasiev and John Zizioulas, which will be relevant for the Indian Church that has a significant percent of the Eastern Christians. Next, the chapter presents the ecclesial documents that perpetuated the streams of thought that arose in the Council. Lastly, the chapter delineates the emergence of local or contextual theologies after Vatican II that contributed to rediscovering the prophetic call of the

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Church and her social commitment in the present world. The research delimits this section with Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, and Dalit Theology and explaining how the sacrament of Eucharist is an energizer and powerful symbol in the development of these theologies.

Chapter three “Indian Theological Association: Heralds of an Indigenous Ecclesiology for India” tries to sketch the characteristics of the indigenous ecclesiology envisioned by ITA. In this attempt, the research tries to find answers to the following questions: what are the major characteristics of the ITA? How did ITA address the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial issues in the process of theologizing in the Indian context with prophetic vigor? What are the characteristics of the indigenous ecclesiology envisioned by ITA? This chapter begins with a short history of the origin, vision, and characteristics of the ITA such as prophetic vision, commitment to liberation and nation-building, experience as starting point, orthopraxis, and emphasis on inculturation. Next, an investigation of the ITA’s context of theologizing is made in order to provide an understanding of the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial realities of India to which a contextual theology is supposed to respond. These realities constitute the *locus theologicus* of the indigenous theology in India. The yearly statements of the ITA on these realities are clear expressions of the prophetic function it has shouldered. Finally, this research points out major features of the indigenous ecclesiology of ITA.

The final chapter, “Challenges and Implications of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in India,” is an attempt to answer how the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA could be made more significant and relevant with the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist as seen in the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church. This chapter begins with an explanation of the similarities and differences between the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church and the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA. Next, the research moves to the question: what are the challenges of a
Eucharistic ecclesiology in India? It tries to focus on the characteristics of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, namely communal, prophetic, eschatological, and pragmatic that challenges the ministry, mission, spirituality, and life of the Church in India. Finally, the research presents the practical implications of Eucharistic ecclesiology in India.

0.4. Status Quaestionis and the Scope of this Study

A broad thematic division of this research could be made as follows: 1) the relevance of a Eucharistic ecclesiology, which was prominent in the early centuries, both in the universal Church and the Indian Church, and 2) the importance of an indigenous ecclesiology in India. There have been many studies on these two themes in the last century and especially in the last couple of decades. The studies on the Eucharistic ecclesiology mainly deal with the ecclesiology of the early centuries. In the Catholic Church, it was Henri de Lubac who tried to regain the centrality of the Eucharist in the ecclesial life in the last century. De Lubac’s scholarly work, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, examines the change that occurred in the meaning of *Corpus Mysticum* in history, i.e., from the early Church to the Middle Ages, and how it changed the central focus on the Eucharist in the Church. In the Orthodox Church, two great theologians who explored the importance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in the last century were Nicholas Afanasiev and John D. Zizioulas. Afanasiev’s *The Church Which Presides in Love* presents the Eucharist as the sacrament that builds the unity in the Church,

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because the fulness of the Church is realized in the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{14} John D Zizioulas’ \textit{Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries} makes a systematic study on how the unity of the Church was maintained during the first three centuries.\textsuperscript{15} In this work, Zizioulas argues that the starting point of the historical search of the unity of the Church must be the unity of the Eucharist and the Bishop that leads us to the sacramentality of the Church and Eucharistic ecclesiology. Recognizing the contributions of two theologians from the east and west to the Eucharistic ecclesiology, namely Henri de Lubac and John D. Zizioulas, Paul McPartlan made a comparative study presenting the Eucharist as central to the dialectic between history and eschatology, \textit{The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue}, which came to light in 1993.\textsuperscript{16}

Contextual theologies, especially Liberation Theology in Latin America, encouraged Indian theologians to take the context of India seriously while theologizing. As a result, they have been theologizing in their particular social, cultural, religious, and ecclesial context, and trying to contribute an indigenous theology to the global Church for the last couple of decades. ITA could bring many theologians under one umbrella and could contribute to the formation of an indigenous theology taking the Indian context seriously. These theologians are convinced of the need of an indigenous ecclesiology in the Indian context considering the prophetic and


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Cf.} Paul McPartlan, \textit{The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue} (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1993). There is also another study from McPartlan which came out in 1995: \textit{Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology.}
liberative dimensions of the Church in India. Though most of the yearly statements of the ITA point to the prophetic role of the Church, the annual statement in 1983, “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology” is unique in this series. However, there are a few individual studies on Indian context, ecclesiology, perspectives on the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II, etc. that deal with the themes discussed in this research. The important ones among them would be the following: Kuncheria Pathil’s *Theology of the Church: New Horizon*, which deals with the ecclesiology of the Indian context; Mathew Vellanickal’s *Church: Communion of Individual Churches; Biblico-Theological Perspectives on the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, which is a scholarly work on the communion ecclesiology, presents the Syro-Malabar Church as an individual Church in the Indian context in the last chapter; and Mathew Paikada’s *Indian Theology of Liberation as an Authentic Christian Theology: Hermeneutical and Theological Perspectives on Dialogue, Inculturation and Liberation* considers the Indian realities seriously.

There is also a doctoral dissertation which considers the context of India seriously by Vijaya Joji Babu Valle, "Becoming Indian: Towards an Indian Contextual Ecclesiology."

The uniqueness of this research is that it is a search for the challenges and the implications of a Eucharistic ecclesiology considering the social, religious, and ecclesial context in India. This research presents that the Eucharistic and prophetic dimensions of the Church are not exclusive but mutually intertwined and intersect each other, because the Eucharistic community is a figure of the eschatological community and the kingdom values underlined by

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20 Vijaya Joji Babu Valle, "Becoming Indian: Towards an Indian Contextual Ecclesiology" (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2010).
the Church in its prophetic mission point to a future community as its fulfillment. Thus, both the Eucharistic ecclesiology and contextual theology find certain commonalities. It also shows that both the sacraments and worship in the Church and the prophetic function of the Church are to be considered equally important in the life of the Church.

This is also the first to examine the contribution of ITA to the indigenous theology, and particularly to the Indian ecclesiology. Discussing the ITA’s interest to study the social problems and find solutions for them, this research also considers how ITA has contributed to nation building. Thus, this work brings to light the contributions of ITA to the contextual theology and the Indian Church for being part of the building of the nation, so that the young buds of the Indian theologians would be inspired by the paths of the older generation, which could make the contextual theology in India grow strong with new prophetic enthusiasm.

0.5. Title of the Research

The primary focus of this research is on the importance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in India which challenges the Indian Church to be a prophetic Church. By “Eucharistic ecclesiology” this research means the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist in ecclesial life and theology. This idea is found in the ecclesiology of the early Church and also revisited in the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Council II. The words “the Church in India” and “the Indian Church” which are used interchangeably mean the Catholic Church in India, which is a communion of three individual churches: Latin Church, Syro-Malabar Church, and Syro-Malankara Church. However, this research does not exclude the other churches in India, because it deals with the Catholic Church’s relationship with non-Catholic churches, especially the churches of St. Thomas Christians. The challenges and implications of the Eucharistic
ecclesiology are universally significant, but considering the context of this research is limited to the context of the Church in India. “The challenges” mainly means the challenges the Church in India faces in its internal structure, theology, life and witness, etc. “Implications” of the Eucharistic ecclesiology are very wide, but this research tries to present certain aspects of it in the context of certain issues to be addressed in the Indian Church.

By the “early Church,” which is mentioned in the title, I mean the Church of the first five centuries with special emphasis to the earliest Church seen of the Acts of the Apostles, which is always considered as an ideal Church in the history of the Church. As it is not easy to present the ecclesiology of the first five centuries, I have delimited it to the writings of the Fathers of the Church. “Indian Theological Association” mentioned in the title is a forum of theologians in India which tries to theologize from the context of India with special emphasis on the involvement of the Church in the social, economic, and political issues of the society and advocate inculturation in India. As the title shows, though I have used the writings of many Indian theologians in this research, my primary focus is on the yearly statements of ITA and especially its views on the indigenous ecclesiology for India, to know the position of the forum.

In the body of the research, two terms having similar meaning namely “inculturation” and “contextualization” have been used very often. Though both are closely related and deal with a particular situation, contextualization is wider than inculturation. The term inculturation is used in relation to the missionary work of the Church where the Gospel has not been rooted. In the process of inculturation a particular culture is recognized by adapting certain elements from that culture. It is mostly done in liturgical practices of the Church. On the other hand, the term

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contextualization is more suitable in theology. For example, the context of theologizing in India cannot be limited to the cultural aspect rather it includes various factors, such as economic, political, cultural, ecclesial, social, etc.

0.6. Thesis of the Research

This research argues that though there is the need of a shift in theological emphasis according to the chronological and contextual changes to make the faith touching the life of the people and to be more relevant in the social and cultural context, the centrality of the Eucharist in ecclesiology cannot be overlooked, because the ecclesial body is built up by the Eucharistic body of Christ. The Eucharist-centered ecclesiology, which is also tied up with the prophetic and eschatological dimension of the Church, could be very strongly found in the Church of the apostolic times and it was continued in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. The ecclesiology of the early Church gives the impression that the two dimensions of the Church, “Eucharistic” and “prophetic” were not exclusive as they are seen today, but intertwined and mutually fulfilling. For the Church in India, which is called to be a Eucharistic and prophetic community by living a life demanded by the Eucharist and being prophetic in her mission in the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial context of India, the statements of the ITA serve as a mirror that shows both the face of the Church and the face of the country. If the ITA, which takes Indian realities seriously for theologizing, adopts an indigenous ecclesiology emphasizing the centrality of the Eucharist, it would be more prophetic and appealing. In the pluralistic context of India, it will help the Indian Church to be challenged and to be a sacrament of Christ by living its vocation to be the body of Christ. Addressing the challenges and the implications of the Eucharist in the Indian context will help the Church in India be truly the Body of Christ.
CHAPTER 1

CHURCH AS A EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY: EXPERIENCE AND WITNESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1.1. Introduction

Louis-Marie Chauvet, a widely read theologian who offers a phenomenological understanding of sacramental theology in the post-modern period, says that the word “church” is used to designate first of all the local assembly in the New Testament, and that “a church without an assembly would be a contradiction in terms.”¹ The usage “local assembly” leads to the assumption that there existed various assemblies or more than one assembly during the New Testament period. From the present connotation of the word “assembly,” we understand two facts: existence of both a noun – “a gathering” or “a group,” and of a verb, which denotes the act of gathering. In the context of first-century Christianity, the assembly was a gathering of people who believed in the Lordship of Jesus, and proclaimed it in their life and worship (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32; 10:40-41; 20:7; 1Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34). The underlining characteristics of this community show that the early Christian community was a worshipping community, and even the very purpose of their gathering would include proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus.

The different theological interests of the gospels, epistles and pastoral letters in the New Testament that deal with various problems in the communities or answer different theological

questions, are indicators of the existence of several assemblies or communities in the first century. Apostolic witness would have been the main source of inspiration for the community. Holiness and the teachings of the apostles grounded an indissoluble relationship between the Risen Lord and the faithful who followed the new way of life. The assembly celebrated their communion both with the Lord Jesus Christ and with each other to be Church. Pathil notes:

_Ekklesia_ means the assembly, gathering, [or] community, and _kyrios_ refers to the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The Church is, therefore, the _community_ of those who believe in and proclaim the _Lord Jesus_. It is the community, which belongs to the Lord. Both the _ekklesia_ dimension and the _kyrios_ dimension belong to the essence of the Church. There is no Church without Jesus Christ and the community.  

On the first Pentecost, Peter preached, “…God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). The early Christians believed that the death and resurrection of Jesus made him the Lord and Christ, and they worshipped him as they came together. Remembering the command of the Lord (cf. Lk 22:19; 1Cor 11: 24, 25), they celebrated the Lord’s Supper in their assembly (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32; 20:7; 1Cor 10:16-17; 11:20), as an expression of their communion with Christ and with fellow Christians.

This chapter is an attempt first to understand the importance of the sacrament of Eucharist in the early Church, and second, to explore how the sacrament of Eucharist formed the function of the Church. It is a thematic exploration of the foundations of the Eucharistic ecclesiology found in the early Church. This section first presents the institution narratives, their ecclesiological meaning, and how they were influenced by the early Christian communities, apostolic witness, preaching, and liturgical practices. Next, the theological importance of the Emmaus episode and the Johannine theology of the Eucharist are examined, from an

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ecclesiological point of view. This chapter then deals with the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles as the model for Christian community in all ages. St. Paul’s imagery of the Body of Christ in First Corinthians, which is accomplished in the sacrament of Eucharist, sets the foundation for the future understanding of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, i.e., the Eucharistic communion builds the Church, the Body of Christ.

The importance of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the early Christian theology continues in the writings of most of the apostolic and Church fathers. However, for the convenience of research, we restrict this study to the earliest sources on Eucharist: Didache, the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Cyprian of Carthage, Ephrem the Syrian, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo. The attempt here is to show how the faith of the apostolic Church - biblical faith and faith life - was understood in the early centuries.

1.2. Biblical Foundations of Eucharistic Ecclesiology

The New Testament offers glimpses of early Christian communities and their Christian living. Further, these writings illumine characteristics of the early Church. The members of these communities were aware of their special call. This awareness is evident in the first name Christians applied to themselves, “the saints” (cf. Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10), and perhaps also in the term “community of God,” which later, according to Rahner, took on the Old Testament characterization of Israel.⁴ He says that the “designation ‘community of God’ or ‘church of God’ was applied first to individual Jewish Christian communities and then also to Pauline

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communities, and then finally to the whole church (Acts 20:28; 1Tim 3:15).”⁵ These communities of Jewish origin were very cultic or liturgical in their faith expression, and they would have continued some of the Jewish practices in their communities (cf. Acts 16:3; 18:18; 20:16; 21:20, 24, 26; 23:6; 25:8; 26:5; Rom. 8:4; 1Cor 7:9; Phi 3: 5-6; Heb 4:15; 1Jn 2:3-4; 5:2-3; Rev 12:17; 14:12).⁶ An ecclesiological and liturgical reading of the New Testament will help us to understand the relationship between the worship and the life of the early Christian communities. This section limits exploring the liturgical and ecclesial meaning of the institution narratives, foundations of Eucharistic theology in the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles, and St. Paul’s understanding of the Church as “the Body of Christ.”

1.2.1. Institution Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels: Liturgical and Ecclesial Meaning

The three institution narratives in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 26, 27–29; Mk 14, 22-25; Lk 22, 14-20) will be discussed in this section. Though the purpose of this study is not an explanation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we cannot neglect the fact that the apostles would convince the early Christians that Christ was present in their midst in a special way in their celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Scriptural studies have proven that there was a period of time in history when the Church did not have the New Testament, but only the teachings of the apostles and the lived experience of the faith.⁷ Kodell says that none of the institution narratives are uniquely original. Rather, they have been affected by community tradition and liturgical

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⁵ Ibid. Rahner says that the pouring of the Spirit helped the early Church realize God’s call to extend its mission outside Palestine with a conviction that they were an eschatological community of salvation, which was obliged to holiness of life. However, though they had their own practices inside their communities, they tried to fulfil this obligation within the framework of the Jewish law even when they faced oppositions from outside.


⁷ During the decades between the death and the resurrection of Jesus and the writings of the Gospel accounts, the early Christians had a lived experience of faith. Cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32; 10:40-41; 20:7; 1Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34, etc.
practices. These practices and community traditions show that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was part of the early Christians’ faith life during that period. The apostles and the early followers of Jesus gathered in house churches for prayer and the Lord’s Supper. In the New Testament, the word “church” designates, first of all, the local assembly of Christians, though later it came to be known as the place of gathering. In this sense, “a Church without an assembly would be a contradiction.” The “lived experience” of the “assembly” in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 2:42; 4:32; 10:40-41; 20:7) and Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (10:14-22; 11:17-34) suggest that the Lord’s Supper was part of the living faith of the early Church. Thus, we can assume that the altar had a significant role in the formation of the Church, or in other words, “the Eucharist was bound to occupy the center place,” in their worship. Having said this, let us examine some of the ecclesiological perspectives that can be traced from the institution narratives in the synoptic gospels, which also would have been influenced by the lived experience of the early Church.

1.2.1.1. Passover and covenantal perspectives

Celebration of Eucharist was part of early Christianity prior to development of sacred texts. Celebration of Eucharist eventually influenced the formation of the institution narratives in

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10 Chauvet, 34; See Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (November 21, 1964)," in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2004), no. 11. The Second Vatican Council shows the importance of the Eucharistic assembly saying that it is in the Eucharistic celebration that the Church manifests the unity of the People of God in a concrete way.
11 Chauvet, 35.
the New Testament. As a community that believed in Jesus Christ as their saviour, the believers would have looked back into their Jewish heritage which cherished God’s salvific interventions in their history. In that sense, Joachim Jeramias’ argument that the synoptic gospels report the Lord’s Supper as a Passover meal (cf. Mt 26:17-9; Mk 14:12, 14, 16; Lk 22:7-8, 11, 13, 15) becomes meaningful here.\(^\text{12}\) Though a detailed explanation of the argument is unnecessary at this point, we cannot neglect that the early Christian communities would have understood the meaning of the Last Supper in the background of the first Passover (cf. Ex 12). It is in this context that LaVerdiere says: “The first Passover led to the Covenant at Sinai and the creation of the Israelite people. The Lord’s Supper celebrates the new covenant and the creation of the Christian people.”\(^\text{13}\) At the first Passover, God saved Israel from death, whereas at the last Passover, Jesus saved the whole world from death. The first Passover tells the story of the election of the people of Israel, whereas the yearly Passover celebration was the commemoration of God’s saving work and making them part of God’s covenant. The Passover meal conveyed to later generations the symbolic meaning of their bond with Yahweh.\(^\text{14}\)

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\(^\text{14}\) The items of the Passover meal reminded the celebrants of the sufferings the Israelites endured and God’s protection (Ex 12:8): Meat reminded the first Passover meal the Children of Jacob had from Egypt; the bitter herbs reminded them of the sufferings their forefathers endured in Egypt; and the bread made without the yeast symbolized the suddenness of their exit from Egypt and their need for a speedy departure.
The evangelists’ usage of the term “covenant” in the institution narratives (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25)\textsuperscript{15} alludes to the covenant in the Old Testament. The people of Israel were made a covenantal people, or, the people of God, through the Covenant of Sinai (cf. Ex 24). The covenant, which made the Israelites God’s own people, is familiar to the early Christians because they saw their life related to it. Jesus’ words on the cup, “this is my blood of the covenant” (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20)\textsuperscript{16} takes the faithful back to the words of Moses on Sinai, sprinkling the blood over the people: “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you” (Ex 24:8). In the old covenant the people of Israel were sprinkled with the blood of the young bulls (Ex 24:1-11), which had much importance in the Semitic world:

For Israelites and other ancient peoples, blood was the symbol of life. Sprinkling the blood of the sacrificial animals on the altar and on the people symbolized the union of God and people, now sharing in the one life that was offered to God. So it is that the covenant at Sinai formed the people of Israel into a people of God.\textsuperscript{17}

In the new covenant, Jesus sheds his own blood and offers it as drink. What is significant in both covenants is the relationship between God and human partners. A vertical relationship is established by both covenants: with the old covenant, the people of Israel became God’s own people; whereas with the new covenant, the disciples or Christians who eat the body and drink the cup come into communion with Jesus. There is also a horizontal relationship built up by both of the covenants. They have a communitarian aspect: in the old covenant, the participants became God’s own people. In the new covenant, participants are signed by the blood of Christ, binding together all who partake in the banquet of the Lord. Israel was given ten commandments

\textsuperscript{15} In Matthew and Mark Jesus says, “this is my blood of the covenant” (Mt 26: 28; Mk 14: 24), whereas in Luke Jesus says, “[t]he cup is the new covenant in my blood…” (Lk 22: 20).

\textsuperscript{16} The quotation is the Matthaean version. Here, we consider the term “covenant” and not the exact phrasing by each evangelist.

\textsuperscript{17} LaVerdiere, Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke, 140.
as a token of their identity established in the covenant, whereas the people of the new covenant received Jesus’ command: “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24), which shows Jesus’ desire to continue what he has done. Both horizontal and vertical relationships are important in this study, because the building up of the Church begins with the reception of the Eucharist; first of all, creating a relationship between Christ and the faithful, and second, building a relationship between the faithful.

Luke gives a particular emphasis on the covenant adding “new” in his institution narrative (Lk 22:20), whereas Mark and Matthew simply state “covenant” (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24). However, all of them mean a covenant established by Jesus himself by his own blood. LaVerdiere says, “[I]n Luke the ‘cup’ refers to an event, to Christ taking the cup, giving thanks and giving it to the apostles. That event is the new covenant in Christ’s blood, establishing a new set of relationships among the participants in the life of Christ.” The cup symbolically denotes the redemptive suffering of Jesus and people’s drinking and participation in the cup establishes solidarity in Jesus’ covenant. Kodell is of the opinion that the adjective “new” also denotes the

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19 Paul also uses the adjective “new” in his institution narrative (1Cor 11:25). Paul and Luke have got similar phrasing of the narrative. However, as there is a detailed section on Pauline narrative, which shows the ecclesiological dimension of the Eucharist more than all other institution narratives, we do not discuss it now.


21 Kodell, 92. Mark and Matthew use the word “many” while sharing the cup and it denotes Jesus’ salvific shedding of the blood for the world. LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 76.
coventoforetoldbyJeremiahwhichiscompletelyinterior. In the celebration of the Eucharist, this relationship between Jesus and the faithful is ever renewed.

1.2.1.2. Perspectives of meal and Christian identity

Having discussed the context of Passover alluded to in the institution narrative, we move to the importance of a religious meal with regard to the Jewish identity and how it influenced Christianity. Jewish meals and blessings before their meals reaffirmed their relationship with Yahweh, the author of all benevolence and the giver of all gifts. The meal is also a sign of hospitality, which is highly valued in the Jewish culture. Meals had a special importance in the life of Jesus and all the evangelists, especially Luke, who has presented the major teachings of Jesus in the context of meals. Though we see Jesus being part of many meals, LaVerdiere says: “[t]heologically, the major difference between the last supper and Jesus’ previous meals is its relationship to Christ’s death and resurrection.” Following Mark, Luke presents it as a Passover meal, with so much preparation that denotes the sacrificial aspect of the meal (Eucharist), which was very much related to the Jewish identity.

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22 Kodell, 65. Kodell also says that the adjective “new” marks the presence of an old covenant, the Sanai Covenant (Ex 24).
23 We will discuss this concept in detail when we discuss the “thanksgiving” perspective.
25 Cf. Ibid., 11-21. Luke presents ten meals in his Gospel: Banquet at the house of Levi (5:27-39); Dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50); The breaking of the bread at Bethsaida (9:10-17); Hospitality at the house of Martha (10:38-42); Noon meal at the home of a Pharisee (11:37-54); Sabbath dinner at the home of a Pharisee (14:1-24); Hospitality at the house of Zacchaeus (19:1-10); The Last Supper (22:7-38); The breaking of the Bread at Emmaus (24:13-35); The meal with the community in Jerusalem (24:36-53).
26 Ibid., 123.
27 Cf. Ibid., 123-4. LaVerdiere says that the Jewish Passover was a celebration of their identity, because they “became part of a story reaching back to Moses and his experience of God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” It shows that they were building a tradition which is handed over from generation to generation.
Like the old Passover meal, Jesus’ meal also becomes part of the history of a people, giving them a new identity. The Christian Passover was celebrated on the first day of the week. It is a prophetic symbol of the achievement of the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah (Jer 31:33-34). If we examine the history of Christianity, we notice that “[n]o other celebration in the life of Christians is more intimately related to their identity.” The religious identity of those who share in the body and blood of Christ is well established by Paul, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

1.2.1.3. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and building up of the Church

Sharing the cup at the Last Supper, Jesus says: “[d]rink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:27-8). The theme of forgiveness is already presented by Matthew (18:17-8) and it is in this context that he uses the word “Church.” According to Rahner, Jesus’ call involves a communitarian aspect and not just a private act of one’s interior conscience. He says that “it [Jesus’ call] really builds church communities around Jesus with his ‘law,’ which breaks out of and transcends the law of the Old Testament, with a cult and its anamnesis of the salvific death of Jesus, and also with a leadership which is in the hands of Simon Peter and the twelve.” It means that the celebration of the Eucharist has a central role in the functioning of this

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28 Kodell, 66.
30 Cf. Rahner, 337. Rahner says that Matthew’s gospel is known as the “ecclesial Gospel” as he shows the essence and the structure of the community of the new covenant, and it is for them that the law of Christ is proclaimed. Rahner also says that the Church’s nature of universality (Mt 8:10ff; 28:18ff), its constitution, leadership and the discipline of the communities are also manifest in the Gospel of Matthew.
31 Ibid.
community. The aforementioned ‘law’ of Jesus is the law of love and forgiveness which clearly fits in the context of Eucharist.

Mt 18:17-18 says if your brother sins against you and he is not ready to resolve it with you or your two witnesses, “tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a gentile or a tax collector. Again, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The role of the Church in forgiving sins is clearly established in these verses (cf. CCC 1444). Taking it into the context of Eucharist, we need to see the salvific role of Eucharist. Keenan says that sin is a failure of bother to love. Jesus’ forgiving love is sacramentally experienced in Eucharist, the sacrament of love, which is the foundation of the Church. The forgiveness motive, which is central to the institution narrative in Matthew, becomes intelligible in this context. Forgiveness promotes communion which is the effect of Eucharist. Thus, these verses on forgiveness in Matthew suggest an internal connection between forgiveness, Church, and Eucharist.

According to LaVerdiere, Matthew connects the Eucharist with the historical reality of the separation of his community from Judaism, and emphasizes the healing aspect of the Eucharist to resolve the internal and external conflicts. The internal conflict arose with the coming of the gentiles into the Church. The external conflict blows up after the destruction of Jerusalem.

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33 “Eucharist as the foundation of the Church” is a theme that will be discussed quite often in the following pages. St. Paul is the pioneer of this thought. In this chapter, we will be discussing the same idea held by various Church fathers.
35 Ibid., 84.
36 Cf. Ibid., 68. The majority of the Christians in the Matthean community had the Jewish background and they stayed close to the synagogues and Jewish traditions in the early years. But they could attract a growing number of gentiles by the seventies and eighties. However, when they entered the Church, the Jewish Christians had a pharisaic
the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, which resulted in the Jew’s hostility towards Christians. The Christian community’s openness to gentiles and faith in Christ were not acceptable for the Jews who wanted to maintain uniformity in Judaism.  

It brought a situation in which Matthew’s community had to choose between the synagogue and being Christian. It caused divisions in the community and even families, and Matthew addressed this situation of the Church, entering a new period in its history. The new situation demanded them to be prepared for persecution (5:11-12). Jesus already had prepared them for it. Everyone was a sinner and they were supposed to forgive others (6:14-15) and it is in this context that they celebrated Eucharist “for the forgiveness of sins.” In other words, the Eucharist built them as a forgiving community. It also alludes to the words of the angel to Joseph at the beginning of the gospel about the child who “will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

In addition to the context of conflicts in Matthew, Kodell says, Mark presents the Lord’s Supper in the context of failure and betrayal of the disciples who celebrated it with Jesus. In Mark’s community, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper would have sent a message of forgiveness and reconciliation, which they found in Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper. These actions could build up their Christian community. For Luke, table fellowship is a means to develop the relationship between all people in various strata of life. In the future, the supreme meal, the Lord’s Supper, builds the community of the faithful.

\[\text{mentality in welcoming the gentiles. Thus, the context of division necessitated granting “forgiveness” to one another.}\]

\[\text{37 Ibid., 68-9.}\]

\[\text{38 Ibid., 69.}\]

\[\text{39 Ibid.}\]

\[\text{40 Kodell, 91-2.}\]
1.2.1.4. Eschatological perspective in the building up of the Church

Matthew’s institution narrative ends with Jesus’ words, “I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father” (Mt 26:29). It indicates the eschatological communion between the glorified Jesus and those who receive the Eucharist in the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the communion the faithful have with Jesus in the Eucharist is the foretaste of the heavenly communion.\(^{41}\) It also shows an experience of the divine-human relationship. At the birth of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, “God is with us” (1:23) in a tangible way for humanity. At the institution of the Eucharist, Jesus promises a presence with humanity which is begun here on earth and extended to the eschaton so that those who become part of the covenant (through his blood) “will be with him” in the kingdom of his Father (cf. Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:16).\(^{42}\) Kodell says that drinking the cup of Jesus implies self-denial of the disciples, “allowing the Father to claim them for the kingdom of God, taking up their cross and following Christ on a way defined by his passion - resurrection.”\(^{43}\)

The Church is a community of pilgrim people (LG 48; GS 45; 57) marching towards the heavenly kingdom. The faithful experience a foretaste of the kingdom of God and heavenly food in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Believers, as a community in Christ gathered around the altar, remember the past,\(^{44}\) and the death of Christ. They proclaimed it looking forward to the eschaton. Explaining the institution narrative of Luke, LaVerdiere says:


\(^{42}\) Though Jesus doesn’t speak explicitly about a life in the Kingdom of God (Father), it is clear from his mention of the drinking of the cup in his Father’s kingdom that this is a future reality.


\(^{44}\) Cf. Kodell, 53.
Fulfillment in the kingdom of God began with the life of the apostolic church but it did not come all at once. Perfect fulfillment lies on the horizon of history, where its vision defines the mission of the church. For this the church prayed and continues to pray: ‘Thy kingdom come’ (11:2). For this, the Church celebrates the Eucharist.45

Thus, the Eucharistic community “looks backward in remembrance and forward in expectation to the banquet of the fulfilled kingdom.”46 In other words, “in the Church, we have the anticipation and the participation in the heavenly Church. Through the veil of the Eucharistic elements, Christ in glory reaches to the Church on earth in order to draw her back through the veil and embody her in the Church of heaven.”47 We experience this union in the celebration of the Eucharist in a unique way. What we conclude from these is that the synoptic episodes of the institution narratives vividly express this link between the ecclesial and the eschatological dimension of the sacrament of Eucharist.

1.2.1.5. Liturgy and thanksgiving

Church is a liturgical community. The word of God has much importance in the liturgy of the Church, from its very beginning. Ratzinger says that gospels “speak within the living milieu, of communities,”48 because they were originated in particular communities, and it shows that the early Church was influential in the formation of the New Testament. In other words, the Sitz im Leben of the early Church has much importance in the formation of the gospels that present the

46 Kodell, 117.
life of Jesus.\textsuperscript{49} It is in this context that we see the relationship between the early Church, particularly its liturgical celebration, and the institution narratives. According to LaVerdiere, Luke emphasizes the thanksgiving aspect of the Eucharist, which took the Christians back to the Jewish tradition of blessing.\textsuperscript{50} Jewish \textit{berakoth} is a perfect example of thanksgiving and gratitude that expresses God’s special concern for them.\textsuperscript{51} Passover celebration involved an \textit{anamnesis} or a remembering of God’s saving concern for the Israelites. To remember God’s saving events in the past was to remember God Himself and to remind God about it. The Christians having gentile origin participate in the new covenant by the grace of God, and thanksgiving is the response to this grace they have received. Thus, LaVerdiere says, the Lukan Eucharist shows the relationship between the Eucharist and the Eucharistic community.\textsuperscript{52} In this context, the meaning of Eucharist is \textit{berakoth}, i.e., “thanksgiving” to God for his gracious intervention in their lives.

The ecclesiological understanding of Eucharist is intelligible in the context of “Eucharist as thanksgiving.” Jesus’ thanksgiving to the Father at the Last Supper is remembered and repeated in the celebration of Eucharist. From the perspective of the Eucharist as thanksgiving,

\textsuperscript{49} Cf. Robert H. Stein, \textit{Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretations} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 276-8. Stein speaks about three \textit{Sitze im Leben}; first of the historical Jesus; second, the early Church; and third, the individual evangelists. Stein says that the early Christians gave meaning to the events in the life of Jesus from the theological perspective grounding on the history of Israel. However, they were concerned with faithful memory of the really past story of Jesus. Cf. also, Richard Bauckham, \textit{Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 244. For Bauckham, the \textit{Sitz im Leben} of the early Church in which the gospels took their origin “is a typical situation, such as preaching, worship, catechesis, or apologetic.”

\textsuperscript{50} Though all institution narratives show the “thanksgiving” aspect of the Eucharist, LaVerdiere emphasizes it from the viewpoint of the particular nature of the community in which Luke wrote his gospel. Cf. LaVerdiere, \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 91.

\textsuperscript{51} Cf. Thomas Elavanal, “Eucharist as Sacrifice,” in \textit{The Mystery of the Eucharist}, ed. Sebastian Athappilly and Paulachan Kochappilly (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2006), 58-61. \textit{Berakoth} is a Hebrew prayer in the synagogue. The first translation of this word in Greek was \textit{Eucharistia}. In English, \textit{Eucharistia} is generally translated ‘thanksgiving’, as is \textit{berakah}, although the Jewish usage would be to call the \textit{berakoth}, ‘blessings.’ The earlier Jewish \textit{berakah} is basically a proclamation, a confession of the \textit{Mirabilia Dei}, i.e., the wonderful or marvellous work of God.

\textsuperscript{52} LaVerdiere, \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 91.
Hans Urs von Balthasar says that the Son eternally receives the divine essence from the Father. He offers it back to the Father in gratitude, in love, in the Holy Spirit. The eternal thankful Son, ‘the Father’s substantial Eucharist,’ is giving thanks in his very person at the Last Supper, and this is expressed in his sharing. The part of the liturgical formula in Luke, “which will be given for you” (Lk 22:19), is an expression of Jesus’ thanksgiving to God and an act of personal sharing, which is determinable in the building up of the body of Christ.

Both aspects, Christ’s thanksgiving and Christ’s sharing, constitute Christ’s body. Commanded by Christ to do this in memory, the participants are asked to renew Christ’s thanksgiving to God as well as Christ’s sharing among themselves. The two, thanksgiving and sharing, are inseparable. There is no genuine thanksgiving without sharing, and no real sharing without thanking God.

Jesus’ Eucharistic command, “do this remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19) is an invitation to the faithful to become part of the worshipping community and a faith of the early Church that “when they do this in the Lord’s Supper, fulfilling his command, he becomes present, thanking God and offering himself in and through their thanksgiving and self-offering.” Chauvet’s interpretation of the Emmaus episode (Lk 24:13-35) reaffirms it: “[w]hat Luke tells us is that each time the church takes the bread, pronounces the blessing, breaks it, and gives it in memory of the Lord Jesus, it is he who does it through the [C]hurch.”

1.2.2. Emmaus Episode (Lk 24:13-35): Ecclesiological and Liturgical Reading for a Prophetic Life

On the third day after the death of Jesus (Lk 24:1; 13), two of his disciples, Cleopas and another disciple, were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Though they had heard from their companions about the resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24:23-24), their attitude shows that they did not

56 Chauvet, 27.
believe them. They were hopeless because the things they had expected from Jesus the Nazarene did not occur in his lifetime (Lk 24:21). Rather he had a tragic end (Lk 24:20). While they were walking, Jesus accompanied them in the form of a stranger. Jesus opened their hearts to the treasure of a Christological reading of the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{57} The disciples’ understanding of Christ was newly created by the intervention of the stranger. They were interested in hearing the new reading of the Old Testament. This is evident in their readiness to welcome him as their guest. While they were dining, the stranger took the seat of the host, and they realized that the stranger was Jesus as he broke the bread. The disciples’ eyes were opened, but they could not see Jesus. In that emptiness of “absence” they had the fullness of presence.\textsuperscript{58} Their personal experience of Jesus at the breaking of bread made the fearful disciples courageous enough to go back to Jerusalem and strengthen the other disciples who were in fear, by giving witness to their encounter with the Risen Lord. Though Jesus explained the word of God and broke the bread for them, the plan to go back to Jerusalem came from the disciples. They enjoyed the company of other disciples because they believed that Jesus was present among them in a special way. This episode shows that Christ’s presence was a challenging presence, and an ecclesiological reading of the Emmaus episode shows the communion aspect of the Eucharist.

A liturgical reading of this episode prompts one to notice a parallel structure for both the Emmaus episode and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Eucharist has mainly two parts: the “table of the word of God,” and the “table of communion.” But, it has a third part (“third table”) in the life of the faithful. In the first part, the “table of the word of God,” the faithful experience Christ in

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Jan Wojcik, \textit{The Road to Emmaus} (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1989), 140. At the end, we see the exclamation of two disciples about the pleasure of the process of learning in which they could grasp the meaning of the Old Testament in a new way: “were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32). Of course, the new understanding was a result of the Christ event.

\textsuperscript{58} Chauvet, 26.
the proclamation of the word of God. In the second part, the “table of communion,” Christ shares his body and blood. These two tables challenge the faithful for the “third table” and it is quite the same as with the response of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. They went back to Jerusalem, abandoning their own plans and conforming to God’s plan, i.e., to strengthen the community in Jerusalem with their personal experience. The Emmaus text has three sections. Firstly, the journey of the two disciples to Emmaus, which is parallel to the first part of the Eucharist, i.e., the table of the word of God. The disciples, who did not believe the words of their companions that the tomb was empty, were accompanied by the stranger (Jesus) who opened their hearts to reread the Old Testament and especially the prophesies so that they could realize the new meaning of it. It was an invitation to see the Old Testament in the light of the Christ event. Secondly, the breaking of the bread, which is the table of bread in the Eucharistic celebration. Though the disciples invited the stranger as their guest, we see the guest taking over the place of the host. As the bread is broken, they realize that the stranger is Jesus. Thirdly, the response of the disciples, i.e., going back to Jerusalem. This shows that the breaking of the bread was an invitation for them to be witnesses of Christ. In other words, Eucharist is a mystery to be lived.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church which is the People of God shares in Christ’s prophetic office. The council understands the prophetic function in “a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise…” (LG 12). This prophetic life of the People of God also involves a witness of faith and morals and Christ’s virtues (LG 12). Rahner believes that the Church exists in its full sense by teaching,

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bearing witness to Christ’s truth, making present the grace of the sacraments, etc.\textsuperscript{60} Eucharist is a prophetic symbol of Jesus’ self-giving that energizes the People of God to witness Christ or by being more Christ-like.\textsuperscript{61} The effect of the Christ experience of the disciples is found in the third part of the Emmaus episode, i.e., the response of the disciples. The two disciples went back to Jerusalem where the other disciples stayed in fear. Though the two were hopeless on their way to Emmaus, their return is an expression of their hope in Christ. It is similar to the response of the disciples after the ascension of Jesus: “they did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Lk 24:52). The reason for their joy was their faith in Christ and their belief that he was present among them in a special way. The two disciples who went to Emmaus were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus just as the disciples who witnessed to ascension of Jesus.

The response of the two disciples was a prophetic action in the sense that they were eager to give witness to the Risen Lord and that it was an expression of their new hope in Christ. Every Eucharistic celebration challenges the faithful to place their hope in Christ and this hope is the basis of the “third table” or the living aspect of the Eucharist. In \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}, Benedict XVI says that the Eucharist is a mystery to be lived.\textsuperscript{62} The two disciples lived the Eucharist by giving witness to their resurrection experience so as to strengthen the community in Jerusalem. The early Church’s willingness to share everything with others (cf. Acts 2:44-5), by which they have become an ideal community for the Christian communities of all ages, is the

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most important example of the extension of their altar. Christianity was always unwilling to remain as a mere cult and proved to be the universal religion mainly by the service it rendered. The instruction of the apostles, the fellowship and the collection for the poor, the celebration of the Eucharist, the common prayers, etc., made up the inner life of the new-born Church. For Paul, the measuring rod of the worthy celebration of the Lord’s Supper was the participants’ attitude and reflection of the other-centeredness of Jesus. The early Christian community had an attitude of sharing as an outpouring of their love towards their fellow Christians and it “is an intrinsic dimension of the Eucharist,” that they saw in the life of Jesus, their Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Thus, we can see that the early Christology could serve as the basis for Christian ethics, social commitment, ecclesiology, eschatology, and sacramental theology, especially the Eucharistic theology.

1.2.3. St. John

Though John does not narrate the institution of the Eucharist, his diligent effort to provide a theology of the Eucharist is very clear in his gospel. Instead of the institution narrative in the synoptic gospels, John gives “the bread of life discourse” in chapter six. Aidan Nichols argues that in John, sacraments are very much rooted in everything that Jesus said and

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63 Cf. LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 7-8. Eugene LaVerdiere is of the opinion that the early Christians spoke of the Eucharist as “our daily bread,” an expression found in both the Lucan and the Matthean versions of the Lord’s Prayer. What distinguished “our bread” from “other breads” was the presence and experience of the risen Lord among them, filling those who had suffered so much grief with a joy they had never known. Their gatherings and the sharing of the table resulted in the communion between Christ and the believers, and also among themselves.


65 Resurrection, 2, 129.

66Cf. Aidan Nichols, *The Holy Eucharist: From the New Testament to Pope John Paul II* (Eugene, OR: Wipe and Stock, 2011), 17. The Eucharist and its institution would have been well-known to John’s community and a repetition of the narrative would have been unnecessary. Cf. also, Kodell, 121. John wrote his Gospel almost forty years after Paul wrote the institution narrative and he was not concerned of the meaning of the Eucharistic action rather, he concentrates on the meaning and consequences of the Eucharist for the individual participant.
In John’s theology, the exalted Lord, the one lifted up who will “draw all things to himself,” completes his salvific work through the Holy Spirit and the sacraments. John who presents Jesus’ promise of the Eucharist, also gives an account of “the foot washing,” that could be considered as a Eucharistic gesture. Other than these two, we also see certain imageries, such as the Lamb of God, vine and branches, and shepherd and flock that unveil the mystery of the Eucharist and also explain the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist.

In the Bread of Life Discourse (Jn 6:22-59), without doubt, Jesus says that he is the bread of life that came down from heaven (vv.41, 48, 51, 58), and the discourse ends with an offer of a series of rewards to those who receive him: resurrection, mutual indwelling, and eternal life (vv. 54-59). The role of the Eucharist in John can be put in terms of a spiritual relationship. The Word comes to the world and unites God to humanity (Jn 1:1-14; 6:57) by the mutual indwelling (Jn 6:56), and it gives life to his people. Thomas Norris says that Jesus’ verse, “Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of

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68 Ibid., 9. There are commentators who see the similarity of Jesus’ own words on his self-gift in John and Luke: “The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (Jn 6:51) in John is close to the Lucan formula “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19). The first one is the promise and the second is the institution proper. Cf. also, Kodell, 125.
69 Cf. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, 340. Other than the imageries mentioned here, in the *Book of Revelation*, we can see some other imagery that explains the relationship between Church and Christ: The Church as “the eschatological Israel” (Rev 7), “the heavenly woman” (Rev 12), “the bride of the lamb awaits the wedding feast in heaven” (19:7), etc. These imageries also have Eucharistic, ecclesiological, and eschatological meanings.
71 This idea is put differently in Matthew and Mark. Here, Jesus says that God is a living God and God of living ones. Cf. Mt 22: 32: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Cf. also Mk 12: 27.
me” (Jn 6:57), connects Trinity, Christology, Eucharist, and eschatology.\(^{72}\) Our Eucharistic communion makes us sharers of the life that the Son has eternally from the Father. In the Eucharist, we have the sacramental sharing of this life which has both personal and communal aspects; personally, the communion builds a relationship between Christ and the faithful, and communally, between the faithful who partake in the one bread, i.e., the body of Christ.\(^{73}\) In this sense the Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion, which is a foretaste of our eschatological union with Christ. Ceslaus Spicq says that for John, salvation is the imparting of life; being begotten of God the believers become the children of God, and are transformed into the likeness of God.\(^{74}\) This new relationship grows the faithful in love, and it is actualized in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this sense, Powers is correct when he says, in the bread of life discourse, “the Eucharist emerges as the ultimate test of the unity of the Church.”\(^{75}\)

The episode of foot washing in John’s gospel is considered as a Eucharistic gesture that we see nowhere else in the New Testament. Parallel to the Eucharistic command, “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19), after washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus said to them: “I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:15). Like the Lord’s Supper, foot washing is a remembrance for the disciples of Christ that they would have to take into their lives. Thus, it would be an example for the Church in its building up and should be


\(^{73}\) This faith has been taken seriously by the Church and something she always tried to maintain in her teachings. Cf. G. Chediath, Jeevamrtham: Visudha Kurbana Sabhapithakkanmaril, 2 ed. (Aluva: MCBS Publications, 2003), 186.

\(^{74}\) Ceslaus Spicq, Agape in the New Testament, trans. Marie Aquinas McNamara & Mary Honoria Richter, vol. 1 (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1963), 28. John holds that eternal life is an eschatological reality. In the future, God’s love and holiness shall become completely manifest in us (1Jn 4:12). All must eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood in order to have eternal life; and we have this eternal life because of the mutual indwelling of Jesus and ourselves, through which we share the life which Jesus has from the Father.

\(^{75}\) Joseph M. Powers, Eucharistic Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 76.
kept up. Raymond Brown offers two interpretations of this text. The first one is based on the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (Jn 13:6-11), which shows that the foot washing is a symbol of Jesus’ death and it makes possible for the disciples to have eternal life with Jesus. The second one is that the foot washing is an example for the disciples to imitate so that they would be able to render loving service towards others.\(^7^6\) In the early Church, the Lord’s Supper was also an occasion for mutual service, where the presence and action of Jesus who offers himself and allows himself to be recognized unites those present as strongly with one another as with himself.

Having discussed the Bread of Life discourse and the foot washing, which are parallels of the institution narrative in John, we should examine the imageries used by John that would help us to understand the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church. “Lamb of God” is theologically one of the richest imageries that explain the mystery of the Eucharist in John’s gospel. In the beginning of the gospel, John the Baptist introduces Jesus to the world as “the Lamb of God,” who is going to take away the sins of the world (cf. Jn 1:29). The image of “the Lamb of God” is to be understood from the context of the sacrifices of lambs for the atonement of sins in the Old Testament. Viewed in the light of the sacrificial ritual, Jesus’ shedding of blood meant the offering of his life to the Father as an expiation for the sins of the humankind.\(^7^7\) This theme occurs quite often in the New Testament (cf. Acts 20:28; Rom 3:25; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20). In the ‘communion sacrifice’ of the Israelite cult, a part of the sacrificed animal was offered to God as a burned offering on the altar and another part was cooked and eaten by the

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offeror. As a result of this offering, the worshippers believed that they were united with each other in a solemn fashion and also especially with the divinity. The blood of the old covenant (Ex 24:6-8) constituted Israelites as the people of God, whereas, the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, which had an atoning power (cf. Rom 3:25) constituted the Church, the new people of God. Theologically, the imagery of the Lamb of God is fulfilled on the cross at the time of Jesus’ death, and it is professed and renewed in every Eucharistic celebration. Two thieves were also crucified with Jesus, and to confirm their deaths, the soldiers broke the legs of the thieves on Jesus’ right and left. One of the soldiers pierced the right side of Jesus instead, and blood and water came out of his side (Jn 19:34). Benedict VII says that “it was the hour when the paschal lambs are being slaughtered. It was laid down that no bone of these lambs was to be broken (cf. Ex 12:46). Jesus appears here as the true Paschal Lamb, pure and whole.”

The imagery of the flowing of blood and water in the Gospel of John has much importance in sacramental theology. Baptism is the Eucharist begun and Eucharist is Baptism being completed. Through the waters of baptism, and the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives a new birth to his people. By the food and drink of the Eucharist, and the consequent gift of his own person he nurtures and develops this new, supernatural life. The blood and the water which flowed out of the side of Jesus serves first as a certification that Jesus is dead, but its significance transcends the simply physiological. By this point in the gospel, water and blood are well-established as signs of salvation (cf. 3:5; 4:14; 7:37-39; 6:51-58). Aidan Nichols says that “John probably expected his readers to think more specifically here of the Sacraments of Baptism and the

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78 Barrossee, 23.
79 Resurrection, 2, 224.
80 Mathew Vellanickal, Eucharist: Bread of Life for the World (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2010), 53.
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Eucharist which mediate the new life in Christ.”⁸¹ Two signs, blood and water, represent two sacraments of initiation; Baptism, in which we receive the Holy Spirit and are incorporated into the Church, and Eucharist, the self-gift of the Son to “build up the Church.”⁸²

John also employs the image of the vine and the branches to show the relationship between Jesus and his followers. For Brown, there might be a hint of the new Israel in this image.⁸³ Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit…” (Jn 15:5). If we read the Bread of Life discourse (Jn 6:32-58) in the background of the imagery of vine and branches (Jn 15:1-17), it is evident that the Eucharist is the means of the union intended by Jesus. First of all, the communion brings a personal relationship between Jesus and his disciples. Second, Jesus’ communion with his disciples brings them together or, in other words, many branches are brought together in Jesus who is the vine (Jn 15:1-17). This symbolism is realized today in the Church through the celebration of the Eucharist and the communion offered by Jesus to his followers in this sacrament. Thus, the “abiding” (menein) or “remaining” takes its perfect form in the sacrament of Eucharist. Aquinas says that the purpose of the Eucharist is our eternal communion with the Lord⁸⁴ and it is actualized in our eating of his body and drinking of his blood, and it builds us into one Body of Christ, the Church.

1.2.4. Early Christian Communities and Eucharist in the Acts of the Apostles

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written for the communities which were founded during the Pauline mission and thus, his community didn’t consist in one

⁸² John Paul John Paul II, 26.
⁸³ Brown, 670. Cf. also, Kodell, 127.
community but in many communities with members of gentile origin from its very beginning.\textsuperscript{85} They were in contact with the Church in Antioch and they wanted to see themselves as part of the Catholic Church as it was spreading around the world. However, the first part of the Acts of the Apostles presents the picture of a community that took birth after the preaching of Peter. The idea of \textit{koinonia} (2:42), which denotes the earliest abstract designation of the Christian group,\textsuperscript{86} is fundamental to the Acts of the Apostles, and it is tied to concepts, such as: “life together (Acts 2:44, 47), being of one heart and one spirit (Acts 4:32), holding together in common (Acts 2:44), mutual sharing, etc.”\textsuperscript{87} This concept of \textit{koinonia} in the early Church has been cherished, and Christian communities throughout the centuries have tried to live out this concept.

The link between the Last Supper and the early community is found in Luke’s usage of the term “apostles.” Luke presents the twelve at the Last Supper as apostles (Lk 22:14), a term frequently used in the Acts of the Apostles, but only a few times in the gospel. Thus, the Last Supper establishes “a transition from the community of disciples, who followed the Lord Jesus until his passion and death, to the community of apostles, those sent by Christ the Lord after his resurrection.”\textsuperscript{88} The early communities under the leadership of the apostles were convinced of the presence of Jesus in their midst, and this conviction determined their lifestyle. They were heirs and custodians of what they received from the Lord and then from his disciples. Thus, they


were adherent and fully committed to their tradition. They assembled as a community on the first
day of the week and broke the bread. This assembly proclaimed who they were, a new creation
in Christ, symbolic of the unity of the human race in the person of Christ.\textsuperscript{89} For Luke, Fitzmayer
says, “the Christian ‘church’ is the reconstituted Israel, and it is the eschatological fulfilment of
the people of God called in a new way to salvation through the ministry and preaching of Jesus
and his followers.”\textsuperscript{90} The most important part of the assembly was the breaking of the bread –
they “took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread and ate. After eating, they shared the
word in light of their breaking of the bread.”\textsuperscript{91} The forty days between his resurrection and
ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples and ate with them (Acts 1:3). The present passive
participle of the word synalizomenos used in Acts 1:4 literally means “while sharing salt with
them” according to Laverdiere “refers to what Jesus did, not on one particular occasion during
the forty days, but over and over again throughout the forty days.”\textsuperscript{92} Jesus’ eating salt with his
disciples is a powerful metaphor that shows the quality and depth of his sharing with them.\textsuperscript{93}
This is the foundation of the development of the Church in future years. The Church had grown
rapidly in the fifteen years after the destruction of the temple (CE 70), when Luke wrote. During
this period, it is apparent that the issues that arose on Eucharist are ecclesial issues, and ecclesial
issues are Eucharistic issues.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{90} Fitzmyer, 322.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 101. Cf. also, \textit{The Breaking of the Bread: The
Development of the Eucharist According to Acts of the Apostles}, 225. Jesus shared salt with the apostles and bonded
to himself and to one another, assuring that the covenant would endure. They would act and speak in his name,
doing what Jesus did in memory of him.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist According to Acts of the Apostles}, 224.
LaVerdiere, who believes that Luke finds the growth of the Church in relation to the Eucharist, gives accounts of the different stages of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles. The first is the Church’s beginnings in Jerusalem (cf. 1:15-5:32), and in this stage the Eucharist is referred to as “the breaking of the bread” (cf. 2:42, 46). Luke brings forth the picture of the early Christian community in different scenes in this stage (2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16). The first scene (2:42-47) is the most basic one which focuses on “‘the breaking of the bread,’ Luke’s expression for the Eucharist.”95 This community, which is said to be an “ideal community” and which “Luke’s readers could recall as the Church’s golden age,” was the result of Peter’s proclamation, and the Eucharist, the breaking of the bread, was one of its distinguishing characteristics.96 LaVerdiere points out the importance of the four marks of the early Church in two sets of two presented by Luke in Acts 2: 42. The first set consists of 1) the teaching of the apostles (he didache ton apostolum), and 2) the communal life (he koinonia); and the second set of 3) the breaking of the bread (he klasis tou artou), and 4) the prayers (hai proseuchai).97 The apostles and those who were with them lived what they taught and gave witness to Jesus’ resurrection in their “communion” (koinonia), which was reflected in their attitude towards one another in their daily life.98 The first set of traits found full expression in the second: the breaking of the bread and prayers.99 For the early Church, the breaking of the bread by the apostles, with

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96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 103. Today, we speak of the Church as having four traditional characteristic marks: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These marks are real and ideal at the same time. It is also true with the early Church. LaVerdiere says that they were the most fundamental realities in the life of the early community. Here, the apostolic teaching doesn’t mean a body of teaching but the act of teaching of the apostles (cf. Acts 4: 2, 18; 5: 21, 25, 28, 42). The community listened seriously to the teachings and made it their own. See also Xavier Leon-Dufour, Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament, trans. Mathew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 26.
whom Jesus broke the bread, in memory of Jesus was the expression of their communion, and
the prayer included thanksgiving and praise, with blessing (Acts 2:47).\footnote{Ibid., 104.}

Second, the Church spreads from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 6:1-12:25), a gentile milieu,
shortly after its birth. First it was a community of Hebrew or Aramaic speaking people and, then
Greek-speaking Jews, which then extended to gentiles and the ends of the earth. When the
community became larger and diversified, there arose problems in their assemblies and
Eucharistic meals. Acts 6:1-7 presents a complaint that the widows in the Greek speaking
community were neglected in “daily distribution” and the response of the twelve. Instead of
directly dealing with the problem, which is a symptom, the twelve treat the fundamental problem
in the areas of \textit{diakonia}.\footnote{\textit{The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist According to Acts of the Apostles}, 120.} The twelve correct the members, requesting them not to neglect the
word of God, and reminds them that their “responsibility for the service at table be shared with
others.”\footnote{\textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 106.} LaVerdiere says that the scope of “the word of God” mentioned here is broader than
presents “the word of God” in Acts as “something that spreads and grows like a living being and is particularly
identified with the church….’’ LaVerdiere says that “the word of God” in this context “refers at once to the message,
the messenger, the announcement, the recipient and the messenger’s reception in faith… that is, everything essential
to mystery of Christ and the gospel.”} In the early Church, serving at tables mainly denoted the Christian hospitality, which consisted
of “creating an atmosphere for blessing and thanking, providing bread for breaking, a cup for
sharing and time for praying, singing hymns and telling stories.”\footnote{Ibid., 122.} From the LaVerdiere’s
exposition of the context, it is clear that the complaint which arose in the community had a direct
relationship with the Eucharist. The twelve’s solution was the appointment of seven deacons
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(Acts 6:3) to serve at the table in their community. The next issue in the community (Acts 10:1-11:18) was on accepting hospitality from gentiles, who were considered ritually unclean. To accept Cornelius in the community, Peter brings the Christological solution – the identity of Jesus Christ is that he is the Lord of all (Acts 10:36), and God was with him (Lk 24:19). Lordship of Jesus is the key to mission of the Church and the Eucharistic table. 105 Those who ate and drank with him are to be witnesses to him before all people, both Jews and gentiles.

Thirdly, Acts 13:1-19:20 explains the missions from Antioch. This stage of the spreading of the Church took place as a result of the missionary initiative. Though the Church’s mission and openness to the gentiles was dealt with in Acts 10-11 on the faith level, this stage shows the policy and implementation. 106 The general assembly held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35) was decisive in formulating a policy that demanded the gentiles coming to the faith “to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage” (Acts 15:29). If the gentiles kept free from these they would be doing what is right. Thus, they would be integrated into the early Church, having the qualities of the model Church in Acts 2:42. Paul and Silas’ sharing meal at the jailer’s house (Acts 16:25-34) is to be seen as an effect of the assembly.

Lastly, Paul’s journey to Rome in Acts 19:21-28:31 is an epic missionary journey in which he brought the gospel to the heart of the Roman Empire. 107 Two meal stories are seen at this juncture. The first one was in Troas on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7-12). The community was gathered for the breaking of the bread. The first day of the week denotes the

106 Ibid., 107.
107 Ibid., 108.
celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the new creation (cf. Lk 24:1). Paul raised Eutychus (20:9), a young man who fell down from the third story of a building. This is a sign that the Eucharist is a life-giving meal that God gives his people. The second meal is on a storm-tossed ship on his journey (Acts 27:33-38). Though it cannot be the actual Eucharist, it could be seen as a literary analogy. Paul gave thanks to God, broke the bread, and shared it among the two hundred and seventy-six whom he could encourage (vv. 35-6). Here, eating was a matter of salvation as they had no food for fourteen days. The implication is that “the Christians needed to join the Eucharistic meal if they wished to be saved.”

In this way, the Acts of the Apostles presents the development of the Church in relation to Eucharist.

1.2.5. Building up of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians

Paul, who had been an ardent follower of Judaism, realized the redemptive role of Christ in the history and committed himself to the flourishing of the gospel. His imagery of the Church as “the Body of Christ” explains his understandings of ecclesiology and Christology that are rooted in the sacrament of Eucharist, and it continues to be meaningful for the last two millennia. Paul’s understanding of the Eucharistic ecclesiology is well explained in the two episodes on Eucharist in the First Letter to the Corinthians: 10:14-22; 11:17-34. These texts on Eucharist constitute a goldmine for later Christians, providing many clues regarding liturgical practice in one of his communities, and Eucharistic ecclesiology, which is the major concern of this study.

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108 Ibid., 110.
110 Cf. Gillman, 269; Lubac, Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 248.
1.2.5.1. Communion and building up of the Church, the Body of Christ

In the first episode (1Cor 10:14-22), though Paul speaks about the relationship between Eucharist and the ethical life of Christians, his notion of Eucharistic ecclesiology is unveiled. Paul reads into any and every table fellowship, whether pagan or Christian, a belief he has inherited from early Israel: “those who eat the sacrificed victims are in communion with the altar.”¹¹¹ For Paul, as for his contemporaries, the act of sharing in a cultic meal signifies a close connection between the guests and the power to which the victims have been offered, and it comes from the Hellenistic-Jewish milieu.¹¹² Paul’s concept of “the body of Christ” is at the heart of his understanding of koinonia or communion. It has both Christological and ecclesiological senses. The ecclesiological concept, Church as “the body of Christ,” derives from the context of the Christological concept.¹¹³

¹¹² Thomas Norris, "Communion: The Trinity and the Eucharistic Life of the Church," in The Mystery of Faith: Reflections in the Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia, ed. and Maurice Hogan James McEvoy (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2005), 198-201. Thomas Norris explains how the concept koinonia is different in the Old Testament and the Greek world. The koinonia between human beings and gods was the central idea in the Hellenistic religions. The goal of these religions was not communion but union. Here, the identity is emphasized more than relation. On the contrary, in Judaism, the relationship between God and his people is expressed in terms of the concept of covenant (berith). Chaburah is the word used for koinonia in Hebrew and it denotes the interpersonal relationships. Therefore, there is no chaburah between God and human beings but, covenant. However, the New Testament speaks about the communion between God and the recipients of Eucharist, but it is not identity. It does bring about the communion between the Trinitarian God and Christians who receive Eucharist. See, William R. Crocket, Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 29-31. Crocket believes that 1 Cor 10:16 speaks of the Eucharist as a koinonia in the blood of Christ, and it would have been impossible in the Jewish milieu without the influence of Greek conceptions. However, the term used here reflects the Jewish meal context, and it prompts us to conclude that “the idea of the Eucharist as communion in the body and blood of Christ does not derive from the Hellenistic mystery cults during the period of the Gentile mission, but has its background in a Jewish milieu,” which has undergone Hellenistic influence. See also, Ernst Kasemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, trans. W. J. Montague, Studies in Biblical Theology (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1964), 109. Kasemann says that the gnostic myth of an Archetypal Man, who is the redeemer, has influenced Paul’s interpretation of the primitive Eucharistic tradition and also his Christology.
¹¹³ Crocket, 32; Cf. George S. Worgul, "People of God, Body of Christ: Pauline Ecclesiological Contrasts," Biblical Theology Bulletin 12, no. 1 (1982). In this article, Worgul argues that the two titles of the Church in the Pauline letters, “People of God” and “Body of Christ” are very significant in the development of different
Paul asks, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Since there is but a single loaf, we, the multitude, are a single body because we all share in this single loaf” (1Cor 10:16-17). The ‘cup of blessing’ and the ‘bread which we break’ are Hebrew expressions and already known to the Corinthians. In v.17, Paul expresses the unity of the Church that is the fruit of the one Eucharistic loaf. V. 21: “You cannot drink both the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons; you cannot share the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

The emphasis in verses 17 and 21 is on the exclusive character of the Eucharistic meal. If the loaf given is one, the intimacy with Christ, which the entire congregation gains from, will tolerate no additional bond of union. Paul begins the chapter with the experience of Israel as a lesson for the new Israel.

William R. Crockett says that the meaning of the word koinonia in Paul’s understanding explains one’s relationship with Christ and the body of Christ; “Communion in the body of Christ implies community in the body of Christ,” which means, the “communion in the body of Christ through the partaking of one loaf in the Eucharist forms the many into one body.”

ecclesiologies in the history of the Church. For him, Pauline ecclesiological titles, “the People of God” and “the Body of Christ,” contrast and give a pluralistic view of ecclesiology.  

114 Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Eucharist: Our Sanctification* (Mumbai: St. Paul’s Publications, 2007), 39. In the Eucharist, the word ‘body’ designates Christ in his servant state, distinguished by passivity, poverty, the cross; the Word “made flesh”, who worked, sweated, suffered, prayed among us. The same can be said for the word blood. It doesn’t indicate a part of a human being (blood is part of the body!) but an event: it indicates death. Not any kind of death but a violent one, and in the language of the covenant, an expiatory death (cf. Ex 24, 8).

115 Tripole, 142.

116 Crocket, 32-3. Cf. also, Dolores Greeley, "The Church as "Body of Christ" According to the Teachings of Saint John Chrysostom" (Notre Dame, 1977), 7. Dolores distinguishes three main interpretations of Paul’s notion of the body of Christ: 1. The traditional “mystical body”… which could be distinguished between: a) the physical body of the resurrected Christ as an individual body; b) the Eucharistic body of Christ present in the Church; and c) the “mystical body of Christ,” which is the Church. 2. The body of Christ as the real, physical, individual body of the risen Christ, who reigns in heaven. 3. The real body of the Risen Christ with the Church by means of the concept of corporate personality.
Kasemann is of the opinion that Paul’s doctrines of baptism and the Eucharist “must be interpreted in the light of his dominant theme – the Body of Christ.”\(^{117}\) In baptism, we put on Christ, whereas in the Lord’s Supper we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, which takes place in the sacramental celebration. The Body of Christ is already there and we are baptized into it, and thus the unity of the Body is not based on baptism.\(^{118}\) Paul’s words, “[f]or in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body…” (1 Cor 12:13a), shows that the unity is not what we make, but the Spirit. It should not be measured quantitatively, but it is “qualitatively the identity of Christ with himself in all his members.”\(^{119}\) Kasemann says that we are in Christ as members of Christ’s Body and we become members of his Body because Christ comes into us or enters into us as Spirit (Pneuma). Both of these movements coincide in the sacramental act.\(^{120}\) The Lord’s Supper transforms the participants, because one’s existence in the Body of Christ is not determined by oneself but by his/her Lord, the true Kyrios, who passed through death and is the exalted one who has lordship over the whole world.\(^{121}\) What he gave us in his death he continues to give us in the Lord’s Supper, and it establishes two forms of communion in the body of Christ.

1.2.5.1.1. **Communion with Christ.**

In Pauline Eucharistic theology, the communion is the self-gift of the Lord, and it brings communion or participation in the life of the giver of the gift.\(^{122}\) Paul’s understating of

\(^{117}\) Kasemann, 111.

\(^{118}\) Ibid.


\(^{120}\) Kasemann, 115; See also, 18. For Kasemann, the Pneuma, which is a sacramental gift, “brings with it its Giver; it is an epiphany of the exalted Lord, who becomes manifest in it… In the Pneuma, the Kyrios comes to us. Takes possession of us and claims us for his own.” He also says: “wherever he (Paul) describes the Pneuma as a sacramental gift, there he is speaking most radicially of the revelation of Christ himself, of his self-manifestation and his presence.”

\(^{121}\) Ibid., 118; Cf. also, 33.

\(^{122}\) Antony Chundelikkat, *Eucharist and Family* (Bangalore: ATC, 2010), 53. See also, Powers, 67-8.
communion that the individual establishes with the Lord is clear in his words, though it has also a communitarian aspect: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ” (1Cor 10:16). It is a sharing in the life of the risen and the glorified Christ, who is the Lord of all. In this way the purpose of incarnation is realized in the sacrament of the Eucharist. For an individual Christian, participation or communion is an experience of “the life of Christ in his soul, manifesting itself by an intimate sweetness, the dulcedo Eucharistica.”

Thomas Norris says that there is a divinization happening in those who receive Eucharist worthily, and it also ‘christens’ the recipient and helps him/her into the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, according to Norris, the reality brought by the Eucharist is the Church, a “unique ‘we’ born from the eternal ‘We’ of the Blessed Trinity,” “a people made one from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, the unity of the Church, the body of Christ, is born out of the individual communion with God. It happens in the sacrament of Eucharist, which assimilates us into Christ, and makes us members of his body, and therefore members of one another.

1.2.5.1.2. Communion of the People and the Body of Christ.

Paul’s usage of “the body of Christ” in this text (1 Cor 10:14-22) has two meanings. In v.16, it denotes the Eucharistic body shared in the Lord’s Supper, whereas, for Paul, the “body”

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126 Ibid., 196.
in v.17: “[s]ince there is but a single loaf, we, the multitude, are a single body because we all share in this single loaf,” is the Church. Paul uses this imagery again in the same letter with the same meaning: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Cor 12:12). Paul is clear in his belief that the ‘Eucharistic Body,’ which is shared by the faithful, makes the many into the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{128} In the words of LaVerdiere, “[i]n the Eucharist, ‘my body that is for you,’ each member [the receiver] works in concert to build Christ’s body, the Church.”\textsuperscript{129} This mystical union accomplished in the Eucharist has been explored in the Eucharistic symbols of the bread and wine, beginning with Ignatius, and it could be presented in the words of Fernando Erasto:

Just as the bread is made from several grains of wheat, all crushed and mixed together, each losing its identity, as it were, in order to form the one bread, so the individual Christians who celebrate the Eucharist mingle to form but one body in Christ and with Christ. The wine too brings out this same significance: it is obtained when several grapes have been crushed, fusing their substance into one single cup of wine.\textsuperscript{130}

More than any other symbolisms, the symbolism of bread and wine explains the Christian communal life which is the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{131}

Though the theology of the Church found in Paul’s writings seems to perceive Paul as an authority, Rahner says, it is in agreement with Peter and the original Jerusalem community, and fully responsible and committed to this community.\textsuperscript{132} It includes all peoples, both Jews and

\textsuperscript{128} Norris, "Communion: The Trinity and the Eucharistic Life of the Church," 196. Here, the term ‘Mystical Body’ means the ecclesial body which is different from the Mystical Body that denoted the Eucharistic body of Jesus in the early centuries.


\textsuperscript{130} Fernandez, 141.

\textsuperscript{131} Joseph Grassi, \textit{Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord’s Supper and World’s Hunger} (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 64. See also, James Kurienal, "Eating the Lord’s Supper and Christian Unity (1 Cor 11, 17 - 34)," \textit{Jeevadhara} 38, no. 224 (March 2008): 167. Though Paul is known for his ecclesiological symbolism of the body of Christ, we cannot restrict him to it because he has also made use of other symbols, such as the plant (Rom 11:16-24), the building (1 Cor 3:9-15), the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33), the temple (Eph 2:21; 1 Cor 3:16-17), and the new Jerusalem (Gal 4:26) to explain his ecclesiology.

gentiles, because it has no boundaries and all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28). The new community is founded sacramentally on baptism and the Eucharist, i.e., “[t]he mystical body of Christ lives by that body which is received at the Lord’s Supper.”\(^{133}\) Paul is convinced of the fact that, like Yahweh in the Old Testament (cf. Lev 7:7; Deut 18:1-4), “Christ exercises an exclusive and total claim over his body, his community, as expressed in the sharing (\textit{koinonia}: partnership, fellowship) which is the Lord’s Supper (10:16-17, 21).”\(^{134}\) It means that the Corinthians, who celebrated the Lord’s Supper, cannot be the part of other tables. As the community grows, there is a consciousness of the total Church in Paul. Though Paul calls the individual communities Church or \textit{ecclesia}, Rahner believes that the whole community sacramentally founded and gathered in faith around Jesus is the Church, “and this church becomes manifest in its fullest actuality here in these individual local communities.”\(^{135}\) The communion of the Eucharistic Body of Christ, which takes place in the local communities, signifies and produces, that is, builds up, the intimate communion of all the faithful in the Body of Christ which is the Church (1 Cor. 10:16).\(^{136}\)

1.2.5.2. Eucharist: a challenging memory for a prophetic life of the Body of Christ

The second episode on the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians (11:17-34) is significant in the theology of the Eucharist as it consists of the first institution narrative.\(^{137}\) In this text, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for neglecting the Eucharistic \textit{koinonia} by their abuses in their

\(^{133}\) Ibid.


\(^{137}\) We have already seen that Paul’s institution narrative is the first one among the four institution narratives in the New Testament.
celebrations.\textsuperscript{138} The text is incorporated here for teaching and correcting Corinthians with a moral exhortation. It is clearly found in the systematically structured passage:

1) Verses 17-22: What Corinthians were doing when they joined together for the Lord’s Supper. It is the present of the text, or the context of the Corinthian community, eating the Lord’s Supper having divisions in their midst.

2) Verses 23-26: What really happened at the Lord’s Supper or the challenging memory of what is handed on by Jesus. In the text, this is the past that consists of the Last Supper of the Lord with his disciples, which prefigured his death and resurrection.

3) Verses 27-34: What should they do when they come together for the Lord’s Supper. It is the future of the community.

The first part (11:17-22), or the present of the text, presents the context of the Eucharistic assembly in Corinth. The very first verse, “I do not praise the fact that your meetings are doing more harm than good” (11:17), shows that Paul intended to correct them for what was going on in their assembly. Following verses, “…when you meet as church there are divisions among you…” (v.18) and “…it is not the Lord’s Supper” (v.20), explicitly shows that there were divisions in their assembly, when they assembled for the Lord’s Supper. This context shows that the Lord’s Supper was part of the Corinthian community. He rebukes them when he realized that “social hierarchies and prejudices have been allowed to infiltrate the central meaning of the worship”:\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138} Nichols, \textit{The Holy Eucharist}, 30. In the first episode, Paul established the meaning of Eucharistic \textit{koinonia} as a communion with Christ which brings about a fellowship among the members of the Church.

\textsuperscript{139} Kodell, 76.
The Corinthians, like the churches of Palestine, celebrated the [E]ucharist in the setting of a fraternal meal, which Paul calls, the Lord’s Supper. The factions that divided the Corinthians resulted in serious abuses of charity and even of good manners in its celebration. Christians who were well off, possibly the Apollos faction, brought ample food and drink to the assembly but refused to share these with other groups. Some also overindulged, even became intoxicated, while others were left hungry. All this was reported to Paul.\footnote{140 Richard Kugelman, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” in \textit{The Jerome Biblical Commentary} ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), 270. Cf. also, 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. Paul was informed by Chloe’s people that there were divisions in their community and this text shows that the didactic motive is central concern of this letter.}

Paul believes that the present celebration of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth is the meeting point of the past, the Lord’s Supper and the future eschatological communion. In order to correct the divisions in the Corinthian community that gathered for the Lord’s Supper, Paul presents the prophetic act of Jesus at the Last Supper, which has become part of the early Christian tradition.\footnote{141 Cf. Ibid. Kugelman says that the Pauline institution narrative is very closer to the Lucan narrative and it was written eight years before Mark’s Gospel. The formula used by Paul also represents the form used in the Antiochene liturgy. Cf. also, Hans Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 197. Conzelmann says that Paul presents the validity of that meal in contrast to the institution narratives in the synoptic gospel, which is characterised as a Passover meal. Cf. also, Edward J Kilartin, \textit{Church, Eucharist and Priesthood} (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 7. Today, many theologians do not consider the Last Supper as the first Eucharistic celebration in the strictly theological sense because, the Church is fully constituted with the death, glorification, and the mission of the Holy Spirit.}

By citing the Last Supper account Paul establishes that the only valid way to celebrate the Eucharist is to do what Jesus himself did, giving his life for them and for all, and in this way they are to proclaim the death of Christ until he comes.\footnote{142 Erasto J. Fernandez, \textit{New Wine in Fresh Skins: Eucharist in the Twenty-First Century} (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008), 71. Cf. also, Gillman, 270.}

Paul uses the remembrance motif twice in the institution narrative. The remembrance is much more than a recollection and a psychological recalling of the past event. It challenges Church to enter into the meaning of the action Jesus performed. In the memory of the past event, the past event becomes present in the here and now, and according to Aidan Nichols the memorial command could be paraphrased as “‘Do this to bring me [Jesus] into your present.’”\footnote{143 Nichols, \textit{The Holy Eucharist}, 31.} It is meaningful in the context of the Jewish Passover, which “meant faithfully responding to
God and God’s past saving actions, which are made present and effective once again in the act of faithful remembrance.”¹⁴⁴ Now, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Lord’s Supper, which is part of the Corinthian community, is made in remembrance of the salvific death of Christ. “In his death Christ gave himself for sins to establish the new covenant in which the Corinthians now live. To remember Christ’s self-giving in death is to participate in it as a present reality, to live faithfully and appropriately in the shadow of the cross.”¹⁴⁵ Kodell says that the remembrance in the Eucharistic celebration involves two things: a reminder to God and a reminder to the followers of Christ. It is a reminder to God that he would fulfil his covenant promises in Jesus Christ, and a reminder to the believers to imitate the example of Jesus’ self-gift in life and death.¹⁴⁶ In this context of the Last Supper, Paul invites the Corinthians to examine their conduct. According to Paul, a new covenant - a new form of relationship, has been brought in Jesus’ blood. The new existence is made one’s own through his participation in the bread and the cup. It is to be seen in the community of believers and their celebrations. The covenantal perspective in the synoptic narratives is seen in v.25. Through the Covenant of Sinai, the Israelites became God’s people. The covenantal blood was a sign of their relationship with Yahweh and also with each other. The covenant promised by Jeremiah (cf. 31:31-34) should also be in the mind of Paul. The Lord’s Supper, according to Paul, established a new covenantal relationship between the Lord and those who partake in it, because it makes them a new people, children of God, the Church.¹⁴⁷ The blood of Christ, in other words the death of Christ, defines the new covenant or the foundation of the Church. At their celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the Corinthians forgot

¹⁴⁴ Gorman, 269.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
¹⁴⁶ Kodell, 80. The anamnesis also has a future perspective, which invites the community to repeat what they have done.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 77.
their sacramental focus as a Christian community in life and faith, instead the Lord’s Supper sacramentalized their division and error.\(^{148}\)

In the third section (11:27-34), Paul applies his understanding of the Lord’s Supper to the situation of the Corinthian community, in which what should be the very sign of Jesus’ prophetic life and seal of the unity of the Church, has become a perpetual cause of its disruption. To celebrate the Eucharist as the Lord’s Supper in their community, or to do the remembrance of what Jesus did, the community wanted to deal with this issue of division that they had in their community.\(^{149}\) The implication of communion for Paul, is a social relationship within the body of Christ, which calls for a social responsibility. Church as the body of Christ, the mark of her unity is to be experienced in the Eucharist.\(^{150}\) Thus, it is a challenging memory that helps the faithful to realize their commitment to unity.

1.2.5.3. Eucharist in the transferring of tradition in the Church

Terrence W. Tilley argues, “traditions are neither made or found, yet both constructed and given.”\(^{151}\) Against the argument of the mainstream that the tradition is found or made, Tilley believes that the traditions are given by God, or the Church, or something that is independent of human creativity, and therefore, are not made. At the same time, traditions are in some ways constructed by those who participate in them.\(^{152}\) According to Richard Kugelman, “traditions” in

\(^{148}\) Ibid., 78; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, ""You Proclaim the Death": 1 Corinthians 11:26 and Paul's Understanding of Worship," 378.

\(^{149}\) LaVerdiere, The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church, 33. Cf. also, Gorman, 269. Gorman says that for a community, forgetfulness of the cross is a forgetfulness of its own identity.


\(^{151}\) Terrence W. Tilley, Inventing Catholic Tradition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 15. We use small letter for “tradition,” because we do not make a division between ‘universal’ and ‘particular’ tradition in this work.

\(^{152}\) Ibid., 16.
Church as a Eucharistic Community

Christianity suggest a *depositum* that has been received and handed on integrally in the primitive Christian community, as having come from the Lord or from the first apostles (cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3).\(^{153}\) The Church believes that Eucharist, which is part of the tradition, was instituted by Jesus Christ and handed over to the Church through his apostles. Paul’s exposition of the Eucharist is the earliest form of the Eucharistic tradition in the New Testament.\(^{154}\) However, Conzelmann says that the institution narrative in 1 Corinthians (11:23-25) is a pre-Pauline fixed tradition.\(^{155}\) It shows that Paul is also part of that tradition or “traditioning.”\(^{156}\) Traditions have much importance in a community as it marks the identity of the community. LaVerdiere says, “traditions announce who we are or who we are meant to be,” and in the celebration of the Eucharist, we are “the body of Christ and a new covenant in Christ’s blood.”\(^{157}\)

Eucharist, which is a tradition and of which we are a part of, according to the command of Jesus two thousand years ago, was a central element in Paul’s Gospel.\(^{158}\) Paul says to the Corinthians: “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you…” (1 Cor 11:23). Hans Conzelmann says that it doesn’t mean that Paul received the notion of Eucharist from Jesus in a personal revelation, rather he learned it in the living Christian community, in Church in which

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\(^{153}\) Kugelman, 270. For Kugelman, these traditions embrace customs (14:34) and religious rites like the Eucharist (11: 23-24), as well as doctrinal and moral teachings (1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 6:7; 2 Thes 3:6; 1 Cor 7:10, 12, 25; 9:14).


\(^{155}\) Conzelmann, 196.

\(^{156}\) Though Paul received the tradition of the Lord’s Supper from a community, he is also part of the tradition as he hands it over to the community founded by him. By “traditioning,” we mean the process of handing over the tradition. Cf. Tilley, Chs. 2&3.


\(^{158}\) Ibid., 33. LaVerdiere presents the sequence of the centrality of Eucharist in 1 Corinthians: “Paul referred to the Eucharist when he first preached at Corinth: ‘when I come to you, brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God’ (1 Cor 2:1). The Eucharist was part of God’s mystery revealed in Jesus Christ, the suffering servant of the Lord, handed over by God (1 Cor 11:23a; see Isa 52:13-53:12) and giving his life as saving nourishment for all (1 Cor 11:23b-25). As Christians handing on the gospel of the Eucharist, the community took part in that same “mystery of God” and proclaimed it to others.”
the risen Lord was present (1 Cor 6:15; 12:27). Most Catholic exegetes regard Paul’s expression “from the Lord” (1 Cor 11:23) as his high regard for the doctrine of tradition, which he had received from the apostolic community, most probably from the Antiochean community in the 40’s. He would have received the basic facts about the Last Supper from the tradition, but “their deeper significance may have come over to him mystically,” or through contemplation. He handed over this tradition to the Corinthian community in the early 50’s while he proclaimed the gospel to them and later reminds them of it through the letter. As they celebrated Eucharist, they lived the faith and became part of the tradition. The Christian community in Corinth, however, “was no longer acting as a link in the chain of Eucharistic tradition, handing on to others what had been handed on to them.” So Paul says that their supper was no longer the Lord’s Supper (11:20). In presenting the tradition, Paul shows his wholehearted obedience to the tradition of faith of which he also becomes a part with his authority as an apostle.

1.2.5.4. Communion until he comes

Paul’s understanding of the Eucharist as the proclamation of the death of Jesus “until he comes” (v.26) is a clear reference to the glorious return of Jesus at the end of the world, and also his faith in the eschatological communion. Paul seems to suggest that the Eucharist has the

159 Conzelmann, 196. Though Paul presents himself as a link in a chain of tradition, he breaks it by telling that he received it “from the Lord,” Conzelmann argues, by this statement, Paul makes himself independent of human authority. See also, Kodell, 71.
162 Cf. Norris, “Communion: The Trinity and the Eucharistic Life of the Church,” 201. Norris believes that by receiving the tradition of the Church and handing it over to the Church in Corinth Paul adds his own doctrinal commentary.
intrinsic capacity to help the community’s togetherness with such an eschatological frame of mind.\textsuperscript{164} Paul’s words, “[f]or as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again” (11:26), is in agreement with the eschatology of the synoptic institution narratives, and it shows that his understanding of the Eucharist has a past, a present, and a future, and this time frame has an ecclesiological significance. The Eucharistic community looks into the redemptive act of Jesus, which is the past of the community; the living of the covenant in the community of his followers, which is the present as “a pilgrim people” (\textit{LG} 48; \textit{GS} 45; 57); and the eschatological fulfillment in the future.\textsuperscript{165}

Powers says that “[t]he Eucharist is the community’s celebration of the power of Christ’s redemptive act on the cross...,”\textsuperscript{166} and the community proclaimed it sharing his body and blood, made present in the bread and wine. It gives the faithful communion in the death of Christ which also implies communion with his resurrection and glorification until his second coming.\textsuperscript{167} Proclaiming the death of the Lord “was a proclamation of the gospel, announcing life and salvation,”\textsuperscript{168} by which they are the body of Christ in the world. Thus, the Eucharist exists as a sacrament of our redemption in the Church until the second coming of Jesus.\textsuperscript{169}

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\bibitem{164} Cf. Antonlyswamy, "Eucharist as the Binding Force of Unity in the Context of Paul’s Campaign for Harmony in Corinth," \textit{Vaiharai} 12, no. 2 (July - December 2007): 229.
\bibitem{165} Kodell, 80; cf. also Kugelman, 271.
\bibitem{166} Powers, 62; Conzelmann, 201; cf. also Kodell, 79.
\bibitem{167} Norris, "Communion: The Trinity and the Eucharistic Life of the Church," 201. Cf. also, p. 202. Norris believes that the Old Testament prophesy of the 'new covenant’ (Jer 31:31-34), and the Servant Songs in Second Isaiah, especially the fourth Song (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), which have direct Eucharistic implications point towards the mystery of the Cross that is brought forth in the Eucharistic liturgy. Cf. also, Kodell, 77. Kodell says that the phrase, “Lord’s death” (11:26) also contains an allusion to the resurrection, whereas, Jesus’ death doesn’t, because “‘Lord’ is Paul’s favourite title for the risen Jesus (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11).”
\bibitem{169} Kugelman.
\end{thebibliography}
Paul’s phrase “until he comes” shows the eschatological outlook of the Lord’s Supper, and Paul is leaning on the liturgy in which maranatha has taken a significant place.\(^{170}\) Paul’s view of the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist is well articulated in the ecclesiological view of Zizioulas who presents the Church as the foretaste of the eschatological assembly of the Lord in the world, and it is experienced in the Eucharist, because the Eucharistic community functions as the figure of the future union.\(^{171}\) Zizioulas believes that the Eucharistic community is the figure of the eschatological community that stands before the Father having Christ as its head surrounded by the apostles. It has to function between the time of the resurrection of Christ and the Parousia.\(^{172}\) Thus, Eucharistic “meal is nothing less than an eschatological proclamation of the gospel,”\(^{173}\) and partaking in it, we receive the life of the Trinity from Christ, and thus, “we already possess the life of the eschaton in the tension of ‘the already now but still not yet.’”\(^{174}\)

Paul wants the Corinthians to know that if they failed to understand the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, what they have is their private supper, which is a sign of disparities and degradation among themselves.\(^{175}\) Those who partake in the Eucharistic celebration with selfish motives do not proclaim the death of the Lord, instead join those who betrayed the Lord.\(^{176}\) Paul’s words, “one goes hungry while another gets drunk,” (11:21) indicate that the focus of the community is not on the Lord’s Supper, but their own supper, depicting the social division which

\(^{170}\) Conzelmann, 202. Cf. also, LaVerdiere, \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 41. LaVerdiere says that the Lord’s Supper resounds the prayer \textit{Marana tha} (‘O Lord, come!’), the prayer at the end of the letter (1 Cor 16:22). Cf. also, Fitzmyer, 221.
\(^{172}\) Conzelmann, 202.
\(^{173}\) Gaventa, 384.
\(^{174}\) Norris, "Communion: The Trinity and the Eucharistic Life of the Church," 194.
\(^{176}\) Kodell, 81.
was well known in the Greco-Roman society.\textsuperscript{177} However, the paradigm that Paul presents before them professes the unity in Christ, which means by partaking the body of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, we become the body of Christ, the Church in which we all are equal members.

1.3. Eucharist in the Building Up of the Church: Faith and Teachings of the Fathers

The biblical texts we have discussed helped us to have an idea of the first century Christian communities in which the texts had their origin. Christianity, which emerged as a movement in Judaism and remained to be so in its early years,\textsuperscript{178} began to spread out of a Hellenized Jewish milieu under the political and cultural influence of the Greco-Roman world in the early decades. By CE 80, the Jews included a prayer in their liturgy, asking that Nazarenes and sectarians may perish. This resulted in the separation of Christians themselves from the synagogue services.\textsuperscript{179} During this period, the homes of the wealthy gentile Christians became the places of worship, especially for the Lord’s Supper.\textsuperscript{180} The table gatherings of the early community celebrated the self-giving attitude of Jesus. The Church in the second and the third centuries was largely urban, having a distinctive cult and a shared body of belief, and an increasingly gentile and Hellenized character. It was not a centralized Church like that of the later centuries, rather a number of local communities in communion with each other.\textsuperscript{181} “While there was no ‘mother Church’ in Christianity,” Edward Foley says, “the domestic table was an important wellspring of the faith.”\textsuperscript{182} During this era, the role of the Church fathers was mainly

\textsuperscript{179} Brown, 26.
\textsuperscript{180} Foley, 16.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 44.
to encourage the faithful to face persecutions against the Church and to make the faith intelligible to the faithful and the gentile world around them. Eucharist, being the central worship of the community, the writings of the Fathers of the Church on the Eucharist have served as both an account of the practices and theology of the Eucharist of the early Church. This section begins with a discussion on the Didache.

1.3.1. Didache

*Didache*, the teachings of the twelve apostles, which demonstrates how the common pattern of worship was spreading during the early stages of the Church, would have been written over a period of time, probably between CE 50 and CE 100. Though it does not present a complete theology or tradition of the Eucharist from the Christological point of view, the thanksgiving meal of the *Didache* community gives us a glimpse of the Eucharist, especially certain rubrics and instructions, of the early community. References on Eucharistic celebration found in chapters 9, 10, and 14 give us a picture of an early century community. Some of the characteristics of the institution narratives we discussed above, such as thanksgiving to the Father, eschatological outlook, and the ecclesiological or communitarian aspect of the Eucharist, are seen in these passages.

The thanksgiving of the Didache community is clearly seen in chapters 9 and 10. First, the community is instructed to give thanks for the cup (9:2), and it evokes the Davidic connection to Jesus. Second, the thanksgiving is for the broken bread, and it is addressed to the Father for the life and knowledge revealed to humanity in Jesus Christ (9:3). After the meal, a

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thanksgiving is made for the fruits of the Eucharistic meal such as God’s indwelling in the hearts and the gifts of knowledge, faith, and immortality (10:2-4).

In chapter 9, the prayer after the benediction over the cup and bread (9:2-3) “establishes an important relationship between the unity of the bread and the eschatological gathering of the church.”\(^{184}\) Just as the grains with which the loaf is made were once “scattered over the hills,” those who ate the fragments of this loaf would one day be harvested “from the ends of the earth” (9:4) by the Father in his kingdom.\(^{185}\) “The Eucharist of the Didache perpetuated the proleptic foretaste of the kingdom that marked the table fellowship of Jesus. Fed on the Eucharist, therefore, “those who shared the Way of Life of the Father were nourished in their altered social reality.”\(^{186}\)

Both thanksgiving and the eschatological outlook help us to understand the faith life of the Didache community. Milavec is of the opinion that their celebration of the Eucharist was the celebration of their “group identity, the standards of excellence, and the habits of judgement” they “needed to champion in the name of the Lord.”\(^{187}\) Other aspects that throw light onto the ecclesiological characteristics are the instructions on the Lord’s Day, sacrifice, exclusion of the non-baptized, and the selection of bishop and deacons for ministering (15:1). The Didachist instructs his community to come together and break the bread on every Lord's Day (14:1). It shows that the celebration of the Lord’s Day (Sunday) and the breaking of the bread were part of this community. The breaking of the bread is also called sacrifice (14:1-3), which indicates a


\(^{186}\) Ibid., 69.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.
community action that points to the sacrifice foretold by Malachi; “a pure sacrifice in every place and time” (Mal 1:11-14). Confession or reconciliation is presented as pre-condition for the worthy celebration of the sacrifice.\[^{188}\] The prohibition, “[y]ou must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the Lord's name” (9:5), shows the sacramental and the special communitarian aspect of the celebration.\[^{189}\] Lastly, the election of the bishops and deacons (15:1) in the community shows different ministries in the communities that already existed in the Didache community.\[^{190}\]

### 1.3.2. Ignatius of Antioch

Following Pauline tradition, Ignatius saw Church as “the body of Christ” and Eucharist as “the sign of unity” in the Church. In the body of Christ, Christ is the head of the body and all Christians are the members of the body.\[^{191}\] Any divisiveness in the community destroys the unity of the body of Christ, the Church.\[^{192}\] Unity being the primary concern, Ignatius defended the unity of God, unity of Christ, unity of the Church and the unity of the faithful. This led Benedict XVI to call him the “Doctor of Unity.”\[^{193}\] Benedict XVI also says that Ignatius dedicated himself

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\[^{188}\] Niederwimmer, 194. Niederwimmer says that chapters 11-15 give instructions for the good order and discipline in the Church. It is very important that in this section the author has included a session on Eucharist and the preparation demanded for it.

\[^{189}\] Cf. Ibid., 154.

\[^{190}\] Ibid., 200. Niederwimmer writes that when the local communities began to choose officials, the itinerant charismatics collided with the officeholders representing the community. In this context, the text is concerned about achieving a resolution between these two groups.

\[^{191}\] Greeley, 12-3.


\[^{193}\] Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 16; 14. Benedict XVI says that by "unity of Christ" means the divine and the human nature in Christ. When the various heresies raised their heads separating the divine and human nature of Christ, Ignatius defended the divine and human
for the unity of the Church and his “irresistible longing for union with Christ was the foundation of a real ‘mysticism of unity.’” Ignatius’ view of the unity of Church, which is the foundation of his Eucharistic ecclesiology, can be found in his model of “One Eucharist – One Bishop - One Church”:

Take ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to [the will of] God.

Theologians from catholic and orthodox traditions find the implications of the unity of Churches in this statement. Theologians like Afanassief and Zizioulas agree that what Ignatius had in his mind was the local church gathered around the altar under the leadership of the bishop.

Cummings says that Ignatius had “a profound experience of union with God-in-Christ through the Eucharist,” with which he relates the entire Christian life. Ignatius calls Christians “God bearers, temple bearers and Christ bearers,” names that could be appropriate only for the partakers of the Eucharist. Ignatius, who believes that the Church presides in charity, exhorts the members of the Church that their Eucharistic celebration should be the center of their self-nature of Christ. By “unity of God” we mean that in God alone unity is found in its pure and original state. A Trinitarian God is the absolute unity.

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197 Cummings, 12.

198 Greeley, 13.

199 Ignatius of Antioch, "Ignatius to the Romans," in Early Christian Writings (Lightfoot & Harmer), Prologue. Cf. "The Letter to the Smyrnaeans". Ch. 6. Irenaeus warns the Smyrnaeans against the unbelievers about whom he says that they “have no regard for love; no care for the widow, or the orphan, or the oppressed; of the bond, or of the free; of the hungry, or of the thirsty.” Cf. also, Benedict XVI, The Fathers, vol. 1 (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2008), 16.
understanding, and also for their frequent celebration of the Eucharist as it effects and expresses the Christian concord. Eucharist is also a way of life for Ignatius and he warns that we cannot be a Eucharistic people in our relationship with other people when we are cut off from the Eucharist. He tried to live a Eucharistic life being the advocate of love and unity in the Church and he also wanted to see his martyrdom as an expression of the Eucharistic way of life:

...Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread [of Christ]. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my sepulcher and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to anyone. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Supplicate the Lord for me, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God.

Ignatius associated his martyrdom with the altar on which the Eucharist is celebrated and the sacrifice of Christ is remembered, and saw his martyrdom as God’s will and “the fulfillment of his baptism and of his participation in the Eucharist.” Ignatius, with the eschatological meaning in his mind, called Eucharist “the medicine of immortality.”

Ignatius used the adjective “Catholic” for the first time while he warns the Smyrnaeans against the separatist attitude among them, and it exposes his ecclesiological vision that the unity of the Church exists in relation to Eucharist and bishop:

Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is administered either as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.

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201 Antioch, "Ignatius to the Romans," IV.1-2; Cf. also Cummings, 21.
202 Antioch, "Ignatius to the Romans," II.2.
204 Antioch, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians," XX.2; "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians," XX.
205 "The Letter to the Smyrnaeans". VIII.
For Ignatius, the bishop is at the center of the true unity and it is clearly seen in the celebration of the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{206} He viewed the bishop as the representative of Christ who creates unity in the community that is organized around him.\textsuperscript{207} Many believe that, what Ignatius means by “catholic” Church is the Church in communion with the bishop, orthodox in its teaching, and in spiritual communion with the invisible or the heavenly Church. Most Catholics mean it as universal Church in its context of geographical expansion, although it is against the views of many orthodox and protestant theologians.\textsuperscript{208}

1.3.3. \textbf{Justin the Martyr}

Eucharist became a part of Christian philosophy with Justin who defended the Christian faith in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century CE. In the \textit{First Apology}, Justin offers an account of the celebration and the understanding of the sacraments of initiation in the middle of the second century.\textsuperscript{209} Baptism made them members of the assembly of the brethren, and they gathered to offer their prayers and Eucharist.\textsuperscript{210} Eucharist is presented closely connected with baptism as part of a single celebration of initiation, and baptism is a precondition for being part of the Eucharistic celebration.\textsuperscript{211} They were aware of themselves as a local community, a part of the larger body of Christians.\textsuperscript{212} Justin mentions the apostolic tradition in saying that Jesus gave Eucharist to the apostles alone, and not

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{207} Johanny, 59.
\bibitem{208} Kudiyiruppil, 23-8. Cf. Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," 95. Afanasiev says, for Ignatius, “any local church is not the ‘Catholic’ Church,” instead “the local churches taken all together from the universal, ecumenical Church,” i.e., the Catholic Church.
\bibitem{209} See, Justin Martyr, "First Apology," in \textit{Justin Martyr}, 65-7. In \textit{First Apology}, Justin explains how his church celebrated the Eucharist: the faithful from different social status gathered at one place in cities and countries. They read writings of the apostles and the prophets and the president gave instruction on it. Then, they prayed together and, after the prayer, the president said the blessing and gave thanks over the Eucharistic gifts and distributed among them. The assembly responded “Amen.”
\bibitem{210} Ibid., 65.
\bibitem{211} Ibid., 65 & 66; Cummings, 23; LaVerdiere, \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 174.
\end{thebibliography}
to others who have similar practices.\textsuperscript{213} He also says that Eucharist was celebrated on Sundays. In this way Justin shows the apostolic line of handing over of the Eucharist in the Church.

In Justin’s \textit{Dialogue with Trypho}, Eucharist is viewed as the memorial of incarnation, suffering, and death.\textsuperscript{214} His interpretation of the Eucharistic prophecy in Malachi 1:10-11 is an exposition of the prophetic proclamation of the unity brought by the salvific death of Christ remembered in the celebration of the Eucharist: “[f]or there is not one single race of men, whether barbarians, or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads, or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus.”\textsuperscript{215} The bread and wine are truly the flesh and blood of Christ for Justin,\textsuperscript{216} and in the Eucharistic bread and cup offered all over the world, the humanity is united in Christ. A prophetic life style and social concern is clearly seen in Justin’s community: “[a]nd we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost.”\textsuperscript{217}

Justin’s accounts of the Eucharist make us conclude that Eucharist was the heart of his community in the second century. The Eucharistic celebration on Sundays, charity attached to the Eucharist, membership and brother-ship enjoyed in the Eucharistic community, holding on to

\textsuperscript{213} Martyr, 66; LaVerdiere, \textit{The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church}, 178; Cummings, 23. Justin mentions the Mithra cult, which was a major rival for Christianity in the Roman world, and he wants to say that it has nothing to do with the Eucharist that Jesus handed over to the apostles.

\textsuperscript{214} Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho,” in Justin Martyr, 70. In \textit{Dialogue with Trypho}, Justin doesn’t speak much about the ecclesiological or communion aspect of the Eucharist, instead he tries to explain the Eucharist and clarifies the misunderstandings of those who criticize Christians.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 117.

\textsuperscript{216} “First Apology,” 66.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 67; Cummings, 24-5. Cf. Maurice Jourjon, “Justin,” in \textit{The Eucharist of the Early Christians}, ed. Willy Rordorf and Others (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 75. Maurice says that in Justin’s community, the collection was “understood as a fruit of communion: God’s gift to us turns us into givers to others.”
the apostolic tradition, etc. throw light into the ecclesiological dimension of the Eucharist in Justin.

1.3.4. Irenaeus of Lyons

In Irenaeus of Lyons’ *Economy of Salvation*, Eucharist has an important place, and Eucharist is considered as “the sacrament of the economy of salvation,” because for him, it is in the Eucharist that “the Church finds its faith summed up.” Against the gnostic vision of the human person as the snaring of a spirit in matter, Irenaeus presents the human person as an indissoluble unity of an animated body, molded by God in His own image and likeness. In Irenaeus’ view, the spirit in the human being is the participation in the Holy Spirit, or the communion of the Spirit. This notion of human dignity is the ground for his argument of the economy of salvation. Eucharist gives communion with God on the process of human perfection, which is actualized within the members of the Eucharistic community, the Church. Thus, the Church or the Eucharistic community is an inevitable part of his notion of the economy of salvation.

Irenaeus believed in the redemption of our body and blood through the body and blood of Christ which we share in the Eucharist, and it is intelligible in the light of the economy of salvation. Christ established communion between God and his creatures, and in the Church,

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the body of Christ, it is communicated from the head, that is Christ himself. Our bodies that participate in the Eucharist are not corruptible because they have the hope of the resurrection:

But our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.  

On another occasion Irenaeus says that the Eucharist, “the antidote to life,” makes us immortal: “…what was perishable might be absorbed by imperishability and what was mortal by immortality (1 Cor 15:52-54) ‘that we might receive adoption as sons’ (Gal 4:5)?”  

Using the imagery of wheat and vine - they are once planted, grown, and then produce fruits - that become the body and blood of Christ, Irenaeus says, the same way, we will be dissolved into the earth, but in the fullness of time we will share in the glory of God.  

Making us sharers in his resurrection and glory, Emmanuel gladdens those who drink his blood, the spiritual food and drink. He believed that the whole body will share in the resurrection of Christ. In this way Irenaeus shows the importance of the Eucharist in his theory of recapitulation: “a taking up in Christ of all since the beginning.” Thus, he establishes the eschatological fulfillment of the fruits of the Eucharist.

For Irenaeus, the prophecy of Malachi 1:10-11, is fulfilled in the Eucharist, the new covenantal sacrifice offered throughout the world, which “fulfills and replaces the institutions of

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223 Lyons, IV.18.5.
224 Ibid., III.19.1; Cf. also, III.16.6.
225 Ibid., V.2.3. Cf. also, Hamman, 92. 92.
227 Cf. Lyons, III.18.7; 21.9-10; 22.3; V.21.1. Cf. also, Greeley, 14.
the old covenant: law, circumcision, sacrifices.” The Church is the locus of this sacrifice, which is handed over to her by the apostles. Citing Ephesians 5:30, Irenaeus says, “[w]e are the members of his body, of his flesh and blood.” Standing on apostolic teaching, Irenaeus exhorts that the Church has shown forth salvation in the world; it challenges our lifestyle: the members of the Church, the body of Christ, are called to be Eucharistic in their actions.

1.3.5. Cyprian of Carthage

It is said that the idea of the universal Church was formulated by Cyprian who believed in the unity of the Church. Cyprian was indebted to Paul for his understanding of the Church as the body of Christ, in which all individual members of the Church have significant roles to play for the life of the whole. The unity of the Church in Cyprian’s understanding could be defined as “one Church, made up of different local churches.” The Church is one because there is one God, one Christ, one faith: “God is one, and Christ is one; His Church is one and the faith is one; and the cement of fellowship binds all the people together into the body’s solid unity.” Cyprian’s theology of the Church, ministries in the Church, sacraments, Christology, etc. are founded on this faith.

Cyprian uses the phrase “the Church of Christ” very often. It denotes the Church having a legitimate bishop. Cyprian does not believe that God is present in the gatherings outside this

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228 Hamman, 88-9.
229 Lyons, IV.18.4.
230 Ibid., V.2.2.
231 Bryan M. Litfin, Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 90. Cf. Lyons, IV.17.5; V.20.1. V, 20.1. See also, Hamman, 94. Hamman is of the opinion that for Irenaeus, “[t]he solidarity between Christ and the church makes ethical demands on the Christian and the Church.”
Church as a Eucharistic Community

The altar and the sacrifice are privileges of the Church of Christ with legitimate bishops and priests. Others who work against this divine institution profane the Lord’s sacrifice, and according to him, they will be punished. Eucharist in the Mother Church, or the Church of Christ, is “the Lord’s food and drink” from heaven and going away from this food is considered as idolatrous and unclean. Here, regarding the unity, Cyprian agrees with Paul’s understanding of unity in the Church (cf. 1 Cor 10).

Cyprian does not speak exclusively on Eucharist. His purpose was to maintain the unity of the Church and in order to attain it he refers to the unity that could be found in the Eucharist. He also refers to the early Christian community (Eucharistic community), which gathered in one mind and soul and perfected in charity, as the perfect model of the unity. Cyprian uses the symbolism of the bread and wine to explain the relationship between Christ and the members of the Church. The wine represents Christ, and the water mixed with the wine is the members of the Church, and it shows the inseparable relationship between Christ and the Church. So also he explains the bread and the grains: “Just as many grains, which have been ground and mixed together, make up a single loaf, so in Christ, who is the bread of heaven, we know that we are one body in which our diversity is united and made one.” In Epistle Fifty Three, Cyprian establishes unity of the Church, present in the sacrament of the Eucharist symbolically, while correcting the practice of using the water alone in the cup of the Eucharist instead of wine mixed

235 Cyprian, "De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate," nos. 5-7 & 13. In no. 7, Cyprian uses the symbolism of the untorn garment of Christ to explain the "oneness" of the Church.
238 "De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate," no.25.
240 Ibid.
with water.\textsuperscript{241} He establishes that wine is important because Jesus used it and it represents Jesus himself. In the Church, water is a symbol of the sacrament of baptism and not the blood of Christ.\textsuperscript{242} In the Eucharist, the water which is mixed with the wine, symbolizes the people who are united to Christ in the sacrament of baptism and the wine to which water is mingled symbolizes the blood of Christ.\textsuperscript{243} It shows the relationship between Christ and his people, i.e., Church, and they cannot be separated from Christ when they are faithfully united to Christ in love and faith.\textsuperscript{244} Thus, the Eucharistic symbolism is used by Cyprian to explain the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The unity of the Church, in Cyprian’s ecclesiology, is primarily based on the legitimate bishops, who are the successors of the apostles, and whose authority comes from Christ.\textsuperscript{245} Thus, the universal Church is the body of Christ having different parts, and the concording fellowship of the bishops links each part and maintains the unity of the Catholic Church. A bishop who does not consider the unity and peace of the Church and separates himself from the Church structure and episcopal college cannot have the power or the dignity of a bishop.\textsuperscript{246} Cyprian believed that the individual members of the Church can cause defilement to the corporate Church, and in his

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\footnotetext[241]{Cf. "Epistle Fifty Three," in Cyprian (London: Oxford University Press, 1971). Cyprian uses the symbols of the Eucharistic Cup, which are also related to wine in the Old Testament; the wine offered by Melchizadek (Gen 14:18; Ps 110:4), the wine in the type of the Sacrifice presented by Solomon (Prov 9:1-5), the red garment (Is 63:2), etc.}
\footnotetext[242]{Cyprian, "Epistle LXII: To Caecilius, on the Sacrament of the Cup of the Lord," in Writings of Cyprian, Containing the Epistles and Some of the Treatises (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), 8.}
\footnotetext[243]{Ibid., 13. The blood of Christ for Cyprian denotes Christ as a whole person.}
\footnotetext[244]{Ibid. Cyprian establishes that those who offer wine alone dissociate Christ from the Church and those who offer water alone separate the Church from Christ.}
\footnotetext[246]{"Letter Fifty Five," no. 24.}
\end{footnotes}
African context, he was always ready to embrace anyone who came back with repentance.247 He also contacted the bishops in Rome to maintain unity in the African Church. It shows his thirst for unity with collaborative or collegial work.248

1.3.6. Ephrem the Syrian

Ephrem of Nisibis is a prominent figure of Syriac Christianity and theology. His theology is found in his prose, homilies, poetic prose, and hymns, in which he has employed the way of paradoxes and symbols; and his theology became liturgy and music.249 His typology and symbolism serve as a vehicle for proclaiming good news and extending theology.250 Inaccessibility of the divine to human reason underscores his theological writings.251 His hymns were mostly used in worship. Defining the Church as a worshipping community and Eucharist as being the greatest form of worship in the Church, Ephrem explains the Eucharist from the perspective of a worshipping community. Thus, his theology is mostly liturgical in nature.

Ephrem’s favorite typology to explain the mystery of Eucharist is the “Medicine of life.” Using the typology “Medicine of life” or “Medicine of Immortality,” Ephrem says that the Church gives the Eucharist, and it explains the age-old notion: “Church makes the Eucharist” (cf. EE 21).252 This typology also explains the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist; eating the

248 "Letter Fifty Five," no. 6.
249 XVI, The Fathers, 1, 158.
251 Cummings, 40.
252 Ephrem Syrus, "Commentary on Genesis," in St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works, ed. Kathleen E. McVey, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), XLIII.8. It was Ignatius of Antioch who described Eucharist as “medicine of life” for the first time but later it was quite often used in the Christian tradition and especially in the writings of St. Ephrem. Cf. Antioch, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians," XX.2; "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians," XX.
living bread, we place our hope in paradise. He offers various ecclesiological imageries to explain the Eucharist, and Owen Cummings says, “Ephrem’s Eucharistic theology is saturated in scripture,” because it is mostly taken from scripture. In his *Hymns on Nativity* Ephrem says:

Blessed is the Shepherd who became the sheep for our absolution.
Blessed is the Vine shoot that became the cup of our salvation.
Blessed also is the Ploughman Who Himself became - the wheat that was sown and the sheaf that was reaped.

The biblical imageries used here denote the sacrament of Eucharist, and also explain the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist. Keeping the Old Testament sacrifice of the sheep (cf. Ex 20:24; 29:27; Lev 9:3; 12:6), Ephrem says that the Shepherd (Jn 10:11) has become the sheep for absolving our sins; the vine shoot of Jesse (Is 11:1) has become the cup – the blood of our salvation. The Shepherd who becomes the lamb, the vine that becomes the chalice, and the sower (cf. Mt 13:1-30, 36-43; Mk 4:1-9; Lk 8:1-15) who becomes the bread are given to us in the Church in the sacrament of Eucharist. Fire and spirit are two imageries of Ephrem that denote Eucharist, and it tells that the life of the disciples is from the food of the Lord.

Fire and the Holy Spirit are in the bread and the cup.
Your bread has slain the greedy one, who made us his bread.
Your cup destroys death, which, lo, had swallowed us up.
We have eaten you, my Lord, and we have drunk you,
Not to nullify you, but to receive life in you.

On another occasion, explaining Isaiah 6, Ephrem describes the Eucharistic Christ as the “coal of fire.” It presents Eucharist as a divine touch on the human being. Ephrem also explains the effect of the Eucharist on the receiver: “He [Christ] filled up the deficiency of the deficient with

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253 Cummings, 44.
255 Lamb, shepherd, and vine are themes of the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation.
something He was able to separate from Himself… the deficiency of the deficient was filled up from a body in which fullness resided. And life was given to mortals from a body in which life resided.”

The imagery of the “two garments of Christ” is another imagery that explains the mystery of Eucharist: his body and his clothing. The bread is like his clothing and the spirit or the life in it is like his body. In *Hymn on the Pearl*, Mary who was instrumental in giving “the Pearl” to the world, is presented as a type of the Church. It becomes meaningful in the sacrament of the Eucharist; Mary gave Christ to the world once, and now the Church gives him throughout the world.

Ephrem’s *Hymns on Virginity* glorifies Christ for his “nature miracles.” The hymn begins with the miracle at Cana where he transformed water into wine, and it has an eschatological tone:

> … Heavenly Bridegroom Who descended and invited all.  
> To enter His pure feast I am invited.  
> Among the generations I shall confess that He is the Bridegroom and there is no other,  
> And His bridal chamber is prior to the ages,  
> And His feast is rich and not wanting…

Here, Ephrem presents Church as the heavenly bridegroom (cf. *LG* 4) that enjoys the feast of the bride whose chamber is eternally present.

In his *Commentary on Exodus*, Ephrem finds the relationship between the celebration of the Passover meal in Egypt and the new Passover, the Eucharist. The first Passover, which is a

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258 *St. Ephrem the Syrian: The Hymns on Faith*, 130, XIX.2-3.

259 Ibid., 81.4.

260 “Hymns on Virginity,” in *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 33.3. Unlike the healing miracles these miracles show Christ’s power over nature.
type of the new meal, made Israel a chosen people of God showing their election and identity, while the “living Body” of the new meal is shared only by those who have become part of Christ in Baptism. Both Passover meal and the Eucharist are the signs of two covenants and thus explain the identity of the old and new covenantal people. He also presents the tabernacle of the Old Testament which contained the holy thongs as the type of the Church which would last forever like the heavenly tabernacle. In this typology, it is the Eucharist that makes the Church a tabernacle in the world. Eucharist is also presented as food that builds counsel with God: “[f]or just as the evil one had given his bitter counsel to the house of Adam under the guise of food, the Good One gave his living counsel to the house of Adam under the guise of food [Eucharist].”

1.3.7. John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom, who is also known as the doctor of the Eucharist, upholds the liturgical participation of the Christians to pattern their lives after that of Jesus, which is expected from all those who receive the body and blood of Christ. Chrysostom, “the golden-mouthed” was a prophetic voice of the Eucharist during his lifetime. He uses the term musterion for Eucharist, and very often in his homilies he uses mystagogical language to refer to the Eucharist. In his baptismal instructions, Chrysostom admonishes the faithful that Christ’s blood is their powerful

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262 Ibid., XXV.1. It shows that Ephrem’s ecclesiology has got eschatological dimension: earthly Church leads to the heavenly communion.
263 “Homily on Our Lord,” XXV.1; See also, L.1. His body gives life because it is the medicine of life. This is a constant theme in Ephrem’s writings; Cf. “Commentary on Genesis,” XLIII.8.
264 Cummings, 60-1.
weapon against the devil. For him, the Church is formed from the side of Christ. On the cross, water and blood came out of his side and they are symbols of baptism and Eucharist in the Church. The body of Christ, which was formed from the side of crucified Christ, preserves its unity and grows sharing the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of Eucharist. Thus, the unity in the Church, the body of Christ, comes from the unity in Christ, his body and blood. The reception of the body and blood of Christ transforms human relationships and brings interdependence among the faithful.

In his *Homily on First Corinthians*, Chrysostom talks about the moral consequences of receiving communion. Reception of the Eucharist brings communion with the whole Christ, head and members, and especially the neediest in the body of Christ, the Church. This relationship between the head and the members and also between the members is brought forth in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, for Chrysostom, Eucharist is a sacrament that reminds us of our responsibility towards our brethren who are also members of the body of Christ: “If, therefore, you come to the Eucharist, do not do anything unworthy of the Eucharist. Do not shame your brother, or neglect him in his hunger. Do not be intoxicated, do not insult the Church. You come giving thanks for that you have enjoyed, so give back something in exchange and do not cut yourself off from your neighbor.”

267 Ibid., III.17-8. Chrysostom says that just as a woman nurtures her child with her own blood and milk, Christ nurtures the church or his offspring with his own blood.  
268 Greeley, 94.  
269 Ibid. For Chrysostom, we have a bodily relationship with Christ and it is through the Eucharist. If we do not have a bodily relationship we cannot be his members. We make this relationship by receiving him mysteriously in the sacrament of the Eucharist.  
The notion of the Church as the body of Christ lingers in various other homilies of Chrysostom as well. In his *Homily on the Gospel of John*, Chrysostom says that Christians are called to be one with Christ who is the head of the body, and this chemistry works out in the Church in the communion of the Eucharist. He insists on a life centered on the Eucharist in this section.\(^{271}\) Chrysostom also asks those who were hesitant to approach the table to be united to the table and to become one Body and members of his flesh and of his bones.\(^ {272}\) One bread and one cup are symbols of unity and interdependence that exist among the members of Christ.\(^ {273}\)

Christ’s gift of Eucharist, which makes us communion with him, is to be approached with the eyes of faith and reason: “[f]or Christ did not give us something tangible, but even in His tangible things all is intellectual…. If you were incorporeal He would have given you those incorporeal gifts naked; but since the soul is intertwined with the body, He hands over to you in tangible things that which is perceived intellectually.”\(^ {274}\) It is not by the power of men, instead by the power of Christ who was crucified for us, that the gifts of the Eucharist become the body and blood of Christ; and the words of Christ are spoken by the priest who represents him at the celebration of the Eucharist.\(^ {275}\)

Chrysostom raised his prophetic voice against the injustices in his society and his preaching often echoed the need of social reforms. He accused the rich landlords who used their


\(^{272}\) Ibid., XLVI.3.

\(^{273}\) “Homilies on First Corinthians," XXIV.2.


dependents as donkeys and mules neglecting their human dignity, and traders whose eyes were always on their profit.276 Luxurious life is against the spirit of Scripture and it is sinful for the Christians.277 John, with the conviction that he was an ambassador of the poor, preached on the relationship between prayer and concern for the poor: “[n]ot because you stretch out your hands will you be heard. Do not stretch your hands out to heaven, rather to the poor.”278 He challenged his congregation to dedicate their lives to the poor by witnessing a life of service with his Church in Antioch, which took care of widows, the sick, the disabled, strangers, travelers and prisoners.279 He considered slavery, that existed in his time, as a consequence of sin.280 For Chrysostom, concern for the poor, the needy, the oppressed, the disadvantaged, etc. determined one’s worthiness to receive the sacrament of Eucharist. He warned his people against the unworthy celebration of the Eucharist, which is a serious sin against the Lord.

1.3.8. Augustine

Though many fathers have commented on the Eucharistic foundation of the Church based on Paul’s statement: “we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Cor


280 Brandle, 140.
10:17), Augustine is outstanding on his emphasis on the Eucharistic foundation of the unity of the Church. Against Pelagianism, a heresy he refuted during his time, Augustine presumes the axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi* - the rule of worship is the rule of faith, which presumes that liturgy is the primary theology. If liturgy is primary theology, it is quite reasonable that Eucharist, “the source and summit of Christian life” (*LG* 11), must be the center of Christian theology.

Augustine is convinced that the bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ on the altar when the word of God is applied. He views Eucharist as the new sacrifice offered according to the grace of the New Testament, from the rising of the sun to its setting (cf. Mal 1:11), by the priest in the line of Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110:4) - priest of God Most-High, who offered the bread and wine. Admonishing his flock to recognize Christ hung on the cross in the bread, and the blood poured out from his side in the cup, Augustine says, whatever things foretold in the old sacrifice have been revealed in the new covenant of the Church. For Augustine, de Lubac says, the Eucharist is much more than a symbol, because Christ makes his presence real in this sacrament. Stressing the mysterious nature of the Eucharistic food, Augustine imagines the Lord saying to him: “I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall

282 Cf. Cummings, 77.
284 "Sermon 228b," 1. Cf. Cummings, 80-1. Cummings says: “Augustine considers sacrifice as the entire movement of humankind toward God, and at the heart of this movement stands the Eucharist, in and through which we are ‘one-d’ with the unique sacrifice of Christ.”
286 Lubac, Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 251.
be changed into me.” Thus, we are mysteriously transformed into him; or by this union “he draws us into himself.” Addressing the newly baptized, Augustine says that they are beginning to receive what they have also begun to be, i.e., they become one flesh with him. The Son offers himself in the Eucharist and by receiving the Eucharist worthily, those who receive him become part of the new covenant with eternal inheritance.

Augustine always saw “the ecclesial body as an extension of the Eucharist.” Church, being the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the mystery on the altar becomes the mystery of each one who receives it. Through the principle of “participation,” Augustine teaches that the Church as the body of Christ participates in the Eucharistic body of Christ, so that they are both identical and different. It is mainly through Christian living. Following Paul (1 Cor 10), Augustine says that though we are many, we become one in the sacrament of Eucharist, because the reception of the sacrament unites the faithful together, so that they are bound together and will not be

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290 See, "Sermon 228b," no. 3.

291 Lubac, Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 257.

292 Foley, 124.

scattered or separated.\textsuperscript{294} One bread and one cup are signs of unity because those who receive it are made one by loving each other, in faith, hope, and undivided charity.\textsuperscript{295} Even if there are a number of breads on the altar or many altars in the world, they are “one loaf” because this is the Body of Christ. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ.\textsuperscript{296} As one loaf is made from single grains, collected together and somehow mixed in with each other into dough, the body of Christ is made one by the harmony of charity.\textsuperscript{297}

Augustine’s ecclesiology becomes intelligible with his concept of \textit{Christus Totus}, “total Christ,” which is formed by Christ together with his Church. It does not mean that Christ is incomplete without us, the members of the Church, but he did not wish to be complete without us, the Church.\textsuperscript{298} Based on Paul’s ecclesiology, according to which the Church is the body of Christ and Christ is the head of the body (Eph 5:23), Augustine says that Christ is comprised of both Christ, the head, and Church, the body: “Christ is us and we are Christ.”\textsuperscript{299} Through communion the faithful have become the members of Christ who is their head. In the Eucharistic celebration, the entire Christ - head and other members of the body - comes together under the head and gives praise and glory to the Father, looking up to heaven, and celebrates the oneness of the body.

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\item \textsuperscript{294} Hippo, “Sermon 228b,” 3.
\item \textsuperscript{295} “Sermon 229," 2.
\item \textsuperscript{297} Ibid., 2.
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1.4. Conclusion

In our search for the importance of the Eucharist in the Early Church, we began our research with examining the biblical foundations of the Eucharistic ecclesiology. The study of the institution narratives shows that these narratives had their origin in Christian communities in which the Eucharist was celebrated and of course influenced by the worship and the liturgical practices of the communities. The institution narratives also throw light onto the Jewish connection of Christianity. Though each evangelist had his own purpose, all of them agree with the covenantal perspective of the Eucharist. The context of the Jewish Passover meal seen in the Last Supper of Jesus, to which the institution narratives are associated, is a passage from the old people of God to the new people of God, or, from the old Israel to the new Israel. The Jewish Passover was a celebration of the identity of God’s own people Israel, whereas the celebration and communion of the Eucharist is a sign of the identity of the members of the body of Christ. The identity of the Church as the body of Christ will be realized in its fullness in eschaton, though it is made present in the sacramental celebration of the Eucharist. This eschatological reality is in agreement with the Emmanuel theme in Matthew, according to which Jesus, the Emmanuel (Mt 1:23) who saves his people from sins (Mt 1:21), shedding his blood for them (Mt 26:28), and is commemorated in the Eucharist. The Church does it as a worshipping community in the form of thanksgiving for his gracious saving work.

The Emmaus episode has the structure of the liturgy of the Eucharist with two parts; sharing of the word of God and the bread of life. It shows the influence of the liturgical tradition in the formation of the biblical texts and sheds light upon the structure of the first century Eucharistic celebration. The response of the disciples – going back to Jerusalem where other disciples stayed – was a prophetic sign of the Eucharistic life demanded by the Lord at the
celebration of the Eucharist each time. For John, the Eucharist is the continuation of the power of Jesus in our time. It flows from everything Jesus said and did as the word became flesh and the purpose of his presence is our eternal life and union with him. Though John does not offer the institution narrative, the Bread of Life discourse and the foot washing bring the sacramental symbolism very active in his gospel, and it affirms the building up of a union between Jesus, the Living Bread, and those who receive him and also between the communicants.

The Acts of the Apostles presents the history of the spreading of the Church soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the early Church, Eucharist was part of their community life and more than that Eucharist was a lifestyle because the prophetic life of this period brought all those who believed in Christ together. Though Christianity spread outside of Jerusalem, the Eucharist had central space in their life. Paul’s teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ in his letter to the First Corinthians determined the future Eucharistic ecclesiology of the Church. This concept is realized in the sacrament of Eucharist; our communion in the Eucharistic body builds up the ecclesial body of which Christ is the head. Building on the Pauline theology of the Body of Christ, the early Church Fathers developed the Eucharistic ecclesiology in the early Christian theology. They also made use of the mystagogical language to explain the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist as the image of what will be made manifest and prefiguration of the full, unending enjoyment of the Lord’s Godhead is clearly found in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

Based on the research on the biblical foundations and the teachings of the fathers of the Church, we conclude that the Church had been primarily a worshipping community from its very

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300 Kodell, 119-20.
beginning, and the Eucharist held the pivotal place in her worship. The centrality of the Eucharist made way for the mode of theology of this period, which is very much liturgical in its nature. The service at the celebration of the Eucharist determined the role of the members of the Church. The members of the community tried to practice the sharing and serving aspects of the Eucharist in their daily life, and this witness of life made them a prophetic community. Even though the Church was spreading outside the Roman Empire and becoming more and more institutionalized, the Eucharistic ecclesiology was at the heart of her life and theology.
CHAPTER 2

CHURCH AS A EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY: A THEOLOGICAL RETROSPECTIVE IN VATICAN II

2.1. Introduction

The Second Vatican Council, which was considered the first global council for many theologians, also showed the world that the Church is not isolated from the world, but part of the world. The openness of the council was clearly evidenced in its exposition of ecclesiology, which is known as communion ecclesiology. The basic idea of communion ecclesiology is rooted in the Trinity and the Eucharist. The ecclesial sense of the Eucharist, which was very strong in the early centuries, was brought back into the foreground in the documents of the council. Thus, after a long period of undue emphasis on the “how” of the Eucharist (real presence and sacramentalism) during the Middle Ages and the modern time, the Church’s renewed interest in the study of the Fathers of the Church impacted the study on Eucharist and Ecclesiology (the “why” of the Eucharist), and the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church was rediscovered. The council’s dogmatic constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium says that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (LG 11). Presbyterorum

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2 Marc Ouellet, "The Ecclesiology of Communion, 50 Years after the Opening of Vatican Council II," in International Theology Symposium (The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with One Another) (National University of Ireland, Maynooth, June 6, 2012); Mathew Vellanickal, Church: Communion of Individual Churches; Biblico-Theological Perspectives on the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2009), 100. This research does not elaborate the Trinitarian basis of the communion ecclesiology, because its purpose is to show the importance of the Eucharist and its relation to the Church.
3 Ouellet.
Ordinis, the decree on the priestly formation, teaches that “[n]o Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist” (PO 6).

This chapter addresses how the Eucharistic ecclesiology was expressed in the Second Vatican Council. This chapter also attempts to answer the following questions: What is the contribution of Henri de Lubac in this theological retrospection? How is Orthodox Church ecclesiology related to the ecclesiology of the council? How could the Church perpetuate the same stream of thought in the following years of the council and what are the modes of it? How did the emergence of local or contextual theologies after Vatican II contribute to rediscovering the prophetic call of the Church and her social commitment in the present world? Why is the sacrament of Eucharist an energizer and a powerful symbol in the development of these theologies?

2.2. The Inspiration of Henri de Lubac for Theological Retrospection

The communion ecclesiology proposed by the Second Vatican Council has its foundation on the sacrament of the Eucharist, because it is intelligible only in the Eucharistic perspective. Henri de Lubac, a very influential French Jesuit theologian of the twentieth century, led this stream of thought proposing the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early centuries or the ecclesiology of the Fathers of the Church. De Lubac, who is also called “a modern Father of the Church,” 4 advocated a return to the Fathers of the Church, in the understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church. De Lubac, who “helped the church to renew

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4 Cf. McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology, 45-60. esp. Chapter 4 "A Modern Father of The Church": The Trials and Triumphs of Henri de Lubac."
itself without losing continuity in tradition,”⁵ was instrumental in the formation of the communion ecclesiology in the Second Vatican Council.

2.2.1. Body of Christ: The Sacramental and Ecclesial Perspectives

The Christian allegory “the Body of Christ”⁶ denotes both the Eucharist, the sacramental body of Christ, and the Church, the ecclesial body of Christ. The relationship between the sacramental and the ecclesial body, for de Lubac, is intelligible only in the context of the Eucharist. Though St. Paul used the natural imagery of the human body (1 Cor 12:12; 26-7; 10:17; Rom 12:5; Eph 1:23; 4:12; 5:30; Col 1:18), de Lubac moved further to explain the mystery of the Church. For Paul, de Lubac believes, “Christ and the Church are just one great mystery,” which is a mystery of union.⁷ De Lubac says that the phrase, “the body of Christ” is very often used by the Fathers of the Church in line with Paul for whom it means the Church.⁸ For them, it is the ‘whole body of Christ,’ the ‘universal body,’ or the ‘full body’ of Christ.⁹ However, this meaning was diminished in the second millennium. Even the authoritative spokesmen of the Church contributed to this loss. The encyclical Mystici Corporis, in which the

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⁶ Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture, trans. E. M. Macierowski, 2 vols., vol. 2, Retrieval and Renewal: Ressourcement in Catholic Thought (Grand Rapids: MI/Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/T & T Clark, 2000). This work is a scholarly study on the four senses of Scripture. It also mentions the relationship between Christ and Church in the allegorical language used in Scriptures. Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 75. De Lubac in this scholarly work establishes that “the body of Christ” denoted the Church in the early centuries, and the works in the first millennium show that the “mystical body,” denoted the Eucharist. However, these two concepts were transposed gradually into today’s understanding, beginning after the mid-twelfth century. See also The Splendor of the Church, 156. Cf. McPartlan, The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue, Chapter 4, "The Eucharist Makes the Church," 75-97.
⁷ Lubac, Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture, 2, 92. De Lubac says, “The Church is in truth the ‘body’ of Christ; she is his ‘flesh’; she forms with him but ‘one single person’: ‘Christ and the Church is [sic] one person.’ Now, ‘if two in one flesh,’ asks Saint Augustine, ‘why not two in one voice?’ And consequently, ‘whether it be head or members that speaks, the one Christ is speaking.’ Then inclusion is mutual: ‘So let Christ speak, since the Church speaks in Christ, and Christ speaks in the Church; and the body in the head, and the head in the body.’”
⁸ Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 4.
⁹ Ibid.
phrase *mystici corporis* is meant to denote the Church, is the best example of this shift.\textsuperscript{10} De Lubac argues that the Fathers of the Church used this phrase for the sacramental body following the Pauline analogy, but in today’s context, it is used for the ecclesial body, which is inappropriate in terms of the Pauline analogy.\textsuperscript{11}

Referring to Master Simon, de Lubac says that there are two bodies in the sacrament of the altar: the true body of Christ present in the sacrament and that which it signifies, the Church.\textsuperscript{12} The sacramental body is more than the flesh and blood of Christ; “they are spirit and life, because the true Logos and the true Godhead are contained within them. Since nothing mortal remains in them any longer, they have become bearers of all grace and all the truth of the Word incarnate.”\textsuperscript{13}

Until the middle of the eleventh century, the expression “the sacrament (the mystery) of the body of the Lord” was frequently used in the Church to denote the Eucharist,\textsuperscript{14} and the mystical body was more or less equivalent to the sacramental body. During this period, the ecclesial body was always used with certain adjectives (e.g. one body, universal body, body of the Church, body of the people, body of Christians, whole body, spiritual body). In this way, it was differentiated from the sacramental body. However, at a later stage the adjective “mystical” was separated from the sacramental body and joined to ‘body’ that designated the Church.\textsuperscript{15} De

\textsuperscript{12} Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 250.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 80. The *Splendor of the Church*, 131. St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church used it in the context of the Eucharist. By the “Mystical Body,” they meant *corpus in mystetrio*, the body mystically signified (Eucharist) and realized by the Eucharist (Church).
\textsuperscript{15} *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 75-100.
Lubac’s critique is that the idea of the “Mystical body of the Church,” or of the Church as forming “a mystical Body,” is inadequate and it comes from a misunderstanding.

De Lubac says that Christ’s own sacrifice and our communicating in his sacrifice is the twofold dynamism implicit in celebrating the mystery of the Eucharist (*Corpus mysticum*), and thus, “*corpus mysticum* is ‘the body engaged in a mystical action, [the] ritual echo indefinitely multiplied in space and time of the single Action from which it takes its meaning.’”\(^{16}\) The mystical action communicates the partakers the sacrifice of Calvary and makes them the body of Christ. During the scholastic period a distinction began to be made between three elements essential to the integrity of the sacrament, and applied to the Eucharist: *sacramentum tantum*, the outward sign of the Eucharist as the species of bread and wine; the *res tantum*, the fruit of the sacrament of Eucharist as the unity of the Church (*corpus Christi mysticum*); and *sacramentum et res*, which is contained under the sign is the body of Christ born of Mary (*corpus Christi verum*).\(^{17}\) This great scholastic formulation, which is structurally Augustinian according to de Lubac, was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in its essentials.\(^{18}\) De Lubac says that the doctrine of the relationship between the physical body of Christ and his Mystical Body was gradually forgotten. Later, without any essential change in the doctrine, the two attributes *mysticum* and *verum* came to be transposed.\(^{19}\) Thus, the expression “mystical body”

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\(^{16}\) McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, 77. Presenting the understanding of the early fathers, de Lubac says that their emphasis was not the explanation of the “real presence” instead of an action and of sacrifice.

\(^{17}\) Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 96-7; McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, 78.


\(^{19}\) Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 100. The mystical body, which was the Eucharistic body in the early Church, became the true (*verum*) body during the middle ages, and the ecclesial body, which is the fruit of the Eucharist, became the mystical body. See also *The Splendor of the Church*, 127.
passed from the Eucharist to the Church: and once again there was, in an analogous sense, a *mystery of the body*. The *mystical body* was the mystery that described this ecclesial body by means of the sacrament, and in its radical meaning, it could strictly speaking be described as being ‘contained’ in the Eucharist. Then, from the *mystery of the body* it developed into being *a body in [the] mystery*; from the signification itself to the thing signified.20

Church as the mystical body of Christ is signified by means of the sacrament of Eucharist: “Mystical is a contraction of mystically signified, mystically designated,”21 and thus, “Ecclesial realism safeguards Eucharistic realism and the later confirms the former.”22 According to de Lubac, it was the individualistic Eucharistic piety that caused the move away from the traditional understanding of the relationship between two.23 However, the terminological change, i.e., *corpus* which is understood as *verum* – first Church and then the Eucharist, has altered the doctrine’s center of gravity, and the Eucharist, historically, ‘the mystery to understand’ became ‘the mystery to believe.’24 He argues that if the “Mystical Body” is exclusively used to denote the Church, it is erroneous, for it “would no longer bring us the realization that those who form this ‘body of the Church’ are really the ‘members of Christ.’”25 Then, there is no meaning for his “living body,” which is animated by the Holy Spirit,26 and it will result in the fading away of the realism and specifying quality of the Christian mystery.27

### 2.2.2. Eucharist Makes the Church: Ecclesial Perspective

The Church, which is very often called “the mystical body” of Christ, according to de Lubac, becomes meaningful only through the sacrament of the Eucharist because, in the

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20 *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 250.
21 Ibid.; McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, 78. De Lubac says: “Christians are not the ‘Eucharistic’ Body of Christ; the Eucharistic Body is Christ’s ‘real, personal Body which lived, died [and] is glorified.’”
22 Ibid., 251.
23 Ibid., 259.
25 *The Splendor of the Church*, 130.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 131.
Eucharist, the social body of the Church, united around its visible pastors for the Lord’s Supper, becomes the Mystical Body of Christ.\(^2^8\) The Church, de Lubac says, like the Eucharist, is a mystery of unity, and there should not be a break between the Mystical Body and the Eucharist, and they must be understood by one another.\(^2^9\)

Emphasizing the unifying work of the Holy Spirit in “the Body of Christ” de Lubac says that we become “the body of Christ” in the Eucharist, not by the symbolism, rather, by the work of the Spirit. By receiving him (Christ/the body of Christ/the Eucharist), we become the Body of Christ (Church); the bridegroom and the Bride become “one flesh.”\(^3^0\) In the celebration of the Eucharist, De Lubac believes, Christ in glory reaches to the Church on earth through the veil of Eucharistic elements to draw her back through the veil and embody her in the Church in heaven. Thus, he means the heavenly Church within the Eucharistic veil, when he says that the Eucharist makes the Church. “The veil envelops both the res et sacramentum (Christ) and res tantum (the heavenly Church).”\(^3^1\) The Heavenly Church or the Church in glory is the perfection of the earthly Church. However, the heavenly Church is not already in perfect existence, but in relation with the earthly Church, her seed, and de Lubac

\(^2^8\) Ibid., 52-3; John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia Encyclical Letter (Rome: April 17, 2003), Chapter II, "Eucharist Makes the Church"; McPartlan, The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue, Chapter 4, "The Eucharist Makes the Church". De Lubac’s reinstatement of the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, “the Eucharist makes the Church,” was taken seriously by John Paul II in his apostolic letter Dominicae Cenae and encyclical letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia. They will be dealt with in detail later in this chapter.

\(^2^9\) Lubac, The Splendor of the Church, 156-7; Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, 260. De Lubac says: “The Church and the Eucharist are formed by one another day by day: the idea of the Church and the idea of the Eucharist must promote one another mutually and each be rendered more profoundly by the other. By the food and blood of the Lord’s body let all fellowship be bound together!”

\(^3^0\) The Splendor of the Church, 158; Cf. Vellanickal, Church: Communion of Individual Churches; Biblico-Theological Perspectives on the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 101.

\(^3^1\) McPartlan, The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue, 85. See also Hippo, "Sermon 228b," 2. De Lubac agrees with Augustine in saying that the Eucharist makes the Church. However, for de Lubac, it is fulfilled in the heavenly Church. Cf. Augustine, City of God, X.6; 20. Augustine says in City of God: “This is the sacrifice of Christians, who are ‘many, making up one body in Christ.’ This is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar..."
envisages the Christian participating in the bride of Christ, which has both heavenly and earthly existence.

**2.2.3. The Church Makes the Eucharist: Ministerial Perspective**

De Lubac, like the teaching of Vatican Council II, believes in the common and ministerial priesthood of the People of God (LG, ch. 2). The Holy Spirit consecrates all Christians as priests in the sacrament of baptism, and it is the priesthood of the whole Church, whereas the Eucharist is effected by the hierarchic Church through its apostolic succession according to the commandment of Christ: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). It does not make them more perfect or privileged, and the institution of the priesthood and the sacrament of Holy Orders do not create two degrees of membership in Christ or two different species of Christians in the Church. All share equally the brotherhood in Christ. It is Christ alone who works in those who have received the ministerial priesthood (in persona Christi) in the Church.

The essence of the Catholic hierarchy is the threefold role of government, teaching, and sanctification, which are derived from Christ’s mission, and have been continued since the beginning of the Church. However, for de Lubac, the supreme exercise of the power of the

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35 Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 141. De Lubac underlines “the fatherhood of the clergy” in the visible Church, the Body of Christ, in which the pastors, the successors of the apostles, mediate the material function of the members. See *The Motherhood of the Church*, trans. Sergia Englund (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1982), 85; see also, chapter V, "Fatherhood of the Clergy," 85-112. Whereas the whole Church, the entire Christianity is our mother, ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78; ibid., 78. not in the human way, because “the mother and child are one, i.e., if “the Church is mother, each Christian also is or should be a mother.” See ibid., 75-84; Cf. Augustine, St. Aurelius Augustine: Expositions on the Psalms, (Christian Classics Ethereal Library Calvin College., 2007), https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/19-psalms/text/books/augustine-psalms/augustine-psalms-web.htm. Psalm 128.5.
hierarchy lies in consecrating the sacrament of the Eucharist and thus, perpetuating the work of redemption.\textsuperscript{37} At the Eucharistic celebration, the sacrament of the heavenly mystery, the priest speaks in the name of the whole community, and the human and divine are united in a mysterious way. De Lubac located the hierarchy’s power of jurisdiction and teaching within its priestly power of sanctifying, and especially within the celebration of the Eucharist. The transition between the principles that the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church takes place via the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{38} The members of the hierarchy bring about the presence of Christ and at the same time receive Christ with others in the Eucharist. De Lubac believes in the visible unity of the worldwide Church for the logic of sacramentality, each community being open on all sides through the bonds of communion.\textsuperscript{39}

2.2.4. Eucharist: The Sacrament of Unity in the Church

We have seen that the Eucharist builds up the Church and it calls our attention to explain Henri de Lubac’s view that the Eucharist, which contains the whole mystery of our salvation, is a sacrament of unity in the Church.\textsuperscript{40} De Lubac, as a matter of fact, is aware that this idea goes back to St. Paul and the Church Fathers who have already explained unity with the images of body, bread, and cup. This unity of the Church as the body of Christ is experienced in the sacrament of Eucharist in a mysterious way. De Lubac argues that all theologians and preachers

\textsuperscript{37} Lubac, \textit{The Splendor of the Church}, 148. See also 149-50: De Lubac says that the Church is on its way towards the sanctuary of heaven and the liturgy of eternity, and “it is never worthier of its own name than when the People of God gathers round its Shepherd for the Eucharistic ceremony.” Cf. McPartlan, \textit{Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology}, 70. Following the thought pattern of de Lubac, McPartlan says that the Pope is understood as Eucharistic guardian and guarantor, as one who strengthens his brother bishops Eucharistically rather than juridically. Cf. also, Jean-Luc Marion, \textit{God without Being}, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 152-3.

\textsuperscript{38} McPartlan, \textit{The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue}, 104.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 106-7. See also p. 110. De Lubac asserts that the eschatological Church (\textit{ecclesia sanctorum}) reduces to the current world-wide Church as that which is present and edified in the Eucharist.

\textsuperscript{40} Lubac, \textit{Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man}, 89.
of Middle Ages, whether they emphasized the mystical or realistic aspect of the Eucharist, agreed that the result of this sacrament is unity.\footnote{Ibid., 93.} The unity brought in the Eucharist is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is well presented in various ancient liturgies. This is not the work of the Church, rather, Christ offers his Church,\footnote{Ibid., 108. See also p. 110: De Lubac points out that in the ancient liturgies, and still in the Eastern liturgies, “the prayers for union form the culminating point of Epiclesis.”} because “[o]ur Churches are the ‘upper room’ where not only is the Last Supper renewed but Pentecost also.”\footnote{Ibid., 111.}

The unity in the life of the Church is not a merely natural growth, rather, it is the fruit of Calvary and “results from the Mass’s application to us of the merits Passion with a view to our final redemption.”\footnote{The Splendor of the Church, 156.} De Lubac defends the traditional teaching of the Church that there is only one sacrifice, made by the whole Church, for the greater unity of the Church: “Just as there is only one faith and only one Baptism, so there is only one altar in the Church.”\footnote{Ibid., 151; Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man, 102-3.} Christ in this sacrament of the altar is the heart of the Church.\footnote{The Splendor of the Church, 157. McPartlan, The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue, 70. The Church is a wide mystery and more paradoxical than Christ, and the mystical life is the triumph of the paradox. In principle, Christ can be considered in himself apart from the Church. He becomes corporate having descended and ascended as an individual. McPartlan is of the opinion that de Lubac is unable to forge the mystical synthesis, whereas, integration is possible if the great sacrament is the Eucharist as the assembled community. In the Eucharist, not only the other sacraments but also dogmas and scriptures give access to the mystery. See also Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology, 31.} For de Lubac, the unity of the members of Christ depends on their relationship with their one single head,\footnote{Cf. Henri De Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 236. God’s love is a gratuitous gift to humanity and it is shared with the humanity in the sacrament} and it is accomplished in the celebration of the Eucharist, because Jesus’ gathering of humanity into himself occurs in and through the Eucharist.\footnote{McPartlan, The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue, 59-60. Cf. Henri De Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 236. God’s love is a gratuitous gift to humanity and it is shared with the humanity in the sacrament}
The Church is one and she is united under the episcopacy that exists in the universal Church. De Lubac says that Christ has primacy within the Church, and the entire universal Church is present essentially, ‘mystically’ in each particular Church, “since Christ is there, through the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop. But equally, each particular Church exists fully only in the ‘one and unique catholic’ Church.” De Lubac warns against expecting changes in the essential structures and faith of the Church “in order to suit the world’s changes,” because the Church is not merely a human society. As the Church is not merely a human organization, the present temptation towards liberalism, which stands in line with the theocratic vision in the past, must be checked. “[T]he fundamental distinction between ‘human nature’ and the ‘supernatural,’ a distinction which underlies their union brought about by grace” says de Lubac, “remains a fundamental element in Catholic doctrine.” The tension of the Church ‘here and hereafter’ should be seen from the perspective of the fundamental character of the Church as divine and human.

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49 The Motherhood of the Church, 233.
50 De Lubac: A Theologian Speaks, 9.
51 Ibid., 20.
53 Ibid. See also pp. 112-3: De Lubac says: “A church secularized, naturalized, which would willingly give up ‘cult’ and replace it with ‘culture,’ seeking her ‘lights,’ not in the Gospels (even if lip service were still paid to them), but in the world; a Church which would pretend to be born today from some kind of radical ‘mutation,’ which would no longer concern herself, even with disinterested zeal, with anything but the organization of life on this earth – such a Church would have no right to exist anymore in the society of men, and would not be long in meeting dissolution.”
2.3. The Eucharistic Foundation of the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II

Communion ecclesiology is the central and the fundamental characteristic of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and it is also reflected in other documents. The Council’s understanding of the Church as a communion is developed in the context of the interconnection between the Eucharist and the life of the Church. The introductory document of the Council, the constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, shows the theological trend of the Council going back to the vision of the Church in the early centuries, “as a particular or local community gathered for the Eucharist presided at by a bishop.” Though this research does not deal with all documents in detail, the following discussion with special emphasis on the dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* will make it clear that the Eucharistic ecclesiology is fundamental to the teachings of the Council.

2.3.1. Beginning with a Constitution on Liturgy

Bernard P. Prusak says that the Council’s liturgical constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, initiated the Council’s retrieval of the concept of the particular or local church according to which the universal Church is the communion of local churches and finds its best

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56 Synod, 340/C.1. See also Ouellet. Ouellet says: “It is enough to mention liturgical reform, episcopal collegiality, synodality, and ecumenism, to touch on the well-known key points of the ecclesiology of communion and its interpretation.” However, the scope of this study doesn’t allow us to treat all these topics at the moment. Cf. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). There is also difference of opinion regarding the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Matthew Vellanickal says that the communion ecclesiology had not emerged fully in the council. Instead, he says, “[i]t contains two different ecclesiologies. One is the Western, juridical, universalistic ecclesiology which starts with the Universal Church, and considers the other Churches as parts of the one Church of God. The other is the emerging ecclesiology of the Universal Church as Communion of the Churches. The fathers of the Council do not seem to have succeeded in making a synthesis of the two ecclesiologies.” Cf. Vellanickal, *Church: Communion of Individual Churches; Biblico-Theological Perspectives on the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, 39.

57 Gaillardetz and Clifford, 66-7.

expression in the liturgical communities, and it is reiterated in *Lumen Gentium*, the constitution on the Church.\(^5^9\) Though the second chapter of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is dedicated to explicate the mystery of the Eucharist, the first chapter gives certain glimpses of the importance of the Eucharist. It asserts that in the liturgy “the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church,” and through the Eucharist we achieve our redemption (*SC* 2). It is through the Eucharist that the Church continually lives and grows, and all the members are united or linked by the very bonds by which Christ wishes it to be formulated. As it is the source of the life in the Church, the Council says:

> [T]he Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery, reading those things ‘which were in all the scriptures concerning him’ (Lk 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which ‘the victory and triumph of his death are again made present,’ and at the same time ‘giving thanks to God for his inexpressible gift’ (2 Cor 9, 15) in Christ Jesus, in ‘praise of his glory’ (Eph 1:12) through the power of the Holy Spirit (*SC* 6).\(^6^0\)

The Council presents the Holy Eucharist as the center of the entire life of the Church. All other sacraments and every ministry of the Church flow from the Eucharist and look towards it. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* also explains the presence of Christ in the Church in her Eucharistic celebration (*SC* 7), in which, as a sacrament of unity the members of ‘the whole Body of the Church’ are united (*SC* 26). The same chapter says the Eucharistic celebration centered around

\(^5^9\) Ibid., 275.

\(^6^0\) See Edmund Gomes, *The Eucharist and the Church* (Shilling: Vendrame Institute Publication, 1999), 110. Gomes says: “In the celebration of the Eucharist, the church experiences its highest actualization. The congregation taking part is given the effectual sign of renewed and deepened, or still further to be deepened, participation and incorporation in the body of Christ. And to be able to share in this body is the primary and ultimate work of the Holy Spirit sent by the Risen Lord. The sign of this participation takes the form of eating the body and blood of Christ sacramentally present. Nowhere is everything which the church is, and has the mission to announce, more intensely manifested than in the celebration of the Eucharist.” See also Powers, 16. “The Eucharist is the very image of the unity of the Church, the visible sign that bishops, priests and laity alike are members of the communion of the Church, and the testimony to the orthodoxy of their status and teaching. And it is in this context that the statements of the real presence of Christ, the change in the bread and wine are to be found.”
the bishop of the diocese is the principal manifestation of the Church \((SC\ 41)\), and the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Sunday Mass at one’s own parish is to be fostered as it explains one’s relation to the body of Christ through the local community \((SC\ 42)\).

The document \((SC)\) that stresses the fact that the sacraments build up the body of Christ \((SC\ 59)\) dedicates a separate chapter for the Eucharist, and it begins with explaining the relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Church.

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us \((SC\ 47)\).

Not only does it say that the Eucharist is also entrusted to the Church to be celebrated, but also clearly shows that this sacrament is the sign of unity and bond of charity in the Church. It also stresses the importance of the liturgical gathering that forms the Church and makes the Lord present in the Church. This document shows the combined work of the two tables, the table of the word of God and the table of the body: “[t]hey should be instructed by God’s word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s Body” \((SC\ 48)\).\(^{62}\)

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\(^{61}\) Uzukwu’s interpretation of \(SC\ 41\) makes it clear and touching. Cf. Elochukwu Uzukwu, *The Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 60. Uzukwu says that where there is the full and active participation of the holy people of God in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in same prayer, around the same altar where the bishop presides, surrounded by his *presbyterium* and ministers. This is a reality in the local church under the leadership of a bishop. Cf. also Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (December 4, 1963),” in *Vatican II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 1999), no. 40.

\(^{62}\) The document says that the two parts of the Mass, “the liturgy of the word” and “the Eucharistic liturgy” \((SC\ 56)\) are closely connected. The importance of the word of God and the means to open its treasures in the Eucharist is explicated in the section on “Decrees,” esp. nos. 51-2. See also, Chauvet, 26. Chauvet says: “It is in the celebrating the Eucharist as his prayer and his action, as it is in the Church welcoming the scriptures as his word, that it is possible to recognize that Christ is alive.”
2.3.2. The Sacramental Nature of the Church

The very structure of Lumen Gentium brings the important shift in the Church’s understanding of herself with the Council. The opening chapter, “The Mystery of the Church,” establishes that the Church, which has a sacramental nature (LG 1), was instituted by Christ in God’s salvific plan (LG 2). Applying the definition of the sacrament to the Church, i.e., the visible sign of the invisible presence of God, McBrien shows the major difference between the conciliar and the pre-conciliar ecclesiology. He says, “Chapter 1 of Lumen Gentium is concerned with the Church as mystery, sacrament, and community, while the Latin manuals of the preconciliar period were concerned primarily with the Church’s institutional and structural aspects.”

The sacramentality of the Church throws light on the incarnational and eschatological dimensions of the Church, and in their extreme forms could be seen as beyond criticisms without the need of renewal and reform. Chapter five, “The Call to Holiness,” for McBrien, is the consequence of the understanding of the sacramentality of the Church, and “[i]f the Church is, in fact, the corporate presence of the triune God, who is holiness itself, then it must look and act like a community transformed by that divine presence.”

The Council fathers use the symbolism of the blood and water flowing from the open side of the crucified Jesus to explain the birth of the Church, which alludes to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In the sacrament of the Eucharistic Bread, the unity of believers, who form one body of Christ, is both expressed and brought about (LG 3). However, it is the work of the

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64 McBrien, 165.
65 Ibid., 165-6.
67 We have already seen in that the Church is presented as the body of Christ in St. Paul’s letters, the fathers of the Church, Henri de Lubac, and the modern Catholic teachings. Cf. also Brant Pitre, Christ as Bridegroom, 2015.
Holy Spirit who sanctifies the Church and dwells in the hearts of the faithful \((LG\ 4)\). The document also brings forth other imageries from scriptures, such as sheepfold, cultivated field, building of God, Jerusalem, our mother, spotless spouse of the spotless lamb, etc. \((LG\ 6)\) to explain the sacramental nature of the Church.

2.3.3. Communion Ecclesiology: An Expression of Eucharistic Ecclesiology

Communion ecclesiology, the central characteristic of the Second Vatican Council, is very explicit in the constitution on the Church. The basic idea of the communion ecclesiology is rooted in the Trinity and the Eucharist.\(^{69}\) The ecclesial sense of the Eucharist, which was very strong in the early centuries,\(^{70}\) was brought to the foreground in the documents of the Council. The Council affirmed that the universal Church is in communion with the Eucharistic communities or local churches by the Spirit \((LG\ 23)\). \("[F]or the early Christians," Joseph Ratzinger says, “the first and predominant meaning of the word ‘Church’ was the local Church.”\(^{71}\) The emphasis on the communion ecclesiology upholds the importance of the local churches. The local churches were not administrative branches of a large organization in the early Church, instead, “they were the living cells, in each of which the whole mystery of the one body of the Church was present, so that each was simply called Ecclesia, Church.”\(^{72}\) The


\(^{70}\) Cf. Ouellet.


\(^{72}\) Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights Vatican II*, 121. Zizioulas. Zizioulas argues that the starting point of the historical search of the unity of the Church must be the unity of the Eucharist (the supreme incorporation of the
Eucharistic celebration of the community was the most appropriate moment of the realization of this oneness of the community:

[The Church of Christ is present each time the people of God gather together in the local Church to hear the Gospel of Christ and share in the mystery of the Lord’s Supper. However small and poor they may be, Christ is active in each local church to ensure that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is realized in each place (LG 26). In the Eucharist, we are built up into Christ’s body the Church.]

In this sense, the early Church was a communion of liturgical communities and communion ecclesiology is an affirmation of the Eucharistic ecclesiology.

Instead of the preconciliar pyramidal structure of the Church with the Pope at its top, the communion ecclesiology presents “a single Church with the Pope as its earthly head, the Church universal is a communion of local churches (regional, national, diocesan, and parochial), each of which is the Body of Christ in that place” (cf. LG 26). However, the fathers of the Council are aware of the importance of a hierarchically structured Church for the functioning of the various ministries of the Church and it helps the Church to work as a body (LG 18-9). Chapter 3 of Lumen Gentium presents the hierarchical structure as a divine plan in which Jesus placed Peter as the head of the apostles, and today, bishops as followers of the apostles are called to work for the unity of the Church working with the Pope, the successor of Peter. It is to be continued until the end of the world (Cf. Mt 28:20) through the apostolic succession in the Church (LG 20). The

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Church in Christ in space and time) and the Bishop that leads us to the sacramentality of the Church and the Eucharistic ecclesiology. (p.19 or before that).

73 Gaillardetz and Clifford, 73.

74 McBrien, 172-3.

75 Prusak, 283-4. Cardinal Ratzinger, few years after the council, saw the insertion of the concept of the hierarchy into the imagery of the Body of Christ in the document of the council as an important theological result. See Joseph Ratzinger, “Review of the Postconciliar Era: Failures, Tasks, Hopes,” in Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 370. “[T]he Council reintegrated into the Church as a whole a doctrine of primacy that was dangerously isolated; it integrated into the one mysterium of the Body of Christ a too-isolated conception of the hierarchy; it restored to the ordered unity of the faith an isolated Mariology; it gave the biblical word its full due; it made the liturgy once more accessible; and, in addition, it made a courageous step forward toward the unity of all Christians.”
college of the bishops, who are the successors of the apostles and heads of the local churches and the “visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches” (LG 23), work as a corporate body to minister the Church. The local bishops represent their churches, the college of Churches, and “in communion with one another and with the Bishop of Rome, these local churches constitute the Church universal,” and the collegiality of the bishops is an expression of the communal nature of the Church (cf. LG 24-5). At the same time, the Council also upheld the lay apostolate, which is conceived not as a participation in the ministry of the hierarchy, instead “a direct sharing in the mission of the Church through Baptism and Confirmation, and then ‘communicated and nourished’ by the Eucharist.”

2.3.4. People of God and Body of Christ: Principal Imageries

The image of “the People of God” is derived from the Hebrew Scriptures, in which Israel is understood as a people chosen by Yahweh (cf. Ex 6:7, 19:5, 23:22; Deut 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Lev 26:9-12; Jer 32:38-41). The early Church appropriated this imagery and made use of it to explain their election, which has much importance in salvation history (cf. Rom 9:30f, 10:9-13, 11:11-2, 25; 1Pet 2:9-10). Lumen Gentium Chapter II, People of God, opens with the salvific arena, where Israel was specially chosen by God. At their failure, a new covenant is established by Christ, and a new people of God is formed as one in Spirit (LG 9). The new covenant was signed by the blood of Christ and it was sacramentally established during the Last Supper. It is sacramentally experienced in every Eucharistic celebration. The Church as “the People of God,” one of the significant contributions of Vatican II, in “contrast to the preconciliar tendency to

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77 McBrien, 166.
78 Ibid., 49-50; Cf. Worgrul.
79 McBrien, 50-1. See other examples: 2 Cor 6:16; Titus 2:14; Heb 8:10; See also the references of the new covenant (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:13; 9:15; 12:24; Col 2:11), and the tension between the old and the new people (Rom 9-11; 1Cor 10:18-20; Gal 6:16; 3:28-9).
identify the Church with the hierarchy, thereby reducing ecclesiology to a kind of hierarchiology,” from the sacramental point of view, “has a visible and an invisible side. The invisible side is the presence of the triune God. The visible side is primarily the baptized persons who constitute the Church.”80 Thus, it includes all people in the Church: Pope, bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and laity. The best possible way to explain or to make explicit this relationship between these members is the “priesthood” of the members which is made clear in the administration of the sacraments. At one level, all members share in the “common priesthood” of Christ by becoming members of his body; and at another level, some share in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. “The people of God” has the dignity and freedom of the sons and daughters of God in Christ. The document also says that the people are made members of the body of Christ through baptism and they are strengthened by the body of Christ in the Eucharistic communion that is manifested in a concrete way in the unity of “the people of God” (LG 10-1).81

*Lumen Gentium* also uses the imagery of the Body of Christ to explain the ecclesial vision of the council (LG 7). “The faithful, collectively known as ‘the people of God,’ receive Christ’s life poured out for them in the sacraments, and the Holy Spirit acts as the Body’s living principle, ordering its members to a common end.”82 The constitution is very particular in explaining the life-giving role of the Holy Spirit in the building up of the Body of Christ from its

80 Ibid., 166. McBrien says that the Church is not something apart from its baptized members, the “recipients and beneficiaries of its spiritual assets, namely the sacraments. The people of God are the Church. Whatever structure and other institutional elements exist within the Church are to assist the People of God to fulfil their mission and ministries. These elements, therefore, exist to serve the whole people of God, not the other way around.”


very beginning to the present day. The Church as “the People of God” is actualized and realized in the sacrament of Eucharist, which is consonant with the Thomistic à propos of the Eucharist that “the reality (res) of the sacrament is the unity of the mystical body.” Ratzinger says that “it is only in the community of all the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ that one is a Christian, not otherwise.” This community, which is the Body of Christ, is built up in the celebration of the Eucharist (LG 11), which is the highest worship of the Church under the leadership of Christ, her head. The Body of Christ image of the Church, which has its foundation in the teachings of Paul, emphasizes God’s call to a communal relationship with him and with one another in Jesus Christ. Paul’s image of the Body of Christ was carried forward by Augustine holding together the Eucharistic Body and the ecclesial Body. The Second Vatican Council, rooted on ressourcement and going back to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, has used it as one of the primary images to explain the theology of the Church (cf. nos. 3; 7; 12; 14; 17-18; 21-23; 26; 28; 30-33; 39; 43; 45; 48-50; 52; 54). The image of the Body of Christ explains the vertical and the horizontal relationship established in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Thus, the theology of Vatican II is in line with the ecclesiology of de Lubac who wrote years before the council: “Considered as a ‘body’ or as a ‘people,’ Body of Christ or

83 Most of the paragraphs of Lumen Gentium mention the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. See nos. 1-2; 4-9; 11-15; 17; 19-22; 24-28; 32; 34; 39-45; 48-50; 52-3; 56; 59; 63-65.
86 McBrien, 51. I have explained St. Paul’s explanation of the image of the Body of Christ in the first chapter. For McBrien (p.52), in Romans 12:4-21 (vv. 4-5: we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another; v. 8 – the whole body needs the gifts of each one) and 1Cor 12:4-27 (vv.12-3: in the Spirit we are all baptized into one body; v. 26 – if one member is suffering, all members suffer, if one is honored, all rejoice together with it), Paul refers more to the union of the faithful than with Christ. In Eph 5:23, Col 1:18 (Christ is the head of the body, the Church), and 2:19, "the Body" refer to the universal Church of which Christ is the head, and in this sense, Body of Christ is something that is to be built up (Eph 4:12; 16; 1:22-3: Christ as the head of the Church), and the gifts of the Spirit are for this purpose (1Cor 14:12).
88 See “Passover and Covenantal Perspectives” in Chapter 1.
people of God, the Church appears first of all as totality. She is, if it can be put this way, the total consciousness or, better yet, the total being of believers. Pastors and faithful are united in one same Church; together they form a single People, a single Body. They are all together the flock of whom Christ is the Shepherd.”

2.3.5. Eucharistic Ecclesiology: The Promise of the Council

The Council’s single statement on the Eucharist, “the source and summit of Christian life” (LG 11), was an acknowledgement of the importance of Eucharistic ecclesiology, and from the very dawn of the promulgation of the document, it has been a very often used quote. The same paragraph continues to say that “strengthened by the body of Christ in the Eucharistic communion, they manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which this most holy sacrament aptly signifies and admirably realizes.” The unity of the people of God is expressed with the imagery of the body of Christ, and it is realized in the Eucharist:

For by communicating his spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation.

In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification… Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another. ‘Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread’ (1 Cor 10:17). In this way all of us are made members of his body (cf. 1 Cor 12:27), ‘but severally members one of another’ (Rom 12:4) (LG 7).

The Council did not adopt the Church as the mystical body of Christ, an idea that crept into the Church during the Middle Ages. Instead, the Council’s “notion of the Church as mystery or a sacramental communion serves as one of the principal categories for understanding the vocation of the Church…” What underlies the ecclesial body of Christ, the Church, is her

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89 Lubac, The Motherhood of the Church, 77.
90 Gaillardetz and Clifford, Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II, 71.
mystical bond of communion with Christ through the participation in the Eucharist. This mystical bond operates a transformation in the people of God. Thus, “the Eucharist, the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, transforms us into the living body of the Church, the Body of the risen Christ in the world.” This understanding of the Church as a living body of Christ by partaking in the Eucharistic body of Christ agrees with the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and it encourages the people of God to be more a responsible and faithful people.

2.3.6. The Body of Christ: A Responsibility in the Modern World

The Council’s pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* should be considered as the second part of the Church’s understanding of herself, and it is a real expression of the openness shown throughout the Council. The first part of the document ends by telling that the Church is “the universal sacrament of salvation” (GS 45), and it is from this realization that the document has explained the role of the Church in the modern world. This document establishes that the Church is in solidarity with the whole human family (GS 1-2). She has the responsibility to read the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the gospel (GS 3). There is a situation of hope (wealth, resources, economic well-being, etc.) and anguish (hunger, illiteracy, changes in values, wars, etc.) today (GS 4). The “signs of the times” are filled with change and these changes have moral, social, and religious implications (GS 5-7). The highly prized values of a society have divine origin, and the mission of the Church is to help the people to be supremely human (GS 11) by esteeming them. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of the Church’s social,

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91 Ibid., 72.
92 Ibid.
93 See the section on “Eucharist in the Building up of the Church: Faith and Teachings of the Fathers” in Chapter 1.
economic, political, and cultural concerns. It flows out of the fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is truly clear in the life of Christ (GS 12-22).

God created human beings to be in community, which reflects the Trinitarian community. Human beings are called to be the neighbors of each other (GS 23-24, 28), and human dignity can only be attained in community with others (GS 25). Since they are created by God, there is a basic equality among all men and it calls for the common good (GS 30). Christians must see all achievements as a sign of God’s greatness and the fulfillment of his mysterious design, because human beings are more valuable than what they have. Researches that do not override moral laws cannot conflict with faith (GS 36) whereas, all human activities of pride and self-love are sins (GS 37). All activity is perfected through love and it is found in the life of Jesus. The people of God (LG, Chapter 2) are called to form the family of God by being the “leaven” in the world (LG 40). As the Church does not control the world, the Church should act as leaven in the world by becoming incarnate in cultures. The Church and the society contribute to each other for the common good. In the Church’s attempt to form the family of God, she motivates the individuals, society, and human activity (LG 41-3). The sole purpose of this interaction is the salvation of humans, and to direct them to Christ, the goal of history, because the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 45).

94 McBrien, 170. McBrien says, “[t]he council’s stress on the servanthood of the Church has had explicit consequences in the Church’s intensified engagement in the temporal sphere on behalf of justice, peace, and human rights,” which could be seen in the post conciliar documents. He also notices that Gaudium et Spes also influenced the birth of Liberation Theology that engaged ecclesiology and social justice. George Therukattil, The Claim of Justice in Third Millennium (Bangalore: JIP Publications, 2000), 2.

2.4.  Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Orthodox Church

The Eucharistic ecclesiology is at the heart of the two “sister Churches,” Catholic and Orthodox Churches, as they draw life from the sacrament of Eucharist. The communion ecclesiology promoted by Vatican Council II has become part of the life of the Church in the years following the Council, and it is important to notice that the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, especially the theology of Nicholas Afanasiev, was an inspiration for the Catholic Church. For the Orthodox Christians, Eucharist is the greatest “sacrifice of thanksgiving offered up to God, by the Church, in Christ, on behalf of the whole creation.” The Orthodox Church believes in the communion of the people of God, which was clearly expressed in *Lumen Gentium*. Orthodox theologian Aram Keshishian says that *koinonia*, which is fundamental to the New Testament understanding of the Church, “refers to the ‘body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12) ‘being in’ and ‘remaining in’ Christ (Jn 14:20, 23; 1 Jn 3:19-24).” The statement of the Joint Commission for theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church testifies that the Eucharist is the expression of the heavenly liturgy, and it builds up the Church because through it the spirit of the risen Christ fashions the Church into the

98 Ouellet.
body of Christ. The same document says that the multiplicity of local churches shows, sacramentally, the unity of the Church. Each Eucharistic assembly is truly the holy Church of God, the body of Christ. This is expressed by two prominent Orthodox theologians: Nicholas Afanasiev and John Zizioulas.

2.4.1. Afanasiev

Instead of the concept of the universal ecclesiology, which is a Catholic phenomenon in which “the Church is a single organic whole, including in itself all church units of any kind,” Afanasiev presents a Eucharistic ecclesiology, which was a reality of the early Church before the universal ecclesiology arose in the second half of the third century. Adopting the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ, Afanasiev builds the foundation of his Eucharistic ecclesiology. Afanasiev argues that “[t]he Church is ekklesia because it is the assembly of God’s people in Christ,” and not a random mob or a community originated by chance. This assembly is the Eucharistic assembly, consisting of the people of the new covenant, and it is the real manifestation of the Church gathering in Christ in which he is present. Thus, every local church,

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101 Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity" (paper presented at the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church: Second Plenary Meeting, Munich, June 30 to July 6, 1982), I. The document has three parts. The first part deals with the work of the Spirit in Christ, the Eucharist, and the Church. The second part is about the Trinitarian koinonia and how it is realized in the unity of the local churches. Part three is about the unity and the diversity of churches.  
102 Ibid., III.1.  
104 Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," 105. See also p. 110. Afanasiev believes that the concept of the Universal Church couldn’t be conceived without the idea of ‘parts,’ where as the Eucharistic ecclesiology denies the idea of ‘parts.’ It is believed that universal ecclesiology is prevalent in the Catholic Church today. However, the criticism to Afanasiev would be that even the Eucharistic ecclesiology fits to the Catholic Church more than to any other churches in the world.  
105 We have explained the concept of the Body of Christ in St. Paul in detail and it establishes that our participation in the Eucharist makes us members of the Body of Christ, i.e., the Church (1 Cor 10: 16-17).  
being the locus of the Eucharistic celebration, is the Church of God in which the faithful becomes the members of his Body. In other words, every local church is a Eucharistic community that makes the believers members in the Body of Christ. “There can be no Church without the Eucharistic assembly, just as there can be no Eucharistic assembly that does not manifest the fullness and unity of the Church. Thus the structure and order of the Church originate in the Eucharistic assembly.”

Early churches were “autonomous and independent” in the sense that “each of the local church was the Church of God in all its fullness.” Without this reality, Afanasiev believes the concept of the universal Church cannot be maintained at all. The unity of the Church envisioned by Cyprian is the unity of local churches and according to Afanasiev, “fullness and unity are the possessions of this Church scattered per totum mundum.” The existence of a plurality of local churches does not destroy the unity of the Church of God. Instead, according to Afanasiev, it safeguards the unity. Church, being the Body of Christ, is not many but one, because Christ is one and unique. Every local church manifests the fullness of the Church of God though we find a plurality of manifestations, and “one plus one is still one” in

109 “The Church Which Presides in Love,” 107. See also p. 109: Afanasiev says that the local church is independent in the sense that any kind of power “exercised over it would be exercised over Christ and His Body.” The local church becomes autonomous because “fullness of being belongs to the Church of God in Christ…,” and we cannot think of the existence of Church outside Christ.
110 Ibid., 95; Cf. Cyprian, “De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate,” no. 23; Cf. Afanasiev, “The Church Which Presides in Love,” 94. Afanasiev is of the opinion that Cyprian was not able to formulate a successful theory of the primacy in the Church.
112 Ibid. Afanasiev says: “[t]he indivisibility of Christ’s Body implies the fullness of the Church dwelling in each of the ‘local’ churches.”
This reality, in the understanding of Afanasiev, is well explained by the Eucharistic ecclesiology that teaches:

...that the unity and fullness of the Church attach to the notion of a local church, and not to the fluid and indefinite notion of the Universal Church. The Eucharist is where Christ dwells in the fullness of His Body; the Eucharist could never have been offered in a local church if it had been no more than one part of the Church of God. Where the Eucharist is, there is the fullness of the Church; vice versa, where the fullness of the Church is not, there no Eucharist can be celebrated.\(^{114}\)

Eucharistic ecclesiology also buttresses the idea of the communion of the Churches, because “the local churches seek to find a common identity in the other churches of God...”\(^{115}\) In the Trinity, we have a model of unity for the structures of the Church.\(^{116}\) However, this union is experienced in the celebration of the Eucharist. The end result of the existence of the local churches and Eucharistic celebrations is not the division or the dispersion of the Church of God, instead it united the local churches founded on concord and love.\(^{117}\) Afanasiev acknowledges the relevance of the question of priority in the Church when there exist several local churches. Though the Church of God is fully present in the Eucharistic assembly, the way in which each of them makes the presence actual in its own life is different. Afanasiev conceives priority in this context, in which, “[a] local church will have higher authority of witness if it has a greater realization of the presence of the Church of God.”\(^{118}\) The church that has priority, i.e., the priority of service, possessed the highest degree of authority. It is a gift or an election from God.\(^{119}\) “If every church’s life is founded on love, if love underlies all relations with other churches, then priority too must spring from love and be a living example of love’s authority.”\(^{120}\)

\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{114}\) Ibid., 110.
\(^{115}\) Ciraulo, 50.
\(^{116}\) Ibid., 45. Though we find a plurality in Trinitarian God we have a perfect model of unity in the Trinity.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., 112.
\(^{119}\) Ibid., 115.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 127.
Thus, in the Eucharistic ecclesiology, primacy belongs to one of the local churches and not to a particular bishop.\textsuperscript{121} Peter was the head of the Church of Jerusalem when it was the only Church, and it had a special place until the death of James.\textsuperscript{122} Building up of the other local churches began from Jerusalem.

It is in the context of Eucharist that Afanasiev explains the ministry of bishops in the Church, who are primarily the presiders over the Eucharistic celebration in the Church.\textsuperscript{123} In the Eucharistic ecclesiology, the head of the local church is the head of the Eucharistic assembly. It is under the bishop, the head and the primary celebrant of the local church, the members are constituted as a corporate body.\textsuperscript{124} Bishops had an important role in the unity of churches. Though the unity of the episcopate is the result of the unity of the Church, Afanasiev says, in actual life, the unity of the Church is preserved by the unity of the episcopate.\textsuperscript{125} This unity is Eucharistic in the sense that the bishop, as the head of the Eucharistic community, preserves the unity of the Church.

Afanasiev argues that the bishop, the presider of the Eucharist, or the head of the assembly, firstly participates in the royal priesthood in the Church.\textsuperscript{126} By participating in the

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 115.
\item\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 118. Afanasiev mentions a special act of service of the Church of Antioch to the Church in Judea during the time of a famine (Acts 11: 30). He also says that the early Church Fathers Clement, on the one hand, and Ignatius and Irenaeus on the other, acknowledged the priority enjoyed by the Roman Church and it was due to authority of witness. See p. 135.
\item\textsuperscript{123} See The Church of the Holy Spirit. 136. The assembly and the ministry are mutually related; there can be no Eucharistic assembly without presiders and vice versa.
\item\textsuperscript{124} Ciraulo, 48.
\item\textsuperscript{125} Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," 97. Afanasiev says that the ecumenical council was the highest institution in the early Church and, however, it wouldn`t have happened without the head of a diocese who convened the council.
\item\textsuperscript{126} See Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (November 21, 1964)," nos. 9-10. The Council uses the titles “common priesthood” and “royal priesthood” to explain the ministry of the people of God in which all members of the Church have participation.
\end{itemize}
royal priesthood, every participant in the Eucharistic assembly is a minister, but with other people and presiders.\textsuperscript{127} Though the presiders are also part of this ministry, they have received a special charism and are ordained for this ministry. What the presiders received from God “was not the charism of priesthood, which God has granted to every member of the Church, but the charism of presidency that distinguished presiders from the rest of the Church.”\textsuperscript{128} In this sense, “[t]he Eucharistic assembly is the assembly of the royal priesthood under the presidency of one of this priesthood who has the charism to preside.”\textsuperscript{129} If the Eucharistic assembly is the assembly of the royal priesthood, for Afanasiev, the question of the degrees of priesthood is meaningless, and it (no special priesthood) was a reality in the early Church.\textsuperscript{130}

Afanasiev argues that there was no special priesthood in the early Church. Scholastic authors thought that this would undermine the doctrine concerning hierarchy in the Church.\textsuperscript{131} For him, if the bishop as the presider is absolutely necessary for the local churches, it does not undermine or degrade the episcopal ministry in the Church, because a bishop as a presider is a necessity for the Church, and it derives from the very foundations of the Church, and thus, the origin is divine.\textsuperscript{132} This understanding of episcopal ministry is not against the understanding of royal priesthood. Moreover, the idea of royal priesthood buttresses the ontological character of the Church, i.e., no Church can exist without the people of God.\textsuperscript{133} Afanasiev’s criticism of

\textsuperscript{127} Afanasiev, \textit{The Church of the Holy Spirit}. 137.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 153. In Afanasiev’s view, the “division of the ministry of presidency into degrees could have been made possible only on the basis of a special priesthood of which the bishop represented a highest degree, while the presbyters were a second degree.” However, this special priesthood did not exist in the early Church. “It is impossible to build the division of presidency into degrees on another principle, which is another evidence in favor of the view that the terms “bishop” and “presbyter” are synonymous and refer to one and the same ministry.”
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 136-7.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. The presiders were the bearers of the administrative function without which no order or structure in churches can exist.
scholastic theology, which affirms the priestly status of the bishop and denies it to the members of the Church, is that it “brings the Church back toward the Old Covenant and undermines the New, made in the blood of Christ.”\(^{134}\) The result was that the very concept of the Church was diluted and there was a tendency toward the Protestant understanding of it.\(^{135}\)

2.4.2. John Zizioulas

John Zizioulas, who intervened in the 2005 Roman Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, said: “[t]he ecclesiology of communion promoted by Vatican II and deepened further by eminent Roman Catholic theologians can make sense only if it derives from the Eucharistic life of the Church. The Eucharist belongs not simply to the beneesse (well-being) but to the esse (being) of the Church. The whole life, word and structure of the Church is Eucharistic in its very essence.”\(^{136}\) Zizioulas substantiates his argument of the Eucharistic life of the Church from the experience of the history. Examining the model of “One Eucharist – One Bishop in each Church”\(^{137}\) of Ignatius who exhorts various Churches to remain united in one Eucharist only, under one bishop and at one altar. Zizioulas argues that throughout the first three centuries the principle of the unity of each Church in one Eucharistic assembly under one bishop was faithfully observed.\(^{138}\) In this way, Zizioulas testifies that the existence of a number of household Churches in the early centuries “did not fragment the Church, but expressed in a quite real way

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\(^{134}\) Ibid.
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
\(^{137}\) See Antioch, "Letter to the Philadelphians," 4. Ignatius says: “Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for, one is the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus, you will conform in all your actions to the will of God.”
\(^{138}\) Zizioulas, 92.
the unity of each Church in one Eucharist.”

When Christianity spread outside the city, the faithful formed their own communities or Churches under their own bishop (or chorepiscopus), and the Eucharist had the central role in it, because it was in the celebration of the Eucharist the communion of the Church in her historical life experienced in its maximum.

In the early Church, Zizioulas says, parallel to the local Eucharistic community, there was universal Church, the Church outside a particular community or the local church. The idea of “catholic” denoted both local and universal realms at the same time, and it was rooted in the nature and structure of the Eucharistic community. The Church is catholic not because of herself but because of Christ in the fact that she is the Body of Christ. “The nature of the Eucharistic community was determined by its being ‘Eucharistic,’ i.e., by the fact that it consisted in the communion of the Body of Christ in its totality and in its inclusiveness of all.” In the Eucharistic context, the mutual exclusion of the local and the universal is not possible, instead one is involved in the other. The whole Christ was present in the each individual church or Eucharistic community, and thus, each of them was “in full unity with the rest by virtue not of an external superimposed structure but of the whole Christ represented in each of them.”

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139 Ibid. See Kondothra M. George, "Local and Universal: Uniatism as an Ecclesiological Issue," in Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement, ed. Gennadios Limouris (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 229. Kondothra says that the local church manifests the fullness of the universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, in the celebration of the Eucharist.

140 Zizioulas, 97-8. See also Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 4, 154. Zizioulas says that the Eucharistic community in the early Church was a local community. Parallel to the local Eucharistic community there was universal Church, the Church outside a particular community or the local church. The idea “catholic” denoted both local and universal realms at the same time and it was rooted in the nature and structure of the Eucharistic community.

141 Cf. Lectures in Christian Dogmatics, 131; Being as Communion, 4, 82.

142 Being as Communion, 4, 158.

143 Ibid., 154.

144 Ibid., 155. This involvement is given expression in the structure of the Eucharistic community when the head of a particular community participated in the ordination of the heads of other Eucharistic communities.

145 Ibid., 157.
For Zizioulas, Christ could be understood in two ways: Christ as an individual who could be seen objectively and historically; and Christ as a person who is known in his relationship with his Body, the Church, which is the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{146} These two modes of existence happen at the same time. The incarnate Christ takes the form of a community that is the Church, and the members of the Church, the “many” are joined together in the “one” to become a single whole that is the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{147} Thus, the Church is a mystery, “essentially none other than that of the ‘One’ who is simultaneously ‘many’ – not ‘One’ who exists first of all as ‘One’ and then as ‘many.’ But ‘One’ and ‘Many’ at the same time.”\textsuperscript{148} The one and the many are mutually constitutive, and it is the work of the Spirit. The Spirit forms Christ and Christ gives the Spirit.\textsuperscript{149} This duality is mysteriously realized in the sacrament of Eucharist. Like that of Christ, Zizioulas explains the two modes of existence of a person, i.e., biological and ecclesiological, from the standpoint of patristic theology. The hypostasis of biological existence is constituted by a person’s conception and birth, whereas the hypostasis of ecclesial existence is constituted by baptism, the new birth of a person,\textsuperscript{150} and this identity is historically realized in the Eucharist, “which has as its object man’s transcendence of his biological hypostasis…”\textsuperscript{151}

Grounded in the Orthodox tradition, Zizioulas views the unity of the Church as eschatological. The Church becomes the reflection of the eschatological community in the

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 110-1. Cf. Mt 1:18-20; Lk 1:35; Lk 4:14: Jesus is historically present as a person in the spirit. Another form of his presence is found in 1Cor 12: The Body of Christ is formed by the charisma of the Spirit.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Lectures in Christian Dogmatics}, 126-7.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Being as Communion}, 4, 112. The idea of one and many is connected with the Eucharistic consciousness of the Church. Cf. 1Cor 10:14-22: Many become one in Christ; Cf. also Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12: The imagery of the servant of God in which one takes the pains of many or one takes the sins of many.

\textsuperscript{149} Á similar idea is seen in de Lubac. Cf. Lubac, \textit{The Splendor of the Church}, 130; 58.

\textsuperscript{150} Zizioulas, \textit{Being as Communion}, 4, 49-54.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 61. See also p. 49. Zizioulas says that God’s eternal life “is realized as an expression of free communion, as love,” and a person loses its uniqueness outside the communion of love, and becomes “a ‘thing’ without absolute ‘identity’ and ‘name,’ without a face.”
Eucharist, for the Spirit renders the life of God a reality here and now in the event of communion.\textsuperscript{152} In other words, each Eucharistic assembly is the bearer of the eschatological assembly until the last day. Until then, the one eschatological assembly has its existence only in these many Eucharistic assemblies, of which the eschatological gathering is the fullness. In this sense, for Zizioulas, other sacraments become meaningful united to the Eucharist or, celebrated with the Eucharist. For, he says, “[t]he sacraments when not united with the Eucharist are blessing and confirmation which is given to nature as biological hypostasis. United, however, with the Eucharist, they become not a blessing and confirmation of the biological hypostasis, but a rendering of it transcendent and eschatological.”\textsuperscript{153} Eucharist is not only the historical realization and manifestation of the eschatological existence of human being, but also a movement towards the realization of it. Thus, the eschatological character of Eucharist shows the relationship between the ecclesial and the biological hypostasis.\textsuperscript{154} The assembly and the movement, which are the two characteristics of the Eucharist, constitute the core of the patristic Eucharistic theology, and this movement or the eschatological orientation of the Eucharist shows that the ecclesial hypostasis is not of this world but it belongs to the eschatological transcendence of history and not simply to history.\textsuperscript{155} Thus, we experience the dialectic of “already not yet,” and it pervades the Eucharist and helps a person towards his true home.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{152} McPartlan, \textit{The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri De Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue}, 193. Zizioulas believes that in the Orthodox tradition, the church is primarily understood in its participation in the worship of God, mainly the divine Eucharist, which gives its distinctive view of the Church. See Zizioulas, \textit{Lectures in Christian Dogmatics}, 121-2.

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Being as Communion}, 4, 61.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 61-2.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 62.
2.5. Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Its Prophetic Dimension in the Post-Vatican Period

Communion ecclesiology was one of the key themes of Vatican Council II. In the years following the Council, the documents of the Church tried to maintain the same thrust: Eucharist as the center of ecclesial life. Many of these post-Conciliar documents emphasized practical aspects of the Eucharist.

2.5.1. Eucharistic Ecclesiology Revisited in the Post-Conciliar Documents

Just before the fourth session of the Council, Paul VI issued the encyclical letter _Mysterium Fidei_, which begins with the statement that the Eucharist, the mystery of faith, is an ineffable gift that the Catholic Church received from Christ, her Spouse, as a pledge of His immense love (_MF_ 1).\(^{157}\) Both the sacrificial and the sacramental aspect of the Eucharist are highlighted in this document. The Pope says that the purpose of the document is to create a new wave of Eucharistic devotion that will sweep over the Church with the Council. He also says that to understand this sacrament, a mystery of faith, we must rely on revelation and not reason. The document asserts the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist telling that no Mass is private, but instead an act of Christ and the whole Church. The document also explains how Christ is truly present in the Church through the sacrament of Eucharist.\(^ {158}\) The post conciliar document _Euchariticum Mysterium_ that aimed at giving flesh to the Council teachings says, “the Eucharist contains the

\(^{157}\) Paul VI, _Mysterium Fidei_, Encyclical Letter (September 3, 1965); ibid.

\(^{158}\) Ibid. The Pope addresses the various kinds of presence of Christ in the Church: Christ is present in His Church when she prays; he is present in the Church as she performs her works of mercy; he is present in the Church as she moves along on her pilgrimage with a longing to reach the portals of eternal life; he is present in the Church as she proclaims the word of God; he is present in the Church as she rules and governs the People of God through her followers of his apostles; he is present in the Church as she offers the Sacrifice of the Mass in His name and as she administers the sacraments; and in the sacrament of the Eucharist which is the highest form of presence.
entire spiritual good of the Church…” Following this line, we see a few more documents in detail in this section.

2.5.1.1. Dominicae cenae

John Paul II’s apostolic letter Dominicae Cenae, which was promulgated to promote and follow the renewal of the Church according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, deals with the liturgical, sacramental, sacrificial, and ecclesial dimensions of the Eucharist. The Pope says that “the Eucharist is the principal and central raison d'être of the sacrament of the priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist, and together with it” (DC 2). In this document the Pope brings forth the concept, “Just as the Church ‘makes the Eucharist,’ so ‘the Eucharist builds up’ the Church” (DC 4). The Pope says that from the beginning of the Church on Holy Thursday, “until the end of time, the church is being built up through that same communion with the Son of God, a communion which is a pledge of the eternal Passover” (DC 4). The communion aspect of the Eucharist, which is made possible in the Eucharistic worship, is emphasized by the Pope in this letter. First of all the Church is brought into being, when we celebrate the sacrifice of the cross of Christ in a fraternal...
union and communion and proclaim ‘the Lord’s death until he comes.’ Second, as we approach the table of the Lord as a community to be nourished in a sacramental manner. What comes first is the communion with Christ, which is a gift of the Lord and then, the communion with his body, the Church (DC 4.). Thus, the faith and the disposition of the mind is a requirement for the building up of the Church, and it is in this way that the Eucharist becomes truly “the source and summit of Christian life” (DC 4; LG 11).

The Eucharist is at the center of the Church because it builds up the Church (DC 4; 12) and inspires her members to be true Christians fulfilling the greatest commandment of love, love of God, and love of neighbor, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament, which is commonly called the sacrament of love. The ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist is stressed in this document presenting the Eucharist as the work of the whole body of Christ (DC 12), “head and members: the whole community united with Christ.” Participating the faithful in his two tables in the Eucharist, the tables of the Word and the Bread, which are the common possessions of the Church, Christ welcomes them to the fullness of life (DC 12). The Pope warns the present tendency to desacralize the sacred in many places in different ways (DC 8). Presenting the Eucharist as a sacrifice, a sacrifice of the Redemption and the sacrifice of the New Covenant, the document says that the liturgical renewal with the Second Vatican Council emphasizes the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.

The emphasis of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist in the document has brought criticism from various sides. There are theologians who believe that Dominicae Cenae is reverting back to the Council of Trent in its theology. However, the critics cannot neglect the fact

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164 Ibid., 8. See also the section on Augustine's understanding of Totus Christus in Chapter 1.
that the document acknowledges the active role of the whole Church, people in ministry and all other members of the Church united with Christ, which was neglected by the Council of Trent. The document is important in this research as it explains how the Eucharist builds up the Church as a community.

2.5.1.2. Ecclesia de eucharistia

After two decades of the promulgation of Dominicae Cenae, John Paul II delineates the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist again in his encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia. The Pope presents the apparent paradox that while the Church ‘makes the Eucharist,’ it is the Eucharist which ‘builds up the Church’ (EE Ch 2; cf. DC 4). The building up of the Church was begun at the Last Supper and will be continued until the end of the age through the sacrament of Eucharist. Jesus offers his own body as food at the table of the Eucharist and makes us his Body. He uses the imagery of the Body of Christ to explain the unity of the Church achieved through the communion of the Eucharist (cf. EE 23). The Eucharist is the means of the transformation of the Church to make it more completely the Body of Christ. Maloney says: “At the table of the Eucharist, the Risen Christ is caring for his own Body,

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165 Ibid.; Cf. The Council of Trent, "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass," (September 17, 1562).
167 Ibid., no. 21. The Pope says: “[t]he Apostles, by accepting in the Upper Room Jesus’ invitation: ‘Take, eat’, ‘Drink of it, all of you’ (Mt 26:26 - 27), entered for the first time into sacramental communion with him. From that time forward, until the end of the age, the Church is built up through sacramental communion with the Son of God who was sacrificed for our sake: ‘Do this is remembrance of me... Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’ (1Cor 11:24-25; cf. Lk 22:19).” He also explains how the Eucharist, the pledge of the future glory, is continued until the end of the age and gives way to the eschatological fulfilment. Cf. also ibid., nos. 18-9.
feeding it with his own flesh, so that we might be made more effective members of this mystery, and so become more fruitful channels of his life to those other members of his Body who depend on us”\textsuperscript{170} (cf. \textit{EE} 9, 16, 18).

The document says that the Eucharist, the “gift par excellence” (\textit{EE} 11), the gift that “presupposes incorporation into Christ through baptism and reinforce[s]” this incorporation by its “unifying power” (\textit{EE} 24), stands at the center of the Church’s life (\textit{EE} 3, 31). Eucharistic communion confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. There are both personal and communal participations in the sharing of the Eucharist. A personal union is with Christ in Holy Communion, but it is only through union with the community that Christians are united with Christ,\textsuperscript{171} because the Eucharist, the possession of the Church, is celebrated by the whole Church (\textit{EE} 39; cf. \textit{DC} 12). The Pope says that the Eucharist makes the Church because each celebration helps us to live it and engage in acts of charity. The document also deals with the apostolicity of the Eucharist. Both the Eucharist and the Church have an apostolic foundation. Apostles received the Eucharistic command of Jesus and today it is continued in the Church through her ordained ministers because it is the possession of the Church (\textit{EE} 9). Thus, the document says that the Eucharist is also “the center and summit of priestly ministry” (\textit{EE} 31; cf. also \textit{DC} 2).

The Eucharist is the culmination of all the sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the Father by identification with his Son through the working of the Holy Spirit. In fact, ecclesial communion, nourished by the sacrament of the Eucharist includes in its invisible dimension “communion with God the Father by identification with His only begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit” (\textit{EE} 34). In the visible dimension, it also implies “communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the Church’s hierarchical

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 137-8. See also John Paul II, "Eucharist: A Sacrament of Unity (General Audience, November 8, 2000)."
order” (*EE* 35). Ouellet says that this magisterial intervention significantly confirms the ecclesiology of communion and revives the Council’s commitment to the cause of ecumenism by highlighting the witness of Catholics in this area.  

However, at the ecclesial level, the document says, the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be the starting-point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection. Thus, the Pope presents the Eucharist as the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, and it demands its celebration “in a context where the outward bonds of communion are also intact” (*EE* 38). For many, this is considered as the main drawback of the document, that it does not do anything to promote Christian unity, instead it is a great disappointment to ecumenists, who think that they are farther down the road toward intercommunion.

2.5.1.3. Sacramentum caritatis

Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* presents the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. This document is divided into three sections...
parts and this structure clearly shows the ecclesial and prophetic dimensions of the Eucharist: 1) the Eucharist, a mystery to be believed; 2) the Eucharist, a mystery to be celebrated; and 3) the Eucharist, a mystery to be lived. The first part says that the sacrament of Eucharist is the work of God and it can be understood only in faith. The document says, in the ecclesial life, faith and sacraments are complimentary, because “faith is grown in the grace-filled encounter with the Risen Lord which takes place in the sacraments,” and, on the other hand, sacraments are expressions of the faith of the Church, and it is also strengthened through the sacramental rites (SCar 6). Eucharist, which is a free gift of the Trinity (SCar 8), is always at the heart of the ecclesial life (SCar 6), because the Church draws her life from the Eucharist (SCar 14; cf. also DC 4; LG 11).

The concept, “the Eucharist builds up the Church,” which was seen in the last two documents discussed above, is revisited in this document as well: “[t]he Eucharist is Christ who gives himself to us and continually builds us up as his body” (SCar 14). It says that “the Eucharist is the causal principle of the Church”: “in the sacrifice of the Cross, Christ gave birth to the Church as his Bride and his body” (SCar 14). In the interplay of the two realities, Eucharist builds up the Church, and the Church “makes” the Eucharist, the Pope says, and the primary causality lies in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, because “[t]he Church’s ability to ‘make’ the Eucharist is completely rooted in Christ’s self-gift to her… ‘he first loved us’ (1 Jn 4:19)” (SCar 14). Again, to show the inseparability of Christ (Eucharist) and the Church, the

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177 See ibid., no. 14. The Pope explains it with the mystagogical catechesis of the fathers of the Church. The Pope says: “The Fathers of the Church often meditated on the relationship between Eve’s coming forth from the side of Adam as he slept (cf. Gen 2:21-23) and the coming forth of the new Eve, the Church, from the open side of Christ sleeping in death: from Christ’s pierced side, John recounts, there came forth blood and water (cf. Jn 19:34), the symbol of the sacraments.” The blood that came out of the side of Jesus is a symbol of the sacrament of Eucharist and the water is of Baptism. In the ecclesial life baptism incorporates people into the Church, and the Eucharistic food nourishes the Church, the Body of Christ. Cf. Nichols, The Holy Eucharist: From the New Testament to Pope John Paul II, 18; Vellanickal, Eucharist: Bread of Life for the World, 53.
Pope says that the early Christians used the same words, *Corpus Christi*, to designate Christ’s body born of the Virgin Mary, his Eucharistic body, and his ecclesial body (*SCar* 15). The Eucharist is presented as the root of the Church as a mystery of communion, and the fullness of sacramental initiation. One becomes part of the Church of Christ by participating in the celebration of the Eucharist at a particular place, and the document says that this Eucharistic perspective promotes ecclesial communion, which is catholic (*SCar* 15).

The second part of the document deals with the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the greatest worship of the Church, based on the principle of *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Benedict XVI says, “[o]ur faith and the Eucharistic liturgy both have their source in the same event: Christ’s gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery” (*SCar* 34). The Eucharistic celebration is the work of the *Christus Totus* (*SCar* 36). He also says that Christ is the true celebrant of the Eucharist and the faithful become fully members of his body through their participation. In the celebration of this mystery, which “is a sublime expression of God's glory,” the earthly Church has a glimpse of the heavenly Church (*SCar* 35). Benedict XVI also insists on the active and fruitful participation of all the faithful who share in the royal priesthood (*SCar* 38).

The last part of the document says that the mystery of the Eucharist is a challenge to the faithful to live out Christian charity. Benedict XVI says that the mystery we celebrate touches every aspect of our human existence:

The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (1 Cor 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God (*SCar* 71).

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The Pope uses the phrase of Saint Ignatius, “living in accordance with the Lord's Day” (*Iuxta dominicam viventes*), which reminds the Christian to have hope of the eternal life and to engage the world with a prophetic life. As a faith community, for Christians, Sunday is the day to “rediscover the Eucharistic form which their lives are meant to have” (*SCar* 72). The Eucharistic celebration that gives us communion with God is an invitation to build our communion with one another, the fellow members of the Body of Christ: “[c]alled to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (cf. 1 Cor 12:27), we are a reality grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, a reality that demands visible expression in the life of our communities” (*SCar* 76). The communion also demands our Eucharistic and prophetic involvement in the society:

In the Eucharist Jesus also makes us witnesses of God's compassion towards all our brothers and sisters. The Eucharistic mystery thus gives rise to a service of charity towards neighbour, which "consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, affecting even my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ." (240) In all those I meet, I recognize brothers or sisters for whom the Lord gave his life, loving them "to the end" (*Jn* 13:1) (*SCar* 88).

2.5.1.4. *Evangelii Gaudium*

Pope Francis, in his first apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, encourages the faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by the joy of the gospel in the years to come (*EG* 1). In this endeavor, he urges prophetically, the need of a special concern for the poor and the needs of society. He says that the personal encounter with Jesus stands at the core of our Christian life and it invites us to share our joy and Christ’s love with others (*EG* 3), for which none other than the sacrament of Eucharist would be the finest means.\(^{179}\) The document often repeats the importance of the Eucharist in the evangelization process of the

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Church. Evangelization takes place in obedience to the missionary mandate of Jesus (EG 19) and thus the Church goes forth with Jesus’ mission, as a first step, by being involved and supportive, bearing fruits and rejoicing (EG 24). It needs a new life which is to be expressed in the life of parishes, dioceses, individual Churches, and all the members of the Church (EG 26-33). In practical life, the Eucharist, which is celebrated according to the mandate of Jesus (Lk 22:19), is the central reality that energizes the life of the Church.\(^\text{180}\) Francis says, “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (EG 49), because the Church is called to be the house of the Father. Though the Eucharist is the fullness of the sacramental life, here, the Pope views it as “a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak,” and not a prize or reward for the perfect (EG 47).

Pope Francis also gives a glimpse of the Eucharistic origin of the authority in the Church. While he recognizes the identity and mission of the laity in the Church, especially women, youth, and the elderly (EG 102-8), he says that the power or authority in the Church is not for domination but for service. The authority in the Church originated as the power to administer the sacrament of Eucharist (EG 104),\(^\text{181}\) and the priesthood is limited to males “as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist” (EG 104). He is very particular to say that there could be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as the Lord (EG 110), which has an implication of the Eucharist.\(^\text{182}\) With the proclamation of the word of God, which should be at the heart of every ecclesial activity (EG 174), the Pope emphasizes the importance

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\(^\text{182}\) Cf. 1Cor 11:26. St. Paul reminds the Church in Corinth that they proclaim the death of the Lord, i.e., the Lordship of Christ, as often as they eat this bread and drink the cup until he comes. He also believes that salvation is the work of God’s mercy and it includes all people (EG 112-3), and the diversity in the Church wouldn’t be a threat to Church unity (EG 117).
of homily in the celebration of the Eucharist (EG 135-44). He uses the imagery of the mother and child to show the importance of homily that leads to Eucharistic communion:

…the Church is a mother, and that she preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit, for children know that they are loved. Moreover, a good mother can recognize everything that God is bringing about in her children, she listens to their concerns and learns from them. The spirit of love which reigns in a family guides both mother and child in their conversations; therein they teach and learn, experience correction and grow in appreciation of what is good. Something similar happens in a homily (EG 139).

The document also acknowledges the Church’s prophetic role and Eucharistic concern in her social action. The faith in Christ who became poor is the basis for the Church’s concern for the poor (EG 186), and their liberation and promotion is the mission of the Church (EG 187). The Pope warns that any Church community that has no concern for the poor runs the risk of breaking down (EG 207). He says that Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but by a life transfigured by God’s presence (EG 259). They should have personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus, and missionary conviction (EG 264-5), so that they can touch the sufferings and miseries of human beings (EG 268-71), finding happiness in seeking the good of others (EG 272).

2.5.2. Emergence of Practical Theologies

The post-Vatican period also saw the emergence of various local theologies emphasizing theological praxis. Giving importance to the contexts of theologizing, these theologies heralded the prophetic dimension of Christian life, to fight against the injustices in the society. The Council document Gaudium et Spes was a great impetus to these theologies. The life of Jesus the liberator is the model and inspiration for these theological endeavors. Latin American liberation theology was the first among them. The advocates of practical theologies see the sacrament of

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183 For Francis, the Church is called to recognize the suffering Christ in the vulnerable - the homeless, refugees, migrants, the addicted, the elderly, indigenous peoples, women, children, the unborn, nature, etc. (cf. EG 209-215).
the Eucharist as a prophetic symbol to fight against the injustices in society. In this section, I explain how the proponents of liberation theology in Latin America, feminist theology, and Dalit theology in India see the Eucharist as a powerful symbol of the Church fighting against the injustices in society.

2.5.2.1. Liberation Theology

Liberation theology, perhaps the most important among the contextual theologies, arose in the second half of the twentieth century questioning the social injustices in society inspired by Jesus the liberator in the gospels. Broadly speaking, the term liberation theology does not refer to a single theological system but to various theological movements. In a narrow sense, it denotes a theological movement, which originated in Latin America to fight against social, political, and economic injustices. The term “Liberation Theology” was coined by the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez in 1971 in his outstanding work *A Theology of Liberation*. Rather than development, liberation theologians advocate liberation in the various realms of society. They see liberation as a situation in which the salvation proclaimed by Christ is realized. Fiorenza explains four characteristics of the liberation theology: 1) context as the starting point; 2) a critique of ideology – which means it reads the tradition or the context from the perspective of the experience of the oppressed; 3) retrieval of the subjugated knowledge as a part of its
constructive theological task; 4) praxis as both goal and criterion. "The term praxis specifies that the liberation they seek is more than a mere technocratic or economic development – it is a liberation that has religious, social, political, and personal dimensions."

At the core of the liberation theology lies the belief that God has a preferential love for the poor and the oppressed. Against the criticism that the Church often has put itself on the side of oppression rather than liberation, liberation theology, intervening in the particular context of massive poverty and oppression, tries to bring the message of Christ alive. The Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), which was founded in 1955, and the bishops who tried to live the gospel values radically, played an important role in the growth of the Church’s concern for the poor, and consequently the growth of liberation theology. Liberation theologians, who emphasize the sacramentality of the Church, insist that the Church exists for others and not for itself, because the Church is the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and this

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188 Fiorenza, 62-65. Social context or the concrete political or social situation - may be of oppression, exploitation, alienation, and discrimination - is the starting point of these theologies. See also Pathil and Veliath, 152; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "For Women in Men's World: A Critical Feminist Theology of Liberation," in The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Maryknoll, NY/ London: Orbis Books/ SCM Press, 1996), 7.


work “is constituted by the Spirit as ‘the universal sacrament of salvation’” (LG 48). If the Church is the sacrament of salvation in the world, it should manifest itself as the sign of salvation, i.e., the visible structures of the Church should convey the message that it bears. The Church we see in the public realm, Wieser says, is primarily one seen as hierarchies or bureaucracies. “In order to be signs of liberation and salvation, they need to appear there as community.” The Church becomes a sign of salvation and liberation in her social context when various divisions and discriminations in its own life are overcome. Ignacio Ellacuría speaks of how the Church really becomes the body of Christ, explaining what happened after Archbishop Romero’s visit to console the people in Aguilares where the army profaned the Blessed Sacrament and killed many rural workers:

He condemned the profanation of the Sacrament and told the peasants: ‘You are the pierced divine body.’ I recalled Augustine’s distinction: the corpus mysticum, the more symbolic reality, is the Eucharist; the corpus verum, the more present reality, is the Church. Now the corpus Christi was even more real: peasant men and women persecuted and assassinated.

The Church, being the sign of the presence of the Lord in the world, in order to make her message of love credible and efficacious, should aspire to the liberation proclaimed by Christ and work for a more human and just society.

Liberation theologians consider the Eucharist as a powerful symbol of liberative action in the Church. Gutiérrez sees the sacraments of the Church, the means of humanity’s encounter with God, as “the efficacious revelation of the call to communion with God and to the unity of

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194 Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation, 147. The Church, which believes that it is the sacrament of salvation in the world, should have the awareness that it is not only the center of salvation but must also foster the awareness that Christ and the Spirit are the hinge of salvation. See p. 143-4.
195 Ibid.
196 Wieser, 139.
197 Ibid., 140.
198 Sobrino, 81.
all humankind." He says that it was in this context the word sacrament was used in the early centuries, and in this sense Eucharist had a unique place among other sacraments. The Eucharist and the mission of the Church are intertwined, because the celebration of the Eucharist creates a human fellowship. In the Eucharist, we celebrate the memorial of Christ’s death in the context of Passover and his resurrection, which is “his Passover from death to life, and our passing from sin to grace.” The Passover context of the Eucharist tells the story of a liberation; the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. In the Christian context, it is a liberation from sin which is at the very root of political liberation.

The Eucharist establishes a communion with God and other participants in the Eucharistic celebration and it presupposes the abolition of all kinds of injustices and exploitations. While celebrating the Eucharist, this bond or koinonia is proclaimed, and if it does not happen in our community, the celebration is meaningless. Gutiérrez explains Congar’s understanding of koinonia that designates three realities: common ownership of the earthly goods for the earthly existence (cf. Heb 13:16; Acts 2:44; 4:32) because it is a concrete expression of human charity (cf. 2 Cor 9:13; 8:34; Rom 15:26-7); the union of the faithful with Christ through the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 10:16); and the union of the faithful with the Trinity (cf. 1 Jn 1:6; 1:13; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3; 2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1). The proclamation in the Eucharistic celebration is also an invitation to the ecclesia/community, because “[o]nly in a community can faith be lived

\[\text{\textsuperscript{200}}\text{Ibid., 146.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{201}}\text{Ibid., 148-9.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{202}}\text{Ibid., 149; Cf. Ángel F. Méndez-Montoya, “Eucharistic Imagination: A Queer Body-Politics,” Modern Theology 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 331. Ángel F. Méndez-Montoya mentions the political, social, and economic dimensions of the liberative action brought forth in the celebration of the Eucharist.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{203}}\text{Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation, 149.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{204}}\text{Ibid., 150; Cf. "Koinonia in the Church," Doctrine and Life 57, no. 6 (July-August 2007): 30; Cf. also Bernier, 12; Andre Lascaris, "Toward a Church without Eucharist," Doctrine and Life 57, no. 3 (March 2007): 54.}\]
out in love; only there can it be celebrated and deepened; only there can it be experienced as simultaneously in fidelity to the Lord and solidarity with all human beings.”\textsuperscript{205} The meal aspect of the Eucharist reveals that Eucharist is a sign of fellowship, and also a gift of creation.\textsuperscript{206}

The Eucharist, the sacrament of love, fellowship, and service, is an overarching symbol in the life of the faithful, and a challenge to fight against the tendencies of division, injustices, and exploitations. The feet washing, the Johannine parallel of the Eucharist, is also a gesture of service, love, and fellowship. The sharing of God’s extravagant love and care in his self-gift “dissolves all boundaries, and enacts a body politics of inclusion, of mutual co-abiding.”\textsuperscript{207} Thus, this mystery demands forgiveness (Mt 5:23-24), caring for the fellow beings, avoiding divisions, and fostering communion (1 Cor 11:17-24), and acts of charity (James 2:14). In other words, these are preconditions for the worthy participation in the sacrament of Eucharist, and they meet the objective of the liberation theology. Gutiérrez says that the Eucharistic celebration becomes an empty action when there is the absence of commitment against exploitation and alienation and for a society of solidarity and justice, because “‘[t]o make a remembrance’ of Christ is more than the performance of an act of worship; it is to accept living under the sign of the cross and in the hope of the resurrection. It is to accept the meaning of a life that was given over to death – at the hands of the powerful of this world – for love of others.”\textsuperscript{208}

\textsuperscript{205} Gutiérrez, \textit{The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations}, 13; Cf. Foley, 347. Foley shows the religious movements from time to time that picture the linkage between liturgy and life: the expansion of the old paradigm lex orandi, lex credendi, to lex vivendi, and lex agendi.

\textsuperscript{206} Gutiérrez, \textit{A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation}, 149; See also Méndez-Montoya, 331. Méndez Montoya explains that the gift is first given to humanity in creation, then the human labor transforms it as the gift of the altar. It is furthermore transformed as Christ’s self-gift in the Eucharist.

\textsuperscript{207} Méndez-Montoya, 334.

\textsuperscript{208} Gutiérrez, \textit{A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation}, 150.
In this context, it is also relevant to note *la teología del pueblo* or “the theology of the people,” which is also called Argentinian liberation theology. It has very much impacted Pope Francis’ theological views. *La teología del pueblo* originated in Argentina along with the development of theology of liberation in Latin America.\(^{209}\) Recognizing the importance of the role of *de pueblo* in “the People of God” in *Lumen Gentium*, it considers theology as the expression of the people of God.\(^ {210}\) This thought was primarily developed by three Argentine priests: Rafael Tello, Lucio Gera, and J. C. Scannone.\(^ {211}\) Though it employs “the ‘see-judge-act’ cycle of interpretation and the preferential option for the poor” which are found in the liberation theology with its emphasis on class analysis of Marxism, *la teología del pueblo* “highlights the distinct role of culture and institutional and structural injustice as a betrayal of a people’s unity, best expressed in a concept of anti-pueblo.”\(^ {212}\) The main characteristics of *la teología del pueblo* could be sketched as follows: 1) focus on *el pueblo*, who are the “marginalized and scorned majority” in Latin America,\(^ {213}\) 2) rejection of Marxist categories, 3) deep respect for popular piety,\(^ {214}\) 4) importance of the historical approach and context than other sciences,\(^ {215}\) 5) never hostility to the teaching authority of the Church, 6) skepticism of the elites of both the left and the right side.\(^ {216}\) *La teología del pueblo* could attract both the prelates and the common people of

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212 Canaris.

213 Gregg, 368-9; Lucio Gera, "Cultura Y Dependencia, a La Luz De La Reflexion Teologia," *Stromata* 30, no. 1-2 (January-June 1974): 91. The people are not seen as a class but as masters of their own destiny, capable of liberating themselves without recourse to arms and violence.

214 Gregg, 368. The popular piety is expressed in different forms such as Marian devotions, “veneration of local saints, public processions, localized religious art, and specific prayers that draw upon the experience and history from which the prayer emerged.”

215 Rourke, 73.

216 Gregg, 368.
Argentina because of its concern for the poor and the marginalized, faithfulness to the ecclesial teachings, and recourse to piety.

Today, most of the Christians do not appreciate liberation theology although the issues raised by liberation theology are relevant, because of various reasons. The Catholic Church appreciates the aspiration of the liberation theologians, however, she criticizes their adoption of a Marxist analysis of society, their presuppositions regarding God, community and the human person, the use of violence as a means to attain the goal or transformation, the political reading of the bible, the understanding of salvation in exclusively socio-political terms, etc. The Church specifically says that “the governance of the political and economic dimensions of society does not directly pertain to the mission of the Church and the mission of the Church is not reduced to it.”

In the new context, however, it could be a spiritual exercise - a call both for social and personal conversion having hope in the ultimate redemption. In the views of Balthasar, even those who criticize liberation theology cannot question the urgency of the practical concern that lingers it, because it “has its specific place within a theology of Kingdom of God. It offers one aspect of theology as a whole, and in practice it calls on the Church to strive to reform the world, in all its dimensions, in conformity with Christ.”

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2.5.2.2. Feminist Theology

Feminist theology that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century was an offshoot of the feminist movement in the western world, which was begun a century ago. Feminist theology, which focuses on the oppression of women in mostly patriarchal societies, has borrowed the principles of the liberation theologians to argue for the rights of the oppressed and the sidelined, and thus, has become a “theology from the underside of history.” Feminist theologians can be both female and male theologians who work for the rights of women, and their objective is to end oppression, discrimination, and violence directed to women and help to acquire equality and human dignity for every woman in society. Instead of completely separating women from men in theologizing, they aim “at the transformation of the theological concepts, methods, language, and imagery into a more holistic theology as a means and an expression of the struggle for liberation.”

Feminist theologians see the Church as a site of tension between two realities: on the one side, the Church is the site where women have the experiences of marginalization and

220 Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 10-6. Clifford presents three major waves of feminism: the first wave, between the mid nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, women’s participation in public life was envisioned; the second, in the 1960s and 1970s, sought civil rights and equality for women, especially in Europe and America; the third wave, which began in the 1980s, envisioned justice for all women around the globe.
221 Fiorenza, 13.
223 Clifford, 13, 17.
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oppression, and on the other, it is the site of empowerment, because it has the shared memory of life, death, and gospel of Jesus Christ, the hope of whole humankind. Thus, at the heart of the feminist theology, which draws on the experience of women as a basic source of content and criterion of truth, there is “the struggle for justice and the creation of right relationships,” in which the Church, being the sign of salvation in the world, has an important role. The prophetic role of the feminists consists in their involvement in the social injustices against women, because whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women cannot reflect the divine, nor can it be a sign of redemption. The hope of the redemptive work to regain the God-given dignity of women is the prophetic-liberating tradition of Biblical faith.

For feminist theologians, the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:43-7), the community in which the Eucharistic ecclesiology is found in its perfect form, serves as a powerful symbol of the social unity that the Church should maintain in all ages. The breaking of the bread, in which the early Christians commemorated and proclaimed the death and the resurrection of Christ, was the primary sign of their communal life. Today, the Eucharist, the central sacrament of the Church, professes the faith in the saving power of the death and

225 Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 117.
229 Cf. Ruether, 24. Ruether gives four themes that are “essential to the prophetic-liberating tradition of Biblical faith,” which give hope to the feminists: “(1) God’s defense and vindication of the oppressed; (2) the critique of the dominant systems of power and their powerholders; (3) the vision of a new age to come in which the present system of injustice is overcome and God’s intended reign of peace and justice is installed in history; and (4) finally, the critique of ideology, or of religion, since ideology in this context is primarily religious. Prophetic faith denounces religious ideologies and systems that function to justify and sanctify the dominant, unjust social order.” Cf. also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-Logy of Liberation (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 69.
resurrection of Christ. Christian feminists believe that those who celebrate the Eucharist together are friends, brothers and sisters, and members of a common body and life. They are no longer strangers, aliens, and nonmembers. Guided by the symbol of such an ideal community, feminist theologians analyze social realities, and examine how the good news of Christ can reshape the structures of the society in which women are sidelined or experience discrimination or oppression. Their criticism of the present Catholic theology is that “it cannot claim to be a liberative theology proclaiming the ‘good news’ of salvation,” because “it does not take seriously its call to become a theology for the poor – women, men and children.” Instead it promotes or sustains division in the Church as high class clergy and low class laity under the patriarchal system of leadership. Ruether believes that in theology, there had been an attempt to emphasize the biological particularity of Jesus, i.e., his maleness, which limits his “representation as the embodiment of God’s universal new Word,” and she is convinced that what is needed is not an emphasis on the biological particularities of Jesus but his message which was the revolutionary word of good news and hope to the poor.

Erasto J. Fernandez, who emphasizes the need of a community action of the Eucharist, says that our assembling or coming together as God’s Children to the Eucharistic celebration could bring out the true meaning of the rite. Assembling as God’s children becomes true and meaningful when the members of the Church consider the fellow Christians as brothers and

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231 Ibid., 115.
The imagery of “the Church around the table,” feminist theologians believe, explicates the equal role of the members of the Church or the discipleship of equals. The Eucharistic table is the unparalleled model and serves as the symbol of this relationship of equals created by Christ sharing his body and blood. In real life, Méndez-Montoya says, the Eucharistic table is “a painful spot, for it mirrors a wounded Church,” especially in the area of gender and sexuality. Méndez-Montoya believes that an authentic Eucharistic action is very challenging, because it demands radical inclusion and promotes a profound sense of personal and communal dignity, and it invites the Church to perform divine caritas. Lucchetti Bingemer is of the opinion that the sacrament of Eucharist places women in a privileged position based on the notion of “transubstantiation” or “real presence.” She argues that God’s feeding of his people with his own body and blood is the supreme way God chose to be with them. In this way, God is giving his own life in this sacrament. “During the whole process of gestation, parturition, protection, and nourishment of new life,” Lucchetti Bingemer says, “we have the sacrament of Eucharist, the divine act par excellence, happening again and again.” In this sense, women can anthropologically understand this mystery in its best possible way.

2.5.2.3. Dalit Theology

Dalit theology, an Indian contextual theology, systematically articulates Christian faith in the context of the newly emerging dalit aspiration for liberation. The rich contributions of Dalit
Theology during the last two decades to theologizing in India have been significant. The word ‘dalit’ can be found in Sanskrit and Hebrew. ‘Dalits’ in Sanskrit means “the oppressed or the broken.” The Hebrew root of the term, dall has a relationship with the Akkadian term dalalu (be weak) and close to that is the Assyrian dalalu (be weak or humble). The word dall is a verb and it means to hang down, to be languid, be weakened, be low, be feeble (Ps 116, 6; 142, 7 (perfect verb – dalote); Is 17, 4 (y-dal)). Almost all the English translations of the Bible have rendered these Hebrew expressions with the same meaning. It may refer either to physical weakness or to a lowly, insignificant position in society.

The social structure of India is stratified, with inbuilt inequalities and injustices, based on the caste-system sanctified by Brahmanic-Hinduism. Sanctioned by the religio-philosophical system, the dalits in India, who are believed to be the ancient Dravidian race - the original people of India, are socially placed outside the four-fold caste system (varnas) and they are referred to as the fifth caste (panchamas). Dalits constitute almost 20% of the Indian population (260 million), and were considered untouchables because of the Hindu understanding of “ritual pollution and purity.” They are a humble, poor class, entirely separated even among the rural...
Numerous social restrictions control their movements and deny them their fundamental right to live as free people with dignity and self-respect. Gandhi unwittingly ‘branded’ them as Harijans, which means “people of God.”

Though Christianity is an egalitarian religion, the situation of the dalits in the Church was no better. Marriage between the higher caste and the lower caste Christians rarely happens in India. Maintaining some sorts of caste distinctions, even among the Hindu converts to the Catholic Church, tempts one to think that the divisions within the Church were recognized and legalized both historically and theologically. It is the ‘untouchable’ caste root of the dalits which makes them objects of repulsion not only in the sight of the non-dalits of other religions but also in the sight of their own Christian co-religionists. It could be very well seen in the Church administration as well, though they constitute the clear majority of the total Christians in India.
Dalit Christians in India experience discrimination from two fronts in their social life: in the Church they are discriminated by their own Christian brothers and sisters; and in society they are discriminated by other higher class people and the political system. A constitutional order of the President of India in 1950 does not give any benefits or concessions, which other dalits in India enjoy, to the dalits in Christian religion as Christianity does not recognize caste divisions. It is in this context of discrimination, the struggles of a community against caste-ism and their continued aspirations for social justice both in Church and society, that Dalit theology took its birth in India. In the words of M. E. Prabhakar, Dalit theology attempts to support the Dalits in their fight for justice:

First, the dalits are typical example of the unique system of oppression in India in which ‘socio-culturally ordained fixed groups have collectively remained at a deprived position for ages’ and dalit theology corrects the tendencies to generalize or objectify the oppressed or poor and reveals ‘the concrete subjectivity of the diverse sections of this oppressed, their existences and histories and aspirations.’

Secondly, Indian Christian theology has failed to take account of the sufferings and hope of dalits, who form the majority of the Indian Christians; its approach of primarily responding to the philosophical-theological conceptions of the dominant brahmanical religion and culture has not helped dalit aspirations.

The immediate concern for formulating a Dalit theology emerged within the Christian Dalit Liberation movement. So, the sources and process of Dalit theology lay in the agony and sufferings of dalits in their search for self-identity, equality, and a meaningful life in the community. In India, the forces of communalism and fundamentalism have made serious inroads into the dalit movement, as well. The situation calls for an urgent and radical review of our

\[\text{South, less than 4 per cent of the parishes are entrusted to Dalit priests. There are no Dalits among thirteen Catholic Bishops of Tamilnadu or among the Vicars-general and rectors of seminaries and directors of social assistance centers.}\]

\[\text{249} \text{ Azariah, 2; See ITA, "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," in Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today, ed. A. Pushparajan and X. D. Selvraj (Bangalore: ITA & Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), no. 17.}\]

\[\text{250} \text{ M. E. Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology," in A Reader in Dalit Theology, ed. Nirmal A. P. (Madrass: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 1992), 3.}\]
paradigms of theologizing today. This is the most important commonality cutting across the various authentic liberation motifs for Indian Christian theology.\textsuperscript{251}

In Dalit theology, Dalit Christology is of utmost importance. As a meaningful Christology, Dalit Christology finds its uniqueness as it is developed through the dialectical encounter between the Jesus of faith and the context of the dalits in which he is experienced. Dalit theology affirms faith and praxis of the “dalitness” of God in Jesus Christ, who incarnated as a dalit. The solidarity of Jesus with the poor and the outcasts finds its Christological symbol in the incarnation. Jesus’ title, the Son of Man, indicates his sufferings and death as a dalit encountering rejection, mockery, and contempt, of which the cross was the culmination.\textsuperscript{252} He was a friend of the poor and the marginalized, tax-collectors, prostitutes, sinners, lepers, untouchables, and outcasts. Jesus’ approach and attitude towards the Samaritans, his Nazareth Manifesto in the Gospel according to Luke (4:18-21), cleansing the temple, and breaking of the law of Sabbath, are of great significance to Dalit Theology.\textsuperscript{253} It looks a bit scandalous that Jesus interpreted laws from the situation of the poor.\textsuperscript{254} Jesus’ disciples were Jews. But they were of the lower status – sudras. Dalit theologians present Jesus as the Messiah of Dalits.\textsuperscript{255}

\textsuperscript{251} A. P. Nirmal, ”Towards a Christian Dalit Theology,” in Emerging Dalit Theology, ed. Xavier Irudayaraj (Madras: Jesuit Theological Secretariat, 1990), 57.

\textsuperscript{252} On the cross he was broken, the crushed, the split, the torn, the driven - the dalit, in the fullest possible etymological meaning of the term. The cross is no arbitrary intrusion in the life of Jesus. So Jesus suffered outside the gate to sanctify the people with his own blood (Heb 13: 11-12). The high point of Dalit experience and Jesus’ experience on the cross is the experience of God forsakenness.

\textsuperscript{253} M. R. Arulraja, Jesus the Dalit (Secunderbad: Jeevan Institute, 1996), 90-2. Dalit theologians believes that the liberation, which Jesus speaks in Luke 4:18-21, is also the liberation of Dalits. Jesus’ action is of great importance for the dalits in India. Cf. Azariah, 3.

\textsuperscript{254} Arulraja, Jesus the Dalit, 92.

\textsuperscript{255} Messiah is the descedent of David who is lifting the dalim, the poor. See Is 11:1-5: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse... he shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the dalim (the poor), and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; ...righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.”
theology, through its prophetic role in the Indian society, expects the revisit of the liberation
proclaimed and set out by Jesus two thousand years ago.

2.6. Conclusion

Stepping on the findings of the previous chapter that presented the Church as a
Eucharistic community from its very beginning, this research made a pilgrimage to see the
glimpses of the same stream of thought in the Second Vatican Council, which aimed at the
theological and structural ressourcement and renewal of the Church in the last century. In order
to explicate the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II, this study brought forth the Eucharistic
ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac, the modern father of the Church, who exceptionally delineated
the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church, showing how the Eucharist makes the
Church and the Church makes the Eucharist. The Church, the ecclesial body of Christ is built by
the Eucharistic body of Christ. The sacrament of Eucharist, which makes us partakers in the
body and blood of Christ, builds up the ecclesial body, and thus the unity in the Church. The
unity achieved in the celebration of the Eucharist is the foretaste of the unity that the members of
the Church would enjoy with Christ in heaven.

The communion ecclesiology, which is founded on the sacrament of Eucharist, is a
significant characteristic of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In this view, the
universal Church is a communion of individual churches or local churches, and the principal
imagery used by the Council, the People of God and the Body of Christ, explain the
relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Church, because it is in the
celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist that the Church is being expressed truly as the
People of God and the Body of Christ. The Council’s theological retrospection to the sources and
the Fathers of the Church brought forth the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the Church. The council’s primary imagery of the Church as the People of God also stresses the importance of all members in the Church instead of the hierarchical structure that had been followed in the Church for centuries. The Council’s pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* presented the need for the renewal of the Church in the modern world so that she could be the leaven in the world, and in her attempt to be the leaven, the sacrament of Eucharist serves as a prophetic and challenging memory and a symbol of transformation.

Communion ecclesiology is also a characteristic of and a reality in the Orthodox Church, the “Sister Church.” Both Catholic and Orthodox Churches testify that the Eucharist is the expression of the heavenly liturgy and it builds up the Church. It is the work of the Spirit of the risen Christ who forms her into the body of Christ. Orthodox theologians Nicholas Afanasiev and John Zizioulas have showed how the Eucharist has been building up the Church since its very beginning. Eucharistic ecclesiology, in their understanding, explains the ministries in the Church and builds up the body of Christ as a single unity. Though the existence of many local churches is a reality, it cannot divide the unity of the Church, but instead it builds up the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ. Bishops, as the presiders of the Eucharist, have a significant role in the building the unity of the Church. The existence of the royal priesthood is not opposed to the ministerial priesthood in the Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox Church understands the episcopal ministry in the Church as an ontological necessity, as it is derived from the foundations of the Church and, thus, its origin is divine.

The Council teaches that the Church is called to be the sacrament of Christ in the world. Being the sacrament of Jesus in the world, the Church has the duty to reflect Jesus in all her
actions. During and after the council, there had been attempts from in the Church, both in the hierarchical and non-hierarchical level, also theological and practical, to make the faith alive with the conviction that the living faith is a sign of the sacramentality of the Church. The Eucharist serves as a powerful prophetic symbol and challenging sacrament to live out the Christian faith in the everyday life of the Church. Many ecclesiastical documents on the Eucharist have strongly affirmed the Church as expressing both theological and practical dimensions of the Eucharist. A close examination of the documents and the contextual theologies that arose in the twentieth century, especially liberation theology, feminist theology, and Dalit theology affirm that Eucharistic ecclesiology is still relevant, and the most appropriate model of ecclesiology. This research on the retrospection of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in the second half of the twentieth century, shows that the Eucharistic ecclesiology is not outdated. Instead, the rich theology that underscores it has the backup of Scripture and the living traditions of the Church both in the East and the West.

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256 See, Canon Eugene Masure, *The Sacrifice of the Mystical Body*, trans. Anthony Thorold (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), 10; Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 61-2. Schollebeeckx says that the sacraments always include a reference to the historical event, because it was upon the historical cross, and there alone at the moment of history, that God really sacrificed his human life for us.
CHAPTER 3

INDIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION: HERALDS OF AN
INDIGENOUS ECCLESIOLOGY FOR INDIA

3.1. Introduction

Acknowledging that the wisdom and the philosophies of the early centuries helped the Church in its infancy to express the Christian message, which could be qualified as “adaptation of the Gospel” intelligible to various peoples and cultures, the Second Vatican Council encouraged the members of the Church all over the world: “[i]n this way it is possible to create in every country the possibility of expressing the message of Christ in suitable terms and to foster vital contact and exchange between the Church and different cultures” (GS 44; cf. LG 15; AG 22). The Council’s encouragement of adaptation and emphasis on culture (GS 53), with its recognition of the universality of God’s plan and the work of the Spirit immeasurably bolstered contextual theologies and interreligious and ecumenical movements in the Catholic Church. In India, though there had been few attempts of inculturation and theologizing using the Indian categories, the Indian Church was mostly preoccupied with a Western theological system which was imported during the colonial period. The Indian Theological Association (ITA), a forum of Indian theologians inspired by Vatican Council II and Liberation Theology in Latin America, felt the need for theologizing in the context of India, using the categories intelligible to the people of India and taking the realities of India into account with utmost care. For the last forty years, ITA has been committed to this goal and has worked for an indigenous theology for India.
In this research, the previous chapters discussed the meaning and the implications of the eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church, its revisiting in Vatican Council II, and its prophetic dimension found both in the Church documents and praxis, since the second half of the twentieth century. Having established that the early Church maintained the eucharistic ecclesiology in its theology and practice, and that it was reinstated in Vatican Council II’s communion ecclesiology, this research moves forward to the Indian Church in which the prophetic and communion aspect of the eucharistic ecclesiology remain a challenge today. ITA, in its commitment to promote contextual theology and nation building in India, argues for an indigenous ecclesiology in India taking the social, cultural, economic, religious, and ecclesial realities seriously. This chapter is an attempt to sketch the important characteristics and challenges of the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA, based on its yearly statements.

This chapter begins with the original vision of the ITA, and certain characteristics of theologizing undertaken by the ITA. Emphasis on the experience, liberation, orthopraxis, and inculcation, which are fundamental characteristics of ITA with respect to its theologizing, will be dealt with in detail. The list of the themes of the yearly statements of the ITA, presented in this section shows the forum’s commitment to the Indian context and realities. Next, an investigation of the ITA’s context of theologizing provides an understanding of the cultural, social, economic, religious, and ecclesial realities of India to which the ITA responds with prophetic valor. These realities constitute the *locus theologicus* of the indigenous theology in India. ITA’s yearly statements or responses to social, cultural, religious, and cultural matters are true expressions of the theology from “below.” ITA also paves the way to build an Indian ecclesiology proper to its context. Finally, this chapter presents ITA’s view on an indigenous ecclesiology for India.
The presentation of research on ITA, Indian context, concerns of the ITA statements, and views on indigenous ecclesiology, provided in this chapter, give a picture of the Church and the context in India. For the Church and theologians, it provides the self-understanding that the Church is struggling to be an indigenous Church, and has a long way to be “eucharistic,” or to be the sacrament of Christ in its fullness. ITA’s proposed solutions to the problems in the Church and responses to the social issues are an eye-opener to the Indian Church.

3.2. ITA, An Intellectual Forum for Contextual Theology: Certain Features and Characteristics

ITA is an intellectual movement of Catholic theologians in India for social action. Its purpose is to promote contextual theology in India. This section presents the original vision and certain characteristics of the theologizing of ITA and its yearly statements.

3.2.1. Origin and Vision of ITA

ITA, which has pledged to promote theologizing in the Indian context, was the fruit of a commitment by a group of theologians. It was founded in 1976 by J. Constantine Manalel, a Carmelite priest in India. The forum sprouted from a number of roots or sources, initiated by Manalel, who gave it an umbrella name, “Theology Centre,” which consisted of various movements between 1950-80, such as “All Kerala Students’ League” (1952), “All Kerala

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2 Jeevadhara Theology Centre, "Kerala Catholic Students' League," http://jeevadhara.org/milestones.html#one. The initial purpose of the use of the word “Catholic” was to spread it in all the dioceses of Kerala and not to restrict it. They had weekly meetings in circles and groups to foster critical and creative thinking, and to initiate social activities among students of different faith affiliations.
Teachers Guild” (1954), “Theology Course for Laity” (1961), “Jeevadhara” (1971), and “Jeevadhara Theological Society” (1974). As the number of theologians in the editorial board of Jeevadhara increased, thought was given to starting an association for the Indian theologians. This resulted in the foundation of ITA.

ITA is an open forum of Catholic theologians of India that envisions a subaltern theology coping with the Indian/Asian context embodying the struggles and hopes of the people. ITA offers a platform for Indian theologians for creative thinking and discourse. It fosters research in spheres of religion and society by involving scholars, social activists, thinkers, and religious leaders of all faiths with the goal of realizing the “fullness of life” (Jn 10:10) on the journey towards the reign of God. The following are the main objectives of ITA:

1. To be a forum for the theologians to meet and discuss current theological issues in its general context.
2. To promote the development of an Indian Christian Theology.
3. To foster research in matters of religion and society.
4. To assist and encourage theologians, in their endeavours without any motive of profit.
5. To promote and realize these objectives, the Association will be free:
6. To prepare and publish books for the general public and theological institutions and centres.
7. To stimulate publication of cultural, philosophical and theological books, written within the Indian context.
8. To do all such other lawful acts and deeds as are essential or conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the society.
9. And which intend to apply their profits, if any, or other income in promoting their objects and prohibit the payment of any dividend or distribution of any income or profits among their members.

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3 “All Kerala Catholic Teachers’ Guild” pioneered the guilds of that sort in India. The monthly conferences in regional levels and seminars on the state level were conducted to improve the qualities of the teachers. Cf. Jeevadhara Theological Centre, "Kerala Catholic Teachers Guild," http://jeevadhara.org/milestones.html#two.
4 A theology course for laity who have secured a post-graduate degree was organized in 1961 by the Jeevadhara Theology Centre. It was a four-year course, dedicating one full month a year in summer. Cf. Jeevadhara Theology Centre, "Theology Course for Laity," http://jeevadhara.org/milestones.html#two.
In the words of the founder of ITA, Constantine Manalel, the original vision of the ITA could be sketched as follows:

1. The theologians’ task extends to the whole country and not confined to the Church. It is a responsibility of the theologians in the process of nation building and to build the bridges of love, hope, and peace in the world.
2. ITA as a fraternity must be solely governed by mutual consent and not by external laws.
3. Freedom of thought and expression could be maintained when ITA is not under the auspices of the CBCI. The prophetic mission of theologians and the authority of the hierarchy, though both necessary, often don’t go together.
4. Extend support and strength to the theologians who have been unjustly harassed by the Roman congregations.
5. Theological praxis is the primary concern, not thinking alone.  

ITA tries to attain these goals founded on a three-fold contextual dialogue:

1. Meeting of Religions
2. Solidarity with the Poor
3. Eco-Beings: We are innately indebted to the whole universe.

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8 Manalel, 6-9.
9 Indian Theological Association, "History," http://www.itanet.in/history.html. To engage themselves in the social and religious problems with faith in God and commitment to all people, ITA members profess a triple remembrance: 1) Divine origin: We are of God; 2) Human solidarity: We are all of one and the same human fellowship irrespective of caste, color, creed, gender and race; 3) Reconciliation between religions and secular ideologies.
3.2.2. Theologizing as a Prophetic Commitment to Nation Building

ITA considers theologizing as a Christian commitment to nation building, because every Christian in India is not only a Christian, but also an Indian with his/her social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of life. This reality cannot be denied. Nation building is the duty of all Christians, because “[i]t is a divine call to build up communities of justice, peace and reconciliation,” seeing everyone as brothers and sisters in Christ. The themes of the yearly meetings and the statements of each meeting show the ITA’s concern for the social, political, economic, and religious problems in India. Theologians believe that theologizing in India becomes meaningful only when it gives adequate attention to all those who are discriminated against based on caste, religion, gender, tribe, etc., because they try to see their context of theologizing with the eyes of Christ; they try to see him: “in the cross of the people, we discern the cross of Jesus; and in their struggles against what is operative and inhuman we sense the power of his resurrection. Such faith-inspired insight into historical realities carries significant seeds in theology.” In India, philosophy and theology are not two separate disciplines but brahmavidya – a discipline of self-realization and liberation. Indian theologians try to adopt this methodology with the conviction of the need of a liberation based on their “faith in the

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incarnation self-giving of the Divine in Jesus Christ.” They also encourage their fellow Christians to participate in the civic and political life, being rooted in Christian values, to change the society.

3.2.3. Experience as the Starting Point of Theologizing

ITA defines theology as “critical reflection on experience [anubhava] in the context of faith.” ITA gives importance to context, which is the sum total of the experiences of a community “with its own culture and traditions, its historical adventures, its struggles and hopes in the light of God’s revelation taken in its totality.” As a matter of fact, the starting point of theology (locus theologicus) for ITA, must be the common people’s experience of the reality of life, leading to theo-praxis (living theology) over theologia (teaching theology). Faith being the heart of theologizing, God who became human and involved in human realities is the inspiration of faith and hope to the people under struggles and oppression. In the context of India, ITA believes that theologians are called to seek wisdom and truth in the light of their faith experience.

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15 “Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002),” no. 37.
16 “The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991),” no. 3; cf. also no. 5. Being so close to the context of the people, this theology finds its expression not only in concepts and formulas, but also in poems, stories, narratives, symbols, myths, etc. in the language of the people. “Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984),” in Theologizing in Context: Statements of the Indian Theological Association, ed. Jacob Parappally (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984), nos. 3; 23. iii.
17 “Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984),” no. 3; Cf. George Therukattil, Compassionate Love Ethics, vol. 1, Fundamental Moral Theology (Kochi: Karumikan Books, 2014), 66.
19 Ibid., no. 30.
in the community and in dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies. This involves committed action and intellectual reflection.\[^{20}\]

ITA makes use of many other sciences that touch human realities to understand the Indian situation or the context. For example, in the 1986 meeting says that ITA is open to employ various approaches to the social reality such as Marxist, holistic-cultural, Gandhian, psychological, feminist, the third-world perspective, social analysis, and science and technology.\[^{21}\] All of them approach realities in their own perspectives, but they contribute to theologizing in India. Social analysis is very important in theologizing for ITA, because it interacts with socio-cultural reality.\[^{22}\] Emphasis on socio-cultural realities, which include “people’s problems, languages, idioms and rhythms of life,” will help the contextual theology to come out of foreign categories, patterns and ideologies.\[^{23}\] ITA presented the major trajectories in Indian theology:

1) the Spiritual-contemplative approach, represented by the Indian Christian Ashram movement; 2) the Intellectual-theological approach in which Christian scholars entered into dialogue with the philosophical and religious traditions of India, and 3) the Socio-political approach which began from the common problems and struggles of people. This approach became the locus for theologizing and creating a new society, and inspired new patterns of formation, i.e. the regional theologates.\[^{24}\]

\[^{20}\] "The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991)," nos. 1-2.
\[^{21}\] "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," no. 3.
\[^{22}\] Ibid., no. 4. Social analysis “is a term used for a critical understanding of all the different institutions, structures, and systems in society: economic, social, political, ideological, cultural, medical, educational, and military. It is a means to identify the various forces at work in our society.”
\[^{24}\] ITA, “Society and Church: Challenges in Theologizing in Indian Society (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2003),” no. 1. The prominent figures in the ashram movement with a holistic way of life were Monchanin, Abhishiktananda, Bede Griffiths and Sara Grant. Within the intellectual-theological approach, the pioneers were protestant theologians like K. M. Bnerjee, A. J. Appaswamy, Vengal Chakkarai, and P. Chenchaiah. Among the Catholics, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya advocated interpreting the Christian faith in terms of Vedanta. The main advocates of liberation theology in India were Paul D. Devananda, M. M. Thomas, Sebastian Kappan, and George Soares-Prabhu. Dalit Theology was another initiative from India by the theologian Aravind P. Nirmal. Father Proksch and Father Zeitler were the pioneers of the theology of inculturation in India. The foundation of National
ITA wants theology to be ready for dialogue with the scientific, technological world, because all humanity experiences the effects of the developments in these areas.\textsuperscript{25} Maintaining the Christian faith, an Indian theologian is supposed to be inspired by the Indian models of \textit{bhashyakara}, \textit{acharya}, \textit{guru}, and \textit{pandit}.\textsuperscript{26} Loyal to religion and community, they are supposed to involve the faith-life and struggles of the community with prophetic freedom and courage, but without fanaticism and fundamentalism. A theologian, who is also a part of the community, like Jesus with the poor in the Jewish community, should make theologizing an experience-action-reflection process.\textsuperscript{27}

### 3.2.4. Theologizing as a Prophetic Action of Liberation

Influenced by Vatican Council II, the Catholic Church in India, under the leadership of the CBCI, initiated a collective process of reflection on its pastoral services and missions, which reached its climax in the “National Seminar on the Church in India Today” (1969). It insisted on the collective work of the laity, priests, religious, and bishops, realizing that theologizing is not just a dogmatic work, but also the responses to the problems and questions, and issues in the Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Center (NBCLC) is to be commended in this regard. The ITA, which was the initiative of Constantine Manalel, offered a platform for the Indian theologians to encounter the contextual realities with immense valor. Cf. Ibid., nos. 3-14; Cf. also V. F. Vineeth, "Inculturation and the Ashram Ideal in India (Paper Presented in the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the ITA, May 3-7, 2002)," in \textit{Christian Commitment to Nation Building}, ed. Anthoniraj Thumma and Alphonse D. Sahayam (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003), 205-9; Swami Joseph A. Samarakone, "Ashram Life: An Inculturated Way of Christian Living in India," in \textit{Renewed Efforts at Inculturation for an Indian Church}, ed. Erasto Fernandes and Joji Kunduru (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002); Vandana Mata, "Ashram Life: An Inculturated Way of Christian Living," ibid.; Mundadan, Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{25} ITA, "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 12.  
\textsuperscript{26} "The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991)," 9-12. \textit{Bhashyakara} is a commentator or an exegete of the sacred scriptures; \textit{Acharya} is a learned teacher or scholar who initiates students into the scriptures; \textit{guru} is a spiritual parent who initiates \textit{jnana} to his students; and \textit{pandit} is a scholar who has expertise in religion and philosophy.  
\textsuperscript{27} "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," no. 29; "The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991)," no. 6.
Indian theologians are aware of various areas in which liberation has to take place in India: liberation of the people of India from the clutches of poverty, inequality, and injustice; liberation of the Dalits, the tribal people, workers and women; liberation of religions, and especially liberation of the Church from its structuralism and the internal injustices, etc. Committing themselves to this cause, the Indian theologians believe, is a prophetic mission they have to undertake today proclaiming “the Truth even if it is unpleasant without being hindered either by individuals or by the establishment.”

Jesus’ life and liberative mission (Lk 4:16-8) is the source and strength of the Church to continue the liberative work today, because he wants “to rid the world of what is negative, savage, alienating, enslaving, dehumanizing.” The Apostles presented an ideal community that took this mission seriously and tried to be a liberative Church engaging in the total liberation of the people. Being in this world, the Church has to denounce the dehumanizing elements in the culture, society, and religion, and thereby promote the life-giving elements. In this regard, the Church is called to witness Christ, and the Indian theologians are convinced that “[t]he witness of the Church to Christ in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, will transform the world.”

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29 “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” no. 15. The statement says that religions are to be liberated “from their exclusivism, fundamentalism, and superiority claims and bring them closer to each other in mutual acceptance and relatedness.”
31 Samuel Rayan, "Doing Theology in India," ibid., 12.
32 ITA, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," ibid., no. 13.
33 "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001),” in Renewed Efforts at Inculturation for an Indian Church, ed. Erasto Fernandes and Joji Kunduru (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), no. 20.
The dignity of human beings is the underlying principle of liberation. In the ITA hermeneutic, “liberation is understood in terms of a wholeness of humans, nature, cosmos and the Ultimate. In a world divided between the powerful and the powerless, wholeness of liberation always includes a preferential option for the powerless and marginalized.”

This dividedness has led to the analysis of the social structure and the structural injustices that are to be transformed with a liberation praxis, which is a response to Jesus’ call to bring the reign of God to earth:

We [Indian Theologians] strive in union to realize God’s dreams for our earth by securing justice for all, dignity for everyone, and equality and fellowship and a fair distribution and sharing of goods as becomes God’s family. Hand in hand we stand against the barbarism of war, armament industry, and the marketing of murder and terror. Together we resist whatever is anti-human, anti-life anti-God. So we weave our way towards the New Heaven and the New Earth and of God’s promise, where God will make his home among us...

To achieve this end, the ITA statement of 2011 says, “A theology of protest and resistance, truth and reconciliation - modelled upon Gandhiji’s satyagraha, animated by genuine love and empowered by God’s Spirit could become a reminder to people of their enslavement, and engage them constructively in a critical reflection of what is considered crucial and decisive to their lives.”

ITA believes that this is the prophetic mission of the theologians in India.

3.2.5. **Orthopraxis over Orthodoxy**

For centuries, the Catholic Church has been trying to preserve the orthodoxy of faith in her documents and practices. ITA believes that what is needed in India is the orthopraxis over
orthodoxy. The “liberation model,” which is peculiar to the Latin American theologians, was an inspiration for the Indian theologians to hold on to orthopraxis. The ITA meeting in 1984 noticed that theologizing in India had not become a reflection of life experience and Christian praxis due to its dependence on western theology, and proposed that the model of theologizing in India should be “action - reflection - action model” by being involved in the struggles and pains of the people.  

Praxis should be the passion of all who involve themselves in the mission of the Church. It should touch every segment of the system necessary to the running of Church, which could be seen at the administrative levels. The hierarchy can take efforts to make others participants in ministry and administration of the Church by listening to the voices of the weaker sections, especially the laity, the poor and the women. The theologians can not only talk but do by upholding the principles such as the option for the poor, the common good, and justice; involving in the social issues of the country, making efforts to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaborating with the people of other faiths, etc.

ITA members are convinced that by being part of an orthodox Church orthopraxis is not an easy task, because there is a sense that the Church hierarchy is legalistic and not practical. Manalel’s position on this concern is that “[p]rophecy in the Church is as necessary as authority and often they do not go together. Theologians should keep intact their prophetic role without any tinge of pride or selfishness and they should be courageous enough to fulfill that role without

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39 See “Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," nos. 1 & 23.
40 “Social dialogue” is an important theme in Pope Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium. He says that social dialogue contributes to peace, and today, there are three areas in which the dialogue is relevant for the human development and the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society, and dialogue with the people of other faiths (EG 238). See Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation (Rome: November 24, 2013), no. 238; Cf. also ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 22.
any fear for the good of the Church and the world.” He also says, “obedience is our response to God’s offer of salvation – Faith is obedience.” In the context of India, Samuel Rayan says that “[t]heology is faith seeking justice.” Though there are different ways of articulating theology, i.e., the language of theology could be both literal and symbolic, theology must be praxis-oriented, because when it touches the realities of life the people may live authentically and joyfully as human beings and believers. Thus, the goal of orthopraxis is the liberation of the people.

3.2.6. Emphasis on Inculturation

Vatican Council II says that culture, “in the general sense refers to all those things which go to the refining and developing of man’s diverse mental and physical endowments” (GS 53). Culture, which is an integral part of one’s social and individual life, is an evolving reality through its encounter with other cultures and situations. In the postmodern world, there may not be any cultures not touched by other cultures. Inculturation is the result of interaction between two or more cultures. Thus, inculturation is a dynamic process. ITA says that religion is the heart of culture, because of its importance in the life of the people. John Paul II, who considered culture as “the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel,” states that “[e]vangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related,” because the change that happens with persons and societies affect the culture and vice versa (EA 21). Though

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41 Manalel, 8.
42 Ibid.
43 Samuel Rayan, "Doing Theology in India," ibid., 18; ITA, "Political Theology in Indian Context (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1981)," ibid.
44 Samuel Rayan, "Doing Theology in India," ibid., 18.
Gospel and culture are different realities, in the dynamism of the Kingdom of God, which is the essence of Gospel, they are intimately related: people are profoundly linked to certain culture and the building up of the Kingdom takes place among the people (cf. EA 21). However, today, there is a split between the Gospel and Culture, which Paul VI called the drama of our time (EN 22; cf. EA 21).

ITA views inculturation as “creative assimilation and not mere borrowing” in the Christian context, because it is “primarily the total living of Christian faith in a particular cultural setting.” Religion, being the heart of the culture, inculturation is an “entry into the total religiousness or ethos of the people,” which demands the reinterpretation of a Christian’s self-identity. True evangelization is not possible without inculturation, and in order to promote evangelization in India, CBCI says that the Church must become “incarnate among our peoples in their rich cultural heritage, socio-economic conditions and vital concerns for truth, justice and liberation from the bonds of ignorance, fear, hunger, disease, suppression and sinfulness.”

Examining the history of the early Church, ITA says the four gospels and many Churches are the responses of the different communities to the Gospel in their contexts. There was an attempt to impose Judaism on everyone who came to the early Church, however, Paul and Barnabas

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46 ITA, "Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988)," no. 29; See "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," in Annual Meeting of the ITA, ed. Jacob Parappally (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), no. 20. The statements say, “Culture includes the norms, symbols, control systems as well as hopes, agonies, anxieties, fears and aspirations that are found in the meaning system of a people.”

47 ITA says, “[o]n the one side inculturation implies the shedding of what is foreign, colonial and alienating, on the other, it demands a critical assimilation of cultural elements which are assumed.”


49 ITA, "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," no. 4.
opposed it, and the Church was opened to all peoples with their religious and cultural differences. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the collegiality and communion as the characteristics of the universal Church, which was an acknowledgement of the dialogue between the Gospel and the culture in the past, and saw it as a need of the future.  

The purpose of inculturation of the Church, according to ITA, is to become dynamically sacramental in the world, involved in the lives of the people (cf. RM 52; EA 21). In *Ecclesia in Asia*, John Paul II presented four areas of inculturation which are necessary in theology especially Christology, liturgy, biblical apostolate, and formation of evangelizers (*EA* 22). ITA, which believes that Rome has not appreciated the attempts of inculturation in the Indian Church, criticizes Rome for the dichotomy of words and practice: on the one hand, the Church appreciates ‘inculturation’ in her documents, and on the other she does not approve the attempts of the local churches that know the cultures of the context.  

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50 Ibid., no. 9.  
51 "Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988)," no. 28; "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 19. John Paul II says that the Church “becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission” by her inculturation.  
In its attempt of inculturation, ITA gives certain names to Jesus to bring out the significance of Christ in the lives of the people in India: Guru, Avatar, Adipurusha, etc. Guru, who shows and initiates the way, is regarded as the one in whom God is present, or God even appears in the form of Guru. Many regard him as sadguru (the true guru).\(^{53}\) There are people who consider Jesus as Avatar, “a visible, historical presence of the divine Being, with its saving love and liberative power at a critical moment in the ongoing struggle between the forces of justice and injustice, liberation and oppression.”\(^{54}\) Jesus, the Adipurusha, is the primordial human person who creates and saves everything through his self-sacrifice. Adipurusha is the creative and salvific cosmic mediator of God in history.\(^{55}\) There are also other names, such as true yogi (the self-realized person), Dalit, etc.\(^{56}\)

ITA is convinced of the need for inculturation in the liturgy of all three individual Churches in India, because the signs and symbols of worship, if they are taken from the life and the culture of the people, will be meaningful for them.\(^{57}\) In the past, in many places missionaries who preached the gospel also dictated the symbols and languages in which people should respond.\(^{58}\) The ITA acknowledges that the Church in India “inherited and internalized certain
elements of foreign cultures” during the period of colonization, or sometimes, mistakenly identified them as the true expressions of the faith, without valuing what is unique in Indian culture. Thus, to become a true Indian Church, there should be a decolonizing of our minds.59 The Church realized the need for inculturation in the last century, especially with Vatican Council II, and CBCI constituted a Commission for Liturgy in 1966 and established the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore to promote inculturation in liturgy.60 Most of the members who work with this institute are members of the ITA.

ITA’s high regard for the inculturation of biblical studies and theological formation in India hopefully will facilitate the emerging missionaries and pastors to be more effective in their ministries. In the evangelization process, ITA views culture as the means “to make the Gospel ‘a more intelligible sign’ and ‘a more effective instrument of mission.’”61 This process of the Gospel encountering the culture is more effective where there is inculturation, because it helps the Church to communicate the Gospel effectively. A program of priestly formation for India, conducted in 1970, insisted on the duty of seminary professors to make the doctrinal formation contextual and relevant so that seminarians would be able to grasp it and convey it.62 The Indian Church has the inheritance both from Judeo-Christian and Indian traditions, and thus ITA believes that theologizing in India should interact with the life situations and the religious heritage handed down to the Church in India. It should not be limited by the Magisterium’s

61 "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," no. 12.
62 "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 2.
superstructure that measures the truthfulness of everything. In the past colonial period, the
seminaries in India have inherited the western conceptual and objective analysis of the faith,
which is very much confined to the classrooms. However, ITA is convinced of the fact that the
perspective of the poor is an imperative for a liberated theologizing today.

ITA uses the word “interculturation” to express the mutual relationship that exists
between religions in a pluralistic context. Inculturation is also an interreligious process because
every culture is intertwined with a certain religion. The Church, in her attempts at inculturation,
accepts the presence and work of the Spirit in other religions (cf. AG 3, 11, 15; GS 10-11, 22, 26,
38, 41, 92-93). Religion and culture are closely related and “religion can be called the soul of
culture, and culture gives religion its language.” Interculturation is the symbiosis that happens
because of an open and creative encounter between two religions/cultures. It challenges both
partners because it invites them to a new self-understanding adopting both external and internal
features. It also includes sharing liberative praxis, changing our own self-understanding, and
overcoming our watertight exclusivisms. Culture is an instrument in the process of

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63 Ibid., nos. 5-6; See Kurien Kunnumpuram, “The Challenge of Hindutva: An Indian Christian Response,” in Hindutva: An Indian Christian Response, ed. J. Mattam and P. Arockiadoss (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), 299. Kunnumpuram says that inculturation of the Church must be the best means to counter the cultural nationalism of Hindutva, which is in the rage in India today.
64 ITA, "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986),” no. 5. P. Arockiadoss, "Inculcuturing Priestly Formation: Experience of the Regional Theology Centres with a Special Reference to Arul Kadal, the Jesuit Rtc of Tamilnadu," in Renewed Efforts at Inculturation for an Indian Church, ed. Erasto Fernandes and Joji Kunduru (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002). The article is a study on the experience of the regional theology centers.
67 "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” no. 23.
68 Ibid., no. 24.
inculturation, whereas in interculturation, culture is a sacrament of divine revelation, because we encounter God in cultures.  

69 Amaladoss argues that the Gospel-culture encounter is an intercultural process, because there has been a series of transmission processes as the gospel is preached in a community or encountered by a community and at each stage of transmission, something is adopted from each culture.  

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3.2.7. Yearly Statements of ITA: Expression of the Prophetic Function

The yearly conference of the ITA forum discusses a topic of theological importance and presents a statement. Most of the themes of these conferences are related to social, cultural, economic, religious, and ecclesial issues in India. The principles of Catholic social teaching are esteemed in these statements. The statements in the last forty years show that the theologians were never intimidated about raising their prophetic voice vehemently for the common good of society. Following are the themes of the ITA conferences in the last four decades:


Political Theology in Indian Context (1981).

Reconciliation in India (1982).


Theological Education in India Today (1984).

Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (1985).

Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (1986).


70 Amaladoss, 16-7.
The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (1991).
The Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (1993).
The Church in India in Search for a New Identity (1996).
The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (1998).
Christian Commitment to Nation Building (2002).
Society and Church: Challenges to Theologizing in India Today (2003).
Concern of Women: An Indian Theological Response (2004).
Dalits’ Concern and an Indian Theological Response (2005).
Church’s Engagement in Civil Society, A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (2008).


Marriage and Family Today – An Indian Theological Search (2015).

Toward a Theology of Christian Minority in Indian Scenario Today (2016).

3.3. Indian Realities as the Context of Theologizing for ITA

Theology in India is more “a reflection on life in the light of faith.”71 In this sense, for Indian theologians, theologizing should help one to make one’s faith more “alive, meaningful and contextual.”72 ITA is convinced that theologizing is not possible neglecting the human or the existential realities and emphasizing the transcendental, because the Kingdom of God is to be realized in the human context.73 The context is very important in theologizing, especially in praxis-oriented theology. For ITA, the Indian context is the locus theologicus, and it has many dimensions: social, cultural, intellectual, political, economic, aesthetic, cosmic, and religious, etc.74 Though it is not easy to sketch the context of India, for convenience, a threefold context is

71 Rayan, 11.
73 "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 17; Cf. also "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," no. 1; "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," in Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response, ed. Antony Kalliath and John Romus (Bangalore: ITA/ ATC, 2014), no. 44.
74 Rayan, 11.
made in this research: 1) the Social and cultural context, 2) the Religious context, and 3) the Ecclesial context.

3.3.1. Social and Cultural Context

The social context of India is multi-dimensional because it involves various factors like cultural, economic, and political elements, and one cannot draw lines between each of them, but all of them intersect at different points. The people of India inherit many cultures that vary from place to place and people to people. They affect the social, economic, and political life of the people of India. However, there is a consensus that India has “a common cultural ethos, an overarching common culture,” which is unique,\(^75\) and grounded in religion and philosophy. Cosmotheandric understanding of reality penetrates the world vision of India.\(^76\) It is an indicator that religious sciences and secular sciences have an interconnection in the Indian context. However, the society is not without numerous problems. The scope of this research does not permit an explanation of all of them, but we shall name a few of them, and how they affect the society by and large.

3.3.1.1. Social problems

A social problem is “a situation confronting a group or a section of society which inflicts injurious consequences that can be handled only collectively.”\(^77\) Thus, the responsibility is

\(^{75}\) Pathil and Veliath, 197-8.
\(^{76}\) Cosmotheandricism is a term coined by Raimon Panikkar. According to this ideology, reality is one but has triple dimension: cosmic, divine, and human, and they cannot be separated. It’s a holistic and integral vision of reality in which there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the spirit and the body. Cf. Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Cf. also Pathil and Veliath, 198; Cf. also Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity}, Reprint ed., The Gifford Lectures (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013); R. Panikkar, \textit{Myth, Fith and Hermeneutics} (New York/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), 444-54.
placed upon society at large. For Ram Ahuja, an Indian sociologist, a social problem is a condition undesirable for some people in the society.\(^7\) Based on the factors responsible for the social problems, Ahuja categorizes them as (1) economic – poverty, unemployment etc.; (2) cultural – divorce, juvenile delinquency, etc.; (3) biological – infectious diseases, food poisoning, etc.; and (4) psychological – neurological diseases, a cult, etc. If one examines these social problems closely, one realizes that moral conscience plays an important role in these problems. In his well-studied work, *Social Problems in India*, Ahuja names twenty-four problems that principally affect Indian society: Poverty, Unemployment, Population Explosion, Aging and Elder Abuse, Communalism, Secularism and Regionalism, Backward Castes, Tribes, and Classes, Youth Unrest and Agitations, Child Abuse and Child Labor, Crime Against Women, Illiteracy, Urbanization, Globalization and Consumerism, Crime and Criminals, Juvenile Delinquency, Domestic Violence, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and Drug Addiction, AIDS, Terrorism, Corruption, Tribal Unrest, Bonded Labor, Agrarian Distress and Farmers’ Suicides, and Black Money.\(^7\) Many of these problems are interconnected as will be clear from the following discussions.

### 3.3.1.2. Poverty and economic imbalances

Independent India has made significant growth in scientific, technological, and economic fields. The 2010 statistics show that India ranks ninth in industrial production and tenth in GNP.
in the world. The per capita income, which was Rs 1,630 in 1980-81 rose to Rs 54,835 in 2010-11. However, India ranked 136th among 186 counties in the United Nations Human Development Index in 2013.\footnote{Ahuja, 30. Human Development Index is made based on three indicators, such as life expectancy, access to education, and income levels.} This an indicator of the economic imbalances and disparities existing in the country, which has the largest number of poor people in the world.\footnote{ITA, "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 4.4.} The top ten percent of the people manage seventy percent of the wealth of the country, and the lowest twenty percent do not even have two percent of the wealth of the country.\footnote{ITA, "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 11; "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 6.} These poor people are mostly tribals or Dalits, and they are also discriminated against socially, economically, and politically,\footnote{Jacob Parappally, "Theologizing in Context: Commitment to Discover the Challenging Presence of the Divine in the Context of Life," ibid., 31; ITA, "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," no. 17.} and are kept apart from the mainstream of society.

In India, poverty is a man-made phenomenon of evil,\footnote{Ahuja, 30. Human Development Index is made based on three indicators, such as life expectancy, access to education, and income levels.} which is seen in the form of “extreme hunger, malnutrition and related diseases."\footnote{ITA, "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 4.4.} Various reasons for poverty - corruption, lack of education, overpopulation, exploitation by the rich, colonization in the past, the lack of political policies, etc. show that many social problems are intertwined in Indian society. The fallout of science and technology and the globalized economy is that it has made the rich richer and the poor poorer, because it caters disproportionately to the needs of the rich and the
powerful, and the fruits of the development have not properly reached the rural population where most of the poor people live.86

3.3.1.3. Caste-ism and inequalities

Poverty coupled with caste-ism makes the life of many miserable in India. The caste system, in which the leaders with vested interests exploit the poor and the unprivileged in the society with the support of religion, is one of the most oppressive systems in India.87 In this system, some are born as high castes with many privileges and enjoy economic, social, political, and cultural power, while others in low castes are supposed to be obliged to the former.88 India is a country that has pledged to protect the rights and freedom of its citizens, forbidding all kinds of discriminations against any citizens based on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or of any of that sort, and assuring social, economic, and political justice for all.89 However, the fact is that the traditional caste system, in which society is divided into different castes based on birth, prevails in many parts of the county. The dominant class, who enjoys the religious privileges, is


87 "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," no. 9; Cf. also "Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988)," no. 2; "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 35; "Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)," ITA, http://www.itanet.in/ITA%20Statements2012.html. ITA says, “Labelling a fellow human being as so-called ‘outcaste’ and ‘polluting’ is already moral debasement… Since the social structure is affected by the evil of caste, politicians as well as bureaucrats make sure that the presence of the subaltern classes/castes, as well as their participation in the political processes of the country, is kept to the minimum, so that their corrupt ways to satisfy the greed at the expense of the bare needs of the poor are uninterrupted.”

88 "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 6.

89 "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 8-9. Cf. Constitution articles 14, 15 (1-2), 16 (1-2), and 29 (2). Article 17 forbids untouchability and 18 abolishes titles other than the military or academic distinction. Directive principles of the Part IV of the constitution speaks about the justice.
against the social changes, as they enjoy a monopoly on income and assets. The caste system has distorted the low caste’s perception of reality in which they see themselves as lower than other people and behave without confidence, bearing burdens from the society.\(^9^0\)

**3.3.1.4. Discrimination against women and weaker segments in the society**

There are various forms of discriminations prevailing in India, and it is clear from the above discussions that the low castes, Dalits, tribals and the poor are discriminated against by the high class and high castes.\(^9^1\) Another group of people that experience discrimination are women. In the patriarchal structure in India, women are exploited in all classes from their birth to death. Many families choose boys, and once girls are born, they are supposed to conform to the wishes of parents and brothers, and later to the husband and in-laws. At marriage, the girl’s family is supposed to pay a huge amount of money as a dowry, and after she is married, she is primarily expected to take care of the children and the household.\(^9^2\) Women, who have little place in the decision-making in the society, also face inequality in wages and family property, infanticide,

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\(^9^0\) "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," nos. 10, 12.

\(^9^1\) "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," nos. 3-4; 27-32; "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," in *Theologizing in Context: Statements of the Indian Theological Association*, ed. Jacob Parappally (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1996), no. 2-6. Tribals are deprived of their lands, political parties manipulate and divide them for power, religions set ranks for them, women in the Indian Church and society have not experienced equality, though God created them as equals. Cf. also, "Hope at the Dawn of the 21st Century (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1999)," in *Hope at the Dawn of a New Century*, ed. Jacob Parappally and Evelyn Monteiro (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), no. 5; See also "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," no. 27; "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," nos. 5-7; "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 1-2.

\(^9^2\) "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," nos. 13-4; "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 7; Cf. also "Challenge of Hindutva, an Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2000)," 45-51. The present Hindu fundamentalist ideology Hindutva, which is founded on patriarchal aristocracy reviving women’s ancient roles only as pure wives and good mothers, does not promote the situations of women in the society, instead sees them as objects of male ownership. However, the ITA is committed to protect the rights of the women and establish justice in the society.
illiteracy, etc., and these are indications of the discrimination against women. The ITA meeting in 2004 states:

A great paradox surrounds the lives of Indian women. In spite of being carriers of life, culture, tradition and religion and considered symbols of honour, they become targets for revenge in conflict situations: communal violence, inter-caste rivalries and religious strife. While woman 'is revered as the one who nurtures life yet she is allowed little space to develop her own life and its potentials.

Though the life situation of women in India has significantly changed in the recent past with the growth of education and advancement in the awareness of the role of women in the society, there remains a long journey until women are seen as equal to men in their full dignity.

3.3.1.5. Corruption, crime, and violence

India, the land known for satyagraha (holding on truth) and ahimsa (non-violence) is not free from corruption, crime, and violence today. Corruption has become part of the Indian society taking various forms and affecting political, social, corporate, legal, commercial, intellectual, and bureaucratic levels. People of India believe that religions are also not free from corruption. Increase of corruption in the country not only distorts the development of the country, but also divides the society by which always there is a group affected by the negativities of corruption. The 2008 ITA statement says, “[p]oliticization of criminals and criminalization of

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93 "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," no. 33; "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," nos. 5-6; "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 19; "Call for a New Theology of Culture: Revisiting the Mission Praxes and Paradigms (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2014)" no. 9; "Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)" no. 7; "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 9; “Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)," ITA.
94 "Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)" no. 5.
95 "Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)" no. 4; Cf. "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," 3-4.
politics have increased. Exploitation, oppression, and dehumanizing praxis occur partly because the state machinery permits power to be concentrated in the hands of a few."\textsuperscript{96} Corruption is also related to crime and violence in the society. Violence is used for individual benefits. There are various kinds of violence prevalent in India: violence against Dalits, tribals and Adivasis, women, children, etc.\textsuperscript{97} Crime and violence occur between castes, religions, political parties, and in and between families, leaving many individuals orphans and families victimized.

3.3.2. Religious Context

The religious context of India could be one that no other country in the world can claim. Doing Christian theology in India would not be possible without understanding the religious background of India. The following discussion will provide a sketch of the religious context.

3.3.2.1. India: a land of religions

Pluralism is a characteristic of the Asian continent and in particular to India, which is a cradle of religions, being both the motherland of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, and a host land for other world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. According to 2011 census, Hinduism, the religion of the majority, is professed by 80% of the people. Muslims in India, the second largest Muslim population in the world, constitute 14%; Christians 2.3%; Sikhs 1.9%; Buddhists 0.80%; and Jains 0.40%.\textsuperscript{98} There are


\textsuperscript{97} ITA, "Violence in Today’s Society: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2011)" nos. 5-9. This statement has discussed the various forms, causes, and effects of violence in the society.

\textsuperscript{98} Ahuja, 142; Cf. Parappally, "Theologizing in Context: Commitment to Discover the Challenging Presence of the Divine in the Context of Life," 33; Pathil and Veliath, 199-201.
also people practicing the tribal religions though the Hindu fundamentalists try to count them in their fold. Religions have much importance in the lives of the people of India, and it is very much tied up with the cultural and social life of the people.\textsuperscript{99} Thus, in the Indian continent, amid the diversities of religions, there is a unity of religiosity that binds the people of the land together.

3.3.2.2. Many religions and religious secularism: richness of India

Religions living together is a reality in India and thus one can see churches, temples, and mosques situated in the same locality. Peoples of all faiths participating in the feasts of other faiths is very common. It gives the feeling that in many places in India, \textit{Vasudhaiva kudumbakam} (the world is one family), a concept similar to the Kingdom of God, is being lived or trying to be lived.\textsuperscript{100} India is a secular country that safeguards the rights and freedom of all peoples irrespective of their religious affiliations. It is not antagonistic to religious ideologies but proactive in supporting religions without favoring a particular religion.\textsuperscript{101} Unlike in the West, ‘secularism’ is conceived as ‘national’ in India. In the West, ‘secularism’ is conceived as the

\textsuperscript{99} ITA, "Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context (the Final Statement of the Meeting of the ITA 1990)," no. 12; Cf. also "Society and Church: Challenges in Theologizing in Indian Society (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2003)," no. 20.


separation between religion and state, whereas in India, it “is a bonding principle, which helps all communities, and religions co-exist, collaborate and engage in the national building up.”

Religion is intimately tied to the social life of the people of India, and “Sarva dharma samabhava” (equal respect for all religions), a concept found in the Upanishads, is a characteristic of this multi-religious country. The framers of the constitution of the country, who were aware of the religious identity of the land, have guaranteed the people the right to preserve and promote their cultural and religious identity by the Constitution (Articles 29 and 30).

3.3.2.3. Religious fundamentalism, politics, and communal violence

On the other side of religious harmony and secularism, there has been the growth of religious fundamentalism and communal violence in various parts of the country. Demolition of the Babri Masjid, a mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 by Karsevakas with the support of various Hindu fundamentalist groups, the Bombay blast in the following year by Muslim fundamentalists, the Gujarat riot in 2002, the Kandhamal (Orissa) riot in 2008, etc. are some

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104 Cf. ITA, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 2. The communal violence that ravaged in Gujarat in 2001 took the lives of hundreds of people. The official reports say that more than nine hundred people lost their lives, whereas the unofficial reports say that the number is more than twenty hundred, mostly Muslims but also Hindus. Thousands were injured and more than five hundred places of worship were demolished.

105 Cf. "Indian Christian Perception on 'Orissa': ITA Statement 2009 on the Violence against Christians in Kandhamal, Orissa, India," 212-3. In the violence against Christians in Kandhamal, Orissa, in which more than fifty Christians lost their lives, many slain or mutilated bodies were in forests, riversides, paddyfields, railway tracks, and state and national highways. Many churches, prayer halls, schools and hostels for Dalits and tribals, houses of the Dalits, social service centers, and orphanages were destroyed in the vandalization. About fifty thousand people became refugees in their own land where they toiled and shed their sweat. This shows the picture of the situation.
examples of the communal violence that occurred in the recent past. Indian theologian Jacob Parappallil says that in the context of religious pluralism and fundamentalism, theologizing in India is very challenging, because “it reveals the presence and absence of God.” The ITA meeting in 1987 brought forth the roots of communalism in India, such as: 1) Economic and political roots: the economic root consists of poverty and injustice which is caused by the unreasonable economic policies and unequal distribution of income, and political aberrations by which the power is in the hands of few who use it for looting the public resources. Communal or religious political parties also contribute to it. 2) Socio-cultural roots: communal conflicts largely take place in urban and industrial areas because in the absence of secular ideologies, people are divided by religions. 3) Ideological support: the absence of a clear ideology, substitutes like capitalism, semi-feudalism, technology, etc. offer an ideological framework for shaping Indian society. 4) Psycho-religious roots: identity consciousness causes religious polarization.

Today, the major reason for religious violence would be the politicization of religion. “Hindutva,” a political ideology held by those who try to impose homogenization in India, aims at a nationalist identity comprising, race, geography, and culture, i.e., birth and growth in India, belonging to the Indian race, appreciating Hindu traditions and practices, and allegiance to one of the Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism). The final statement of the

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107 "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," nos. 5-8.

ITA meeting in 2016 says that the agents of anti-Christian violence branding Christians as “agents of conversion,” ‘agents of foreign powers,’ ‘outsiders,’ ‘members of a foreign religion,’ ‘beef-eaters,’ etc.” are “tools in the hands of those who manipulate Hindu religious sentiments in order to achieve political and economic power and to enslave the poor and marginalized as well as to discriminate the minorities and dehumanize the Dalits,” and not real Hindus who follow genuine Sanathana Dharma. There are also “honor killings” happening in India in the name of marriage. Society and religion build boundaries for the marriages of the young people. This is very common in India. When some inter-caste or inter-religious marriages occur, caste-ridden or religious fundamentalist kinsfolk ruthlessly kill their dear ones for an “unexpected” or the “prohibited” relationship. Most often the victims of the attack are the low-caste partners killed in the name of “honor” for the high castes.

3.3.2.4. Religious legitimization of inequality

This research has already touched on the evil effects of caste-ism in India. The condemnable reality is that religion, which is expected to work for the enhancement of human beings, becomes the agent of the perpetuation of oppression and marginalization by defending caste-ism in India. In other words, caste-ism is a systematized legitimization of inequality in the varna, dharma, and karma with the support of religion which says one’s birth in a higher class or lower class determines his/her social status or dignity. It leaves low castes and Dalits on the borders or the peripheries of the society without any human dignity and rights. They do not have

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rights, but instead duties to perform. Thus an institutionalized inequality is perpetuated. Though equality of all members is fundamental to Christianity, it is not kept up in all parts of the country.

3.3.2.5. The Church’s attitude towards other religions

A pluralistic context is a situation of both danger and opportunity. ITA says that a religion’s responses to other religions could be varied. 1) a claim of the absolutism of one religion tempts it to subordinate the other or assimilate others. 2) a religion may choose to lead isolated life. 3) A religion may fear the other. 4) a religion may see the other as a threat that leads to the suppression of the other. 5) a religion could seek harmony and coexistence. 6) A religion may desire to relate positively which leads to dialogue and communion. Though all of these responses were part of the history of the Indian Church at different times, some became dominant at times. Today, at a time when religious unrest prevails in various parts of the country, the Church fears the dominant religion and the government policies favorable to it. However, there are also places where one can see harmony and coexistence.

At the same time, inside the Church in India, leaders and members have a superiority complex regarding their faith, and a prideful and negative approach towards other religions. Even a half-century after the Second Vatican Council that acknowledged the role of world religions, that is, the ray of truth is present in them (NA 4), the Church in India, being in the land of religions, ITA says, is either not aware of the role of the world religions, or ignorant of what it has inherited from other religions and cultures. ITA is critical of turning our back on the rich

traditions of other religions that narrows our concept of divine revelation. The Church, which upholds and perpetuates the Roman imperial and medieval feudal systems, unwilling to appreciate the communitarian leadership of Hinduism, extols structures and organizations, dogmas, and laws. But contrast, Indian religious tradition prioritizes spiritual values.\textsuperscript{113}

3.3.3. Ecclesial Context

The history of Christianity in India goes back to the first century that marked the arrival of St. Thomas the Apostle in India.\textsuperscript{114} The Indian Christians who belong to the Eastern Churches, also known St. Thomas Christians, believe that their Church was founded by St. Thomas the Apostle. Indian theologian Placid Podippara qualified St. Thomas Christians as “Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion and Oriental in Worship.”\textsuperscript{115} This description shows the diversity and the richness of their tradition, which is very much rooted in the local Hindu culture and Oriental form of worship. Today Christianity in India is fragmented. The one Church of St. Thomas Christians before the beginning of colonization, is now divided into eight Churches. Two of them, the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church, belong to the Catholic communion.\textsuperscript{116} Other than these Churches with Oriental traditions, there are also the Roman Rite (Latin) Church and many reformed Churches in India. The ecclesial context discussed in this research is mostly from the Catholic point of view.

\textsuperscript{113} ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 9.
\textsuperscript{115} Paulachan Kochappilly, "Brief Survey of the Ecclesial Mission and Pastoral Care of the Migrants of the Syro-Malabar Church in India and Abroad," in The Ecclesial Mission and Pastoral Care of the Migrants of the Syro-Malabar Church, ed. Pauly Kannookadan (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2009), 143.
\textsuperscript{116} Other Churches having the St. Thomas tradition are: Syrian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Malabar Independent Syrian Church, St. Thomas Evangelical Church, and Assyrian Church of the East.
3.3.3.1. Conflicts between individual churches

Three individual Churches in the Catholic communion in India with separate Rites are the Latin Church, the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. Constantine Manalel, in his inaugural address at the ITA, said that the Rites in India seem to be parallel lines that never meet and confuse our identity.\(^{117}\) Though the presence of different individual churches with their particular rituals and celebrations are God’s gifts, and represent God’s variety of saving presence in our land, ITA has been aware of a strained relationship between the Latin and the Oriental Churches in their pastoral practices\(^{118}\) (cf. also EA 26), which is a threat to their very existence as Christ’s sacrament in the world.\(^{119}\) The Church is missionary by her very nature. Evangelization, which is entrusted to the Church by the Lord (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-8), is at the heart of the Church. However, the Syro-Malabar Church, the largest missionary Church in India, had been denied the right to evangelization outside Kerala until October 2017. This had been a cause of friction in inter-ecclesial relations in India for many decades. Though all-India jurisdiction was once enjoyed by the Oriental Church in India, apart from the establishment of few dioceses outside Kerala, it had not been reestablished after the erection of Latin hierarchy in India. Though Church documents recognize the sisterhood of all Churches, this injustice done to an Oriental sui juris Church shows that the reality is otherwise.\(^{120}\)

\(^{117}\) Manalel, 5; Cf. also ITA, "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," ibid., no. 8.

\(^{118}\) "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 5.

\(^{119}\) "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 3.

\(^{120}\) Xavier Kochuparampil, Evangelization in India: A Theological Analysis of the Missionary Role of the Syro-Malabar Church in the Light of the Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Documents (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1993), 328-9. Interestingly, more than 70% (percentage of the missionaries – priests and religious) of the evangelization work in India is done by the members of the Oriental Churches, mainly the missionaries from the Syro-Malabar Church. Cf. Thomas Kollamparampil, "Syro-Malabar Witnessing Thrust," in The Mission Theology of the Syro-Malabar Church, ed. Pauly Kannoookkadan (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2008), 112; See CBCI, "The Communication from CBCI to the Synod of Bishops in Rome (CBCI General Body Meeting, Calcutta, January 6-14, 1974)," no. 11.
3.3.3.2. Institutionalization of the Church

The Church in India is highly institutionalized with its imported hierarchical structure and administration. ITA points to the dichotomy that exists in the Church between the people and the hierarchy. People tends to identify the Church with the hierarchy and its institutions which attempt to control or monopolize the works in the Church. This hegemony is reflected in the liturgical celebrations, finance, and administration. The Church in India seems to be an institutional religion confined to its own ideologies and interests.\(^{121}\) The overemphasis of the institutional nature of the Church has brought worldliness in the Church, which is a failure of the Church’s mission in the world to transform it into God’s kingdom.\(^{122}\) Being tempted by the worldly realities and values that cater to the rich and the powerful, the Church cannot stand with the poor and their cause. Instead, this situation alienates the poor from the Church.\(^{123}\)

3.3.3.3. Tensions between bishops, clergy, and laity

Sometimes, it seems that the Church is preoccupied with the mundane and temporal wealth and power. The result is that “the points of discipline have taken precedence over pastoral care.”\(^{124}\) It has been reflected in several tensions that have been prevailing in the Church in India; namely, the tensions “between clergy and laity, bishops and theologians, bishops and priests as well as between diocesan clergy and religious.”\(^{125}\) The laity, who are integral parts of “the

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\(^{121}\) ITA, “Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985),” no. 14; Cf. also “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 13.

\(^{122}\) “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 10.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., nos. 10-1.

\(^{124}\) “The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” no. 10.

\(^{125}\) “Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982),” no. 3.
Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation” (AA 3; cf. also LG 31-2), forms the vast majority of the Christian community and the civil society, nationally and globally. Though they occupy various positions in society and work for the common good of the society (cf. LG 36), they are not treated as equal partners of the clergy. Vatican Council II insisted the pastors “recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church” (LG 37). By virtue of their incorporation with Christ and the people of God in the baptism, they share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ in their own way, to carry on the mission of the Church (LG 31). As the living members of the Body of Christ, laity have the duty to build up the Church (LG 33), by giving themselves at the work of “evangelization and the sanctification of men” being the leaven in a secular world (AA 2). However, ITA notices that there is a systematic sidelining or exclusion of the laity in the Indian Church. ITA is also aware of the need of a greater collaboration between the magisterium and theologians for fulfilling the mission of the Church in India.

3.3.3.4. Compartmentalization and discrimination

ITA says that there is a pattern of compartmentalizing and labelling in the Indian Church. In other words, there are certain invisible walls or boundaries that separate different sections of people in the Church such as bishops and priests, religious and laity, men and women, Latins and

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126 “Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006),” no. 1.
127 Ibid., nos. 14-5. Cf. also nos. 16-9: The ITA statement observes various reasons for clergy-laisy division: 1) Social stratification based on labor, power and authority in the secular society (when it comes to the Church, the laity is always at the receiving end). 2) The lack of awareness of the ground realities of the composition of the Indian Christian community – dalits, tribals, and the subaltern groups suffer from discrimination. 3) Power structure or hierarchical structure destroys the participatory culture, thus always stress on the role of the clergy.
Syrians. People are also divided scandalously based on their castes, position, possessions, etc. ITA condemns this tendency with the conviction that it is a betrayal of the very reality of the people of God, the Children of the same Father. 129 Many have the feeling that the laity often become mere spectators in the Church in a politicized situation. 130 There are also discriminations going on in some parts where the remnants of Hindu casteism still prevail. In those areas, the higher class enjoys privileges. They would like to be known in their castes and a large section of the Church is not conscious of it. 131 ITA reports that though a considerable number of people have become Christians in the recent past, seeking liberation from the bondage of caste system, they were not liberated from the oppressions of the caste systems, because in most parts of India, the Church has been controlled by the upper class and castes. Thus, these people are treated as “new Christians” but still untouchables. 132 Though the life of the women in India have been improving significantly in the recent past, there is a long way to go to the goal of equality, and it is also visible in the Church structures. Women, who constitute the majority of the folk, are excluded from active and adult participation in its life. 133 The token of a small representation of women at the parish, diocesan and national levels in these years has been an encouragement for them, but the Indian Church still has miles to go.

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129 ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 7.
130 "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 10.
131 Rajkumar. 15.
132 ITA, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 15; "Church's Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 5. The Title “new Christians” is a discriminatory title in many parts of the country meaning that they are not traditional Christians or they do not have a long tradition to claim.
133 "Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)" nos. 8, 11, 13.
3.3.3.5. Failure of the Church’s response in the social issues and local realities

In spite of the frequent declarations by the Church that she is with the poor and the marginalized, the Church institutions and systems show that she is in a secure and privileged state. It makes the poor, the Dalits, and the tribals feel that they are not going to be defended or protected by the Church.\(^1\) Church leaders are not courageous enough to make social changes, because they themselves are not free from the dominant sections and vested interests.\(^2\) There is also a feeling that those who are involved in the struggles of the people - especially fisher folk, tribals, and women - belong to the weaker sections, and are not sufficiently supported by the Church.\(^3\) ITA acknowledges the failures of the Indian theologians, who should be in “constant dialogue with adherents of secular movements, believers of other religions and disciples of Christ, lay, religious and Church leaders.”\(^4\) When theologians do not have the courage to disagree with the Church establishment for the good of the Church, but comply with it, this perpetuates injustice and promotes authoritarian practices.\(^5\)

3.3.3.6. The foreignness of the Church

The foreignness of the Church in India is visible in the functioning of the Church, and in the behaviors of clergy and religious, and also in the expression of worship.\(^6\) Amaladoss says

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\(^1\) “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 7-8.
\(^2\) "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002),” no. 34.
\(^3\) "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985),” no. 23.
\(^4\) Ibid., no. 16; Cf. also "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 10.
\(^5\) "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 2.
\(^6\) "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 3-4.
\(^7\) "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987),” no. 19-20; See "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” 10-1. The statement says that though the Church has been present in India since the apostolic times, still it seems to be a foreign entity. Many social and cultural values are western or Syrian, religious and priestly formation, and art, architecture, and liturgy are foreign.
that though the Indian Christians are Indians geographically, ethnically, and culturally, their administrative, financial, liturgical, theological, and spiritual identity is largely foreign. ITA regrets the Church’s dependence on foreign money. This foreign dependence is also seen when there are some internal problems in the Church, and people from outside, who do not know the context, have the last word.

Amid these tensions and internal issues in the Church, ITA believes that it is time for the Church to open its eyes to realize that because of globalization, secularization, and the impact of media, the traditional religious and social value system long cherished by the humankind has been fading, and there has been an uprising of disregard for the dignity of the human beings.

3.4. ITA Statements: The Prophetic Response

Having given a glimpse of the Indian context, which is the locus theologicus of an indigenous theology, this research moves to the ITA statements. ITA, being faithful to its objective, has tried to respond to the social, religious, and ecclesial realities anchored in principles of liberation, inculturation, and orthopraxis. This section is an attempt to sketch certain important concepts and a few recommendations found in the yearly statements of ITA.

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140 Amaladoss, 24; Cf. also ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 5. Theologians pointed that even for the local Churches needed the recognition of Rome even for the translation of the liturgical texts in vernaculars and it could be a sign of the lack of trust in the competent people in the local Church; "Hope at the Dawn of the 21st Century (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1999)," no. 21; "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 21.
141 "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 22; Cf. also CBCI, "The Communication from CBCI to the Synod of Bishops in Rome (CBCI General Body Meeting, Calcutta, January 6-14, 1974)," no. 12. ITA believes that the availability of foreign funds makes the Church "self-complacent, arrogant and condescending." See ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 42.
142 "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," nos. 4-5.
3.4.1. Statements on Social and Cultural Problems

Social problems in India are faced by all peoples of all faiths. Parappilly opines that there was a paradigm shift in the Church’s response to the poverty in society from 1970 onwards. Until then, the Church organized welfare programs for the economic development of the poor, but in the 1970s, with the influence of the constitution of the FABC and the Synod of 1971, the Church began to think about the injustices in society with the realization of the need of a liberation of the poor from an exploitative society.\textsuperscript{143} ITA, committing itself to the liberation of the poor with the conviction that God is present “in the people’s history and their socio-political struggles,”\textsuperscript{144} challenged the systems of exploitation and injustices. The statements of the ITA present certain important concepts for the establishment of a just society.

3.4.1.1. An Indian socialism instead of capitalism

To face the poverty in India, which is caused mostly by an inordinate passion for profit in capitalism, and examining different ideologies of liberation in the society, ITA proposed that what is needed in India is the rejection of capitalism and acceptance of an Indian form of socialism which will have to borrow from Marxism, Gandhism, and other Indian systems.\textsuperscript{145} ITA believes that it is the lack of constructive political policies, and not of resources and technical skills that hinder the development of the country.\textsuperscript{146} Capitalism failed to bring an equitable society, but brought a glaring inequality between the rich and the poor. The Church began to

\textsuperscript{143} Parappally, "Theologizing in Context: Commitment to Discover the Challenging Presence of the Divine in the Context of Life," 37.
\textsuperscript{144} ITA, "Political Theology in Indian Context (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1981)," ibid. (2002), no. 3; Cf. also Jacob Parappally, "Theologizing in Context: Commitment to Discover the Challenging Presence of the Divine in the Context of Life," ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{145} ITA, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," ibid. (2002), nos. 30-45.
\textsuperscript{146} Ahuja, 69.
understand it with Pope Paul VI, and said that uncontrolled capitalism is a threat to the modern world, and there is a need of the state to have the power to make policies to control the market.\textsuperscript{147} ITA, as a forum committed to form a human community, is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of all human beings, conceiving that an economic policy, in which all the affected persons have no participation, is not going to benefit all or their interests.\textsuperscript{148} Jesus, who identified himself with the poor and their struggles to give them full humanity, must be the model for the Church to deal with the social evils today. This is “a kenosis – an emptying out, on the institutional, community and individual level,” leading a simpler life, taking “a stand against consumerism, narcissism and wastage,” to which a “Gandhian lifestyle of economizing and salvaging, preserving and conserving, repairing and making amends to the earth,” is a model from our own land.\textsuperscript{149}

3.4.1.2. Primacy of people over government and economics

In the history of Israel, primacy is given to the people over the government and economics.\textsuperscript{150} ITA presents this as the ideal concept that should be followed and supported in society. In a Christian understanding of trusteeship, wealth and property are gifts of God, and they are to be used for the good of the society and not only for individual benefit.\textsuperscript{151} ITA says that the purpose of human economics is to serve authentic human needs, which is social justice

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\textsuperscript{147} ITA, "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 46; Jose Kuriedath, Christianity and Indian Society: Studies in Religious Sociology (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2013), 24-5.
\textsuperscript{148} ITA, "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 46.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., no. 49; Therukattil, The Claim of Justice in Third Millennium, 170.
\textsuperscript{151} Kuriedath, 26.
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and not just profit making. The economy should serve human persons and not vice versa.\textsuperscript{152}

However, the present social and economic system does not follow this ideal. Instead human beings are treated as a means to serve the economy and its administrative system. Against this paradigm, ITA says that whatever we do, our target groups should be the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized, and when we work with the middle class, we should prepare them to serve the victims of injustice in the society (LK 4:18).\textsuperscript{153} Nandini Ghosh names six pillars of human development: equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment, cooperation, and security, and though all of them are economic factors, primarily they deal with human rights as they stress the well-being and dignity of all people.\textsuperscript{154} Again, the human being is above economics. The government, which has the duty to serve the people, is expected to form economic policies for the well-being of the people grounded in human dignity and the common good (EG 203). ITA states that the new economic policy (GATT),\textsuperscript{155} though it contributed in the introduction of competition in the economy and qualitative products, perpetuated inequality, treating human beings as mere objects to make money, destroying the environment, and fostering injustices and hatred between cultures.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{152} ITA, "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 33.


\textsuperscript{154} Nandini Ghosh, "Importance of Civil Society for Inclusive Human Development," ibid., 60. Human development is connected with human rights and dignity. See J. Felix Raj, "Inclusive Growth and Human Development," ibid., 30-8. J. Felix Raj presents four understandings on development: 1) human development, which involves the improvement of social, cultural, political, and economic conditions of human beings; 2) development as a total social process, which stresses the interdependence of various aspects of life and thus, the development is more than financial and material aspects of life; 3) development as freedom, freedom from any sort of bondage; 4) development as liberation – "liberation from all that limits or prevents self-fulfillment" or the exercise of our freedom. Cf. also Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{155} GATT is the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade.

\textsuperscript{156} ITA, "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," nos. 9-13. For environmental pollution, see "Ecological Crisis: An Indian Christian Response (the Final Statement of the ITA 1997)," no. 5.
3.4.1.3. Priority of the common good over individual good

Individual good is the motive of a capitalist economy, in which the economy is run by the market force of profit. On the other hand, the common good looks at safeguarding the interest of a larger society. Only an inclusive development can support the common good. The Church has the duty to support the government in this regard to ensure that policies benefit the poor and help to uphold their dignity. ITA, which believes that the Church can convince firms of the need of sharing their profits with people in need. It also promotes the principle of subsidiarity to help the employees working in lower levels become proud and more responsible at their workplace. In this way, the Church could be an agent of social justice in the society.

3.4.1.4. Condemns corruption and inequality

ITA condemns the corruption and inequality that have contaminated the Indian society. India as a country gained freedom by means of the powerful weapon of non-violence practiced in satyagraha (embracing truth). It has the moral responsibility to fight against adharma

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157 Cf. Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate (Rome2009), no. 7. Benedict XVI says, “Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of all of us, made up of individuals, families and immediate groups who together constitute society.” He also says that “profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end that provides a sense both of how to produce it and how to make good use of it. Once profit becomes the exclusive goal… it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty” (CV 21). Cf. James P. Bailey, Rethinking Poverty: Income, Assets, and the Catholic Social Justice Tradition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 49-50. Cf. also Kuriedath, 27; John XXIII, "Mater Et Magistra, Encyclical Letter," (Rome: May 15, 1961), no. 65. John XX III says that common good is “the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby persons are enabled more fully and readily to achieve their own perfection.”


159 ITA, “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)” no. 33; See J. Milburn Thomson, Justice and Peace: A Christian Primer, Reprint edition ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 188. Thomson considers working for justice as central and essential for a life lived in relationship with God. He says that social transformation is the duty of Christians and it can be possible only through Christian conversion which is to happen in oneself first and then radiated out into the society.
(wrongness or immorality) and asatya (untruthfulness). As a response to the corruption pervading in the country, the ITA meeting of 2012 state that we have a responsibility to build a community “on an ethics of common good through the practice of diakonia (service), koinonia (community), marturia (witnessing), and Eucharistic hospitality, which ought to be the antithesis of corruption and its philosophy of unabated consumption and hoarding.”

ITA also condemns inequality which is “the root of all social ills” (EG 202). In Indian society, which is divided by caste and class, ITA recommends that the Church become the voice of the marginalized for their dignity, and play a salvific role, because every human being “is sacred and his/her dignity must demand social respect and recognition.” They are the children of the same Father, and this son/daughter-ship should be reflected in the Church’s “life, activities, business decisions, government policies and institutions. It is a cosmic/divine invitation to become the ‘other-centred,’ an embodiment of truth, justice and equality.” The Church in India should initiate steps to end the divisive tendencies based on caste, class, sex, religion, language, rites, etc., and try to establish justice in society. The ITA believes that promoting inter-caste marriages and inter-religious collaborations would help in this regard.

ITA Conference in 2013, pointing to the life of Jesus who promoted a counterculture in Jewish society by touching the ‘untouchables’ and dining and welcoming the ‘sinners’ and ‘outcastes,’

\footnote{ITA, "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 6; Cf. M. K. Gandhi, The Words of Gandhi (New York: New Market Press, 1982), 71; C. F Andrews ed, ed. Mahatma Gandhi at Work: His Own Story Continued (Kessinger Publishing, Place and year are not available), 316.

\footnote{ITA, "Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)" no. 61.

\footnote{"A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," no. 46; Raj, 39.

\footnote{39; ITA, "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," 24.

\footnote{"Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 44.}
stated that they are committed to herald Jesus’ cultural praxis in India for a cultural transformation.\textsuperscript{165}

3.4.1.5. Conviction of the role of the Church

The very objectives of the ITA and its commitment to liberation, praxis, and inculturation show that ITA is convinced of the Church’s role in being physically involved in the social and cultural affairs of the people. As the first step, the Church should relinquish triumphalism, authoritarianism, hierarchism, and a preference for the status quo, and work for the liberation of the people, because without being physically involved in the struggles of the poor, feeding them with the prospective of post-mortal paradise is a mockery.\textsuperscript{166}

ITA realized the need for reconciliation in India in the context of the glaring inequality between the have-nots and the haves, low caste and high caste, and the depressed class and the dominant class.\textsuperscript{167} The ITA statement of 1982 presented certain practical suggestions for the Church in India for reconciliation in India. a) The Church should focus on structural sins equally as on personal sins; this can promote awareness among people about the structures that perpetuate injustice in the society. b) The Church should exercise its prophetic role by publicly protesting against and criticizing social evils - socio-economic policies, caste-ism, corruption, gender discrimination, etc. in which the Church can also join with other non-Christian organizations. c) The Church must stand with the poor and the unprivileged class and work for

\textsuperscript{165} “Call for a New Theology of Culture: Revisiting the Mission Praxes and Paradigms (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2014)” no. 27.
\textsuperscript{167} ITA, "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982),” no. 1.
human rights and the development of the people. d) The Church should seek empower women
who can bring changes in our society and the women religious who play their role in it.\textsuperscript{168} In
addition, the Church must to train leaders imbued with basic human and Christian values and rise
above the vested interests of some people or groups to bring about the liberative action of Christ
in the nation.\textsuperscript{169} Theologians must be involved in the struggles of the people because without this
involvement, an Indian theology of liberation is not possible.\textsuperscript{170} The mission of the Church is to
do what Jesus, who went about doing good and proclaiming good news. The good news was that
“God is powerfully present and is transforming this world, gifting his rule to all and in particular
to the poor, oppressed, weak, marginalized and outcaste. His rule means fullness of humanity
and grace to all.”\textsuperscript{171} The Church is not only called to preach this good news, but also to live it as
an authentic symbol of the Kingdom in the world.

3.4.2. Statements on Religious Realities

ITA is convinced of the richness of the religious background of India which is seen as the
universal presence of the Spirit of God. In the multi-religious context of India, ITA is aware of a
theology of religions, of which the \textit{locus} must be dialogue, liberation, and inculturation.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., no. 18; See also "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting
2001)," no. 15; "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," no. 44.
\textsuperscript{169} "Political Theology in Indian Context (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1981)," no. 8.
\textsuperscript{170} "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 47.
\textsuperscript{171} The Challenge of Hindutva: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2000)," no.
52; Cf. "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA
Meeting 2009)," nos. 51-2. The statement says that Christian schools and hospitals should be made available for the
poor and the marginalized in the society without inculcating the feeling of inferiority as they come to our
institutions.
\textsuperscript{172} "Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting
1988)," nos. 20-9. Here, “dialogue” is understood as a mode of being or a way of life which consists of sharing and
mutual enrichment (esp. no. 21). It “is not merely a joint exercise in intellectual reflection, but it is a process of
liberation and entrance into the religious experience, faith commitment and worship and a rooting of ourselves and
our society into the religio-cultural milieu of the people” (no. 24). Liberation has socio-political, religious, cultural,
and ecological implications (nos. 25-7). To survive in the world, a religion has “to adopt itself constantly to the
changing modes and values of life.” (no.28).
Instead of noting the differences among religions, ITA believes that discovering similarities would help religions come together to work for the liberation of all the people of India. ITA’s response to the religious realities in India could be sketched as following.

3.4.2.1. Many religions: an opportunity for inter-religious encounter

Yves Congar says that in the last century, the Church discovered “the existence of other spiritual worlds” having positive values. In the process of the realization of these values, which is the result of a long discovery of study and dialogue, one also discovers “the riches and unique significance of the Christian faith;”\(^{173}\) a faith in “a living and active God, who reveals and communicates himself” to his people to as sons and daughters of God.\(^{174}\) Indian theologians see the unique multi-religious context in India, which is “similar to that of the Church’s encounter with the Greek philosophical world,” as an opportunity for inter-religious encounter.\(^{175}\)

Following the teachings of Vatican Council II (LG 16; NA 2), they ask the Christians in India to approach the legitimacy of other religions and their salvific value with openness.\(^{176}\) ITA wants Christians in India to reaffirm the plurality that exists in the country, whether it be racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic, with openness to the richness bestowed on the nation, and to resist anything against it.\(^{177}\) “[T]he freedom of the Divine in self-manifestation and the creativity of the human in exploring the Divine” are the two factors behind the existence of many religions,


\(^{174}\) Ibid., 145; Cf. also Walter Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?," ibid., 165-6.

\(^{175}\) ITA, "The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991)," no. 4; "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 4.5.

\(^{176}\) "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," no. 12.

\(^{177}\) "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 29; Cf. "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 4.
and what leads the Church in her relationship with other religions is the respect for human beings’ quest to answer the deepest questions of life, and the Spirit’s work in them (cf. RM 29). Thus, many religions contribute to the beauty and richness of a society:

…Hinduism has contributed the sense of the Divine in the universe and humankind, the sense of interiority, renunciation, silence and solitude; Buddhism and Jainism enrich Indian religiosity with many values like those of \textit{ahimsa}, \textit{maitri}, and \textit{karuna}. Christianity too has contributed to the shaping of the value systems of India through her spirit of Christian charity and a life of peaceful coexistence with others.179

3.4.2.2. Salvation: goal of all religions

The existence of many religions raises the question of the goal of religion. Vatican Council II says, “All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share in a common destiny, namely God” (\textit{NA} 1). Salvation is the goal of all religions, though they name it differently. The Church believes that everyone is saved through Christ and “everyone who is saved participates in the paschal mystery of Christ,” and “it does not require a conscious, explicit profession of faith in Jesus Christ” (cf. \textit{GS} 2).180 Those who accept this concept can relate with other religions more openly. The Church’s conviction that the Spirit of God is present in all human beings, and the risen Christ is present to all people through his spiritual mode of presence,
Chethimattam says, should help Christians celebrate the presence of the Spirit and Christ in all believers. This is the “recognition of Brahman as Atman” residing in every being.\footnote{J. B. Chethimattam, “Indian Spirituality and Liberative Action,” in Papers and Statement of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association: Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context, ed. Dominic Veliath (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1993), 87-8; Cf. ITA, "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” nos. 7-11.} The statement of the ITA in 1980, “Understanding Salvation in the Indian Context,” states that the Christian approach to salvation in India must consider India’s context, and there should be “a real incarnation and involvement in India’s material conditions, an intellectual sharing in the thoughts and aspirations of our fellow countrymen and a sincere identification with our cultural and religious values.”\footnote{“Understanding Salvation in Indian Context (the Final Statements of the ITA Meeting 1980),” no. 3.} The statement also comments that other religious traditions provide opportunities to understand the idea of salvation and the obstacles to it.\footnote{Ibid., no. 4; Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught (Grove Press, 1974). Rahula elaborates four noble truths in this text. In Buddhism, moksha, cessation of Dukkha is the liberation which could be salvation. In Hinduism, liberation arises from a direct encounter with and experience of Sabda.} To realize the role of the world religions “as mutually fulfilling and challenging realities,” ITA thinks that the Church must be open to understand the universal emergence of the Kingdom of God of which Christ is the unique sacrament for us.\footnote{ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987),” no. 32. The same paragraph says: “If the Christians can rethink and reformulate the traditional Christological assumptions in the context of religious pluralism, dialogue with other religions will be a genuine reality. This will make a denominational Church into an effective sacrament of the Kingdom of God in this world.”}

3.4.2.3. Need of holding on religious values instead of violence

ITA (1988);\textsuperscript{186} “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism” (1989);\textsuperscript{187} and “Towards and Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context” (1990).\textsuperscript{188} ITA condemns all kinds of communal violence and cruelties that result in the destruction of sacred places - temples, mosques, churches, and gurudwars, and sacred things – sacred books and vessels.\textsuperscript{189} After the demolition of the Babrimasjid Mosque at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 and the consequent communal violence all over the country, ITA issued a Christian response to the incident. The theologians listened to the spokespersons of the communities affected by the violence and examined the motives of those who engineered such destruction, and also the means to avoid the violence of that sort.\textsuperscript{190} Again in 2009, ITA made a statement condemning the Violence Against Christians in Kandhamal, Orissa.

Frequent communal violence occurring in India is an indicator of the fact that religions can also become oppressive, dehumanizing, and intolerant. ITA’s response to communalism in India consists in promoting greater social justice, democracy, and secularism.\textsuperscript{191} To establish social justice from a religious point of view, there should be “a reaffirmation of religious experience as means and expression of human solidarity in terms of relatedness to the

\textsuperscript{186} “Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988).”
\textsuperscript{187} “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989).” The statement shows openness to other religions leaving aside the triumphalistic and exclusivistic attitudes and following the kenotic Christ who takes humanity to the vast horizon of divine experience.
\textsuperscript{188} “Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context (the Final Statement of the Meeting of the ITA 1990).”
\textsuperscript{189} “Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987),” no. 2.
\textsuperscript{191} “Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987),” nos. 9-12. Joining the struggles of the people to establish justice which above all classes, cates, religions, and sex meet people on a common ground. Attempts to establish democracy brings forth equality of all people and foster mutual respect and understanding that combats communalism. Participation in secular movements also confronts communalism.
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Divine..." ITA urges that all the efforts should be made to counteract the forces of communalism upholding the universal values of truthfulness (satyam), justice (dharma), equanimity (samabhavana), equality (samatva), non-violence (ahimsa), love (maitri), and compassion (karuna), which are common possessions of all religions. ITA also believes that a secular understanding of religion is vital in combating the forces of exploitation of religion that perpetuate communalism and violence for the interests of the few with vested interests.

ITA condemns “the honor killings,” firstly, because any act of violence is against the divine plan and human rights and dignity; and then, “the integrity of the sanctity of the marriage has to be built upon the inviolability of the God-given human dignity of both the spouses irrespective of lower or higher caste status,” and not the honor constructed upon one’s caste, birth, or profession. ITA, acknowledging Christianity’s communalistic history and asks the faithful to be open to other religions, and also to address fundamentalist tendencies within the Church.

3.4.2.4. Attitude of Jesus: a challenge to fight against inequality

ITA condemns the inequality perpetuated by the religions in India. When the self and selfishness began to occupy the central place in religions, ITA says, “[t]he sale of religion without God has become a common feature today.” The religious values of India, satya

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192 Ibid., no. 27.
194 “Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 28.
195 Raja, 292.
197 ITA, "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," no. 7.
truth), dharmavidhi (duty/virtue), ahimsa (non-violence), anuranjana (reconciliation), sahishnuta (tolerance), etc. should help the religions to become involved in social problems, and work for peace and reconciliation, protecting life and leading a life without any discrimination on the basis of caste, class, or religion. The 2010 statement says, “[t]here is a need for interfaith groups that will deconstruct images and metaphors of cultural paranoia, challenge distorted perceptions that create divisions and contradictions, and work to create new metaphors of solidarity and love.” ITA believes that Jesus’ response to a class-based society would be a challenge for all Christians. He dined with the poor and the outcasts and preached the kingdom of God, which is open for all without any discrimination.

3.4.2.5. Keeping the spirit of Vatican II to value other religions

ITA acknowledges that Christians were not always Christian in their attitude towards other religions in the past, and they still lack a real encounter with other religions. In the early Church, though there was predominantly an apologetic approach to other religions, there was also an openness to other cultures and value systems, which could be seen in the philosophical interpretation of faith, symbols used in worship, administrative systems, spiritual categories, etc. This situation was changed during the Middle Ages when its encounter with Islam resulted in religious antagonism and exclusivism. This had been continued almost until the Second Vatican Council. The Council acknowledged the universal presence and action of the Holy Spirit who sows the seeds of truth among all peoples, religions, cultures, and philosophies (cf. AG 4, 15; NA

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198 “Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982),” no. 6-7; “Indian Secularism Threatened: A Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2010),” no. 36; Cf. also “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)” nos. 18-9.
This realization was “a paradigm shift” in the Church’s understanding of the salvation history.\(^{201}\) The Christian attitude towards other religions throughout history could be classified as: ecclesiocentrism, christocentrism, and theocentrism. In the Indian context, theologians believe, theocentrism would be a responsible response, because it considers other religions as ways offered by God, the creator of all peoples, and author of life and salvation. However, these theologians are aware that christocentrism and theocentrism do not exclude each other.\(^{202}\)

In India, with its mosaic of religion and cultures, “to be religious is to be inter-religious,” says ITA.\(^{203}\) To attain this goal, the Church in India must come out of its triumphalism, egoism, dogmatism, and assertiveness, and encounter religions with respect in dialogue “in which differences become complementarities and divergences are changed into pointers to communion.”\(^{204}\) The members of the Church, whether lay, cleric or religious, cannot forget the fact that they belong not only to the Christian community, but also to the society of India, which involves certain rights and duties.\(^{205}\) ITA stands with awe before the mysterious work of God whose Spirit is in action in both individuals and groups of people who follow other religious traditions: “We joyfully proclaim our own experience of the Word in Jesus, on the one hand, and on the other we also seek to relate in an open and positive way to the other manifestations of the


\(^{202}\) ITA, “Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988),” nos. 11-9; See also no. 31.

\(^{203}\) “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” no. 36.

\(^{204}\) Ibid., no. 32-5. Cf. also "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 2; "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 36; Vempeny, 161; Drego Pearl, "Communal Politics and Violence: Towards a Theological Response," ibid., 123; ITA, "Society and Church: Challenges in Theologizing in Indian Society (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2003)," no. 21.

\(^{205}\) "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 42.
Word as they are part of the one divine mystery.” Thus, ITA proclaims a pluralistic stand, holding onto Jesus’ community principles of equity, fraternity, and sister/brotherhood, and including all peoples.

ITA regards the religious pluralism in India as a sign of unity in diversity and not of contradiction, “because the possibilities of the transcendent God are in-exhaustible.” The Vedic axiom *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti* (Truth is one, but there are different perceptions of that truth) is the heartbeat of Indian culture. ITA views that Christians in India have a duty to foster a spirituality co-natural to the land, without diluting the Christian commitment. Contemplative perception, surrender to God in love, and commitment to the integration of the world are the three constitutive elements of Indian spirituality beyond all religious boundaries that help to have an encounter with God. ITA says that the future of the country depends on the fraternity of religions and not on the domination of one over the other or the annihilation of the other.

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206 “The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998),” no. 5.14-5.Cf. also GS 22; RM 28
209 “Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context (the Final Statement of the Meeting of the ITA 1990),” nos. 10; 18-20.
3.4.3. **Statements on Ecclesial Realities**

Being in touch with ecclesial realities, ITA has brought forth certain suggestions for the improvement with self-criticism.

3.4.3.1. Rites: called to be the sacrament of Trinitarian communion

On the matter of Rites, ITA was never hesitant to urge the leaders of the individual churches to appreciate the equal dignity, rights and obligations, and autonomy of the individual Churches to fulfill the common mission entrusted by the Lord, because the Church, which is called to be “a true sacrament of Trinitarian communion,” is “a community of equals where each one has to use his/her charism to build up the Body of Christ.”

In India, the three Catholic individual churches “are sacramental expressions of the Church of Christ,” called to proclaim “the saving presence of the Risen Lord in this country.”

The primary duty of the Church is evangelization, which is the sharing of the Christ experience of the Church. It is a joint mission of all individual Churches, forgetting all kinds of divisions and factions, and considering the socio-economic and political situation of India. It involves “bringing about peace, reconciliation, justice, equality and fullness of life in all its dimensions.”

To be the authentic witnesses of the gospel, the three individual Churches in India are to be, first of all, “signs of communion among themselves rather than signs of

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212 "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," 18.

213 Ibid., no. 36; Cf. also Louis Malieckal, "Ecclesial Hope in the Fashioning of a New Society," in *Hope at the Dawn of a New Century*, ed. Jacob Parappally and Evelyn Monteiro (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), 90-1; CBCI, "The Communication from CBCI to the Synod of Bishops in Rome (CBCI General Body Meeting, Calcutta, January 6-14, 1974)," no. 31; "Message of the Bishops of India to the People of God (Bombay, January 6-12, 1983)," I. no. 7.
bickering” (Communion *Ad intra* - cf. EA 26). The unity of these Churches ought to be a witness in the Indian scenario of pluralism, Christianity being a small minority.\textsuperscript{214} Any attempts at segregation or separatism diminish the moral authority of the people of God before people of other faiths. ITA explains the existence of various individual churches as “the best expression of the Church of Christ which keeps alive the tradition of authentic catholicity and communion.”\textsuperscript{215}

First, the individual Churches form the Body of Christ, and the structures of government, and the worship of these Churches emerged from within their life. In the course of time these churches were called “rites,” according to ITA, a term which diminished their ecclesial identity. The later developments such as liturgical celebrations, structures of administration, devotions, etc. are the expressions of the Holy Spirit in these Churches.\textsuperscript{216}

ITA proposes that each individual Church in India is to be considered as ‘a moral person’ with equal dignity, rights, and obligations, and autonomy as constitutive elements of these Churches. The Spirit is the basis of the autonomy, a norm that is self-contained and not self-determined, and it is essential for a free and genuine self-expression and self-determination.\textsuperscript{217}

Mutual co-operation and respect is expected to foster communion in the Church in which the successor of Peter functions as the sign of unity. Autonomy should not be identified with authority exercised in the Church, “which can often degenerate into ecclesiastical autocracy,”


\textsuperscript{215} ITA, “The Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” no. 12.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., no. 20. When each individual church is considered as a moral person, the statement says that an “I-Thou” relationship could be promoted among them. See ibid., no. 23.
instead, the participation of the laity in decision making, which was practiced in India in ancient
times, should be promoted.\textsuperscript{218}

The Annual Meeting of the ITA in 1993 discussed the Rite issue in detail and proposed
following practical suggestions to implement the equality of Churches which should be started
with the spirit of love. 1) Foster confidence instead of seeing other Churches as threats, requiring
a mutual listening and dialogue. 2) Prepare an atmosphere in which all three Churches can work
in collaboration with the local ordinary. 3) See the other as a blessing and a complement to its
own being. 4) Regard the communion of Churches as community at the service of the mission of
Jesus and not as part of a super-institution or organization. 5) Liturgical rites are to be evolved in
each individual Church based on its traditions and cultural contexts. 6) See the possibility of the
priests of different Churches living together in one parish and taking care of their respective
faithful and working together for convergence of opinion on present issues. 7) And, envision the
possibility of forming common Indian liturgies and anaphoras.\textsuperscript{219}

3.4.3.2. Mission of the Church is to build up the community, not institutions

ITA is convinced of the mission of the Church, which is to continue the mission of
Christ, building a community, not an institution. It means that the identity of the Church is not
primarily an institution, but a spiritual community that “experience the unfolding of the Reign of

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., nos. 21-2. "Hope at the Dawn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1999)," no. 29. Participatory decision making brings credibility to the functioning of the Church at parish, institutional, diocesan,
and synodal level. Cf. "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA
Meeting 2013)," no. 45.

\textsuperscript{219} "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," nos. 26-32. Other
Church is a threat only when one sees itself as unsecure and others as not equal to it. Cf. also ibid., no. 46. The ITA
seeks the possibility of the formulation of indigenous rites which would be the result of the encounter of the Gospel
with the local culture. "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final
Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 6.9.
God proclaimed by Jesus” and recognizes charisms, guided by the Holy Spirit. In the institutionalized Church, there is not much hope for the participation of its members. The ITA meeting in 2011 was daring enough to call the structural injustice “violence,” which “occur in the form of clericalism, gender discrimination, suppression of lay participation, ritualism and authoritarianism.” In this regard, ITA admonished the leaders of the Church on the need for an introspection and openness to lay leadership. The meeting also expressed the need of a paradigm shift in the concept of authority in the Church. Instead of the unquestioned and oppressive power of domination, ITA thinks that servant leadership must be the ideal of the authority in the Church.

ITA also insists on exemplary standards of integrity and public accountability from Church leaders both in financial and moral matters in order to restore people’s confidence in Church leaders and in the administrative system. Instead of the institutionalized structure, in which leaders of the system have the say, ITA proposes the need of corporate responsibility in the decision-making process in the Church which demands the participation of the responsible bodies in each level of administration from synod level to the parish level. Women who form the majority of the faithful should also be included in these bodies. A Church that tries to keep up the status quo, or its own maintenance and security (EG 49), cannot be an effective instrument of

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220 “Society and Church: Challenges in Theologizing in Indian Society (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2003),” no. 27.
221 “Violence in Today’s Society: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2011)” no. 28.
222 Ibid.
223 “Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)” no. 65.
proclaiming the word of God and evangelization of the peoples.\textsuperscript{225} This attitude impoverishes the Church and stifles its vitality, because “the guidance of the Holy Spirit is ignored and its gifts are controlled for the sake of external convenience and the upholding of the status quo.”\textsuperscript{226}

3.4.3.3. A participative Church can avoid compartmentalization and internal tensions

Institutionalization instead of community building in the Church has severely impacted the relationships between bishops, clergy, religious, and the faithful in the Church. ITA’s primary response to this situation is to realize the nature of the Church as the people of God (cf. \textit{LG} Chapter 2), within which each one has one’s own role.\textsuperscript{227} The clergy by their charism minister and serve the community (\textit{LG} Chapter 3). Religious, who are called to love God with undivided hearts, by their evangelical counsels shine before other members as a sign that inspires others to perfection (\textit{LG} Chapter 6). Laity, by their common priesthood, participate in the priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices of Christ, and thus carry on the mission of the Church in the world (\textit{LG} 31-3). ITA criticizes the attitude of the hierarchy of the Church in India for sidelining the common people, which is not seen in the Western countries today. This attitude gives the feeling that they are acquiring and exercising economic, social, and political power.\textsuperscript{228}

The Church as the people of God is a unity, and the dominance of one group over the other will damage the unity, and thus what is needed is cooperation and participation. It demands

\textsuperscript{225} ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 14-5; Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love.”; ibid.
\textsuperscript{226} ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 16.
\textsuperscript{228} ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 22.
that the Church should be inclusive in its nature by including people from all strata so that the poor, oppressed, and the marginalized will have a space, and also laity, especially women, would be included in the administrative functions.²²⁹ Towards attaining this goal, ITA wants a change in the present system in which the Church is identified with the rights of the hierarchy and has little to do with common people and parishes at a grassroots level. Instead, the concept of a participative Church or a people-centered Church (AG 41; GS 43; EA 23), is to be nurtured. ITA comments that Palliyogam, an ancient practice of Church Assemblies that prevailed in the Oriental Churches of Kerala for centuries, is a challenge to the present system of administration. In this system, the laity could participate in the decision-making, and they could also truly contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ (LG 32,33).²³⁰ ITA believes that Church leaders have an important role to improve the life of the laity in the Church. To this end, ITA proposes the following suggestions. 1) Education of the laity and women religious on their effective participation in the ministries of the Church by very fact of baptism. 2) Need of a renewed understanding of the ministry in the Church to avoid the misinterpretation of scriptures by the interested parties. 3) Emphasis on the importance of service instead of authoritarianism in the ministry. 4) Seminary formation should include this new understanding on ministry. 5) The laity should be encouraged to seek professional theological education.²³¹


²³⁰ ITA, "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 25; "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)."

3.4.3.4. The Church’s involvement in social issues gives messianic hope for many

ITA states that the Church was “practically ineffective as an instrument of social change in India” and sometimes she was an obstacle being unready to support those who worked for social change.\textsuperscript{232} The result is that she could not provide the messianic hope of liberation to the poor and to people who are in grief and anguish.\textsuperscript{233} It does not mean that the Church was not involved in socio-economic or political issues, but it was not aware of the oppressive structures in the society. ITA meeting in 2011 states, “[n]o occasion should be missed to express solidarity with the oppressed, marginalized and underprivileged sections of the people in their struggle for justice and liberation from inhuman oppression.”\textsuperscript{234} When the Church is involved in social issues, human dignity and inalienable rights of human beings must be considered and must also be subject to the due process of justice,\textsuperscript{235} because justice stands for the dignity of the human person struggling for a just and fraternal society.\textsuperscript{236} Acknowledging the Church’s contribution to education in India, ITA says that today, in a society which is structured hierarchically, the

\textsuperscript{232} ITA, "Political Theology in Indian Context (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1981)," no. 1; Cf. D'Lima, 160-1.

\textsuperscript{233} ITA, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 20; Cf. also "Understanding Salvation in Indian Context (the Final Statements of the ITA Meeting 1980)," no. 7.

\textsuperscript{234} "Violence in Today’s Society: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2011)"

\textsuperscript{235} "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 1; Cf. also "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," no. 43; "Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)"

\textsuperscript{236} Therukattil, \textit{The Claim of Justice in Third Millennium}, 2.
Church has the duty to educate the poor and the marginalized and to stand up for their rights and liberation.\textsuperscript{237}

3.5. ITA on Indigenous Ecclesiology

The seventh annual meeting of the ITA, which was held at Nagpur from October 21-23, 1983, reflected on the theme “Search for an Indian Ecclesiology.” The meeting discussed the role of the Church in the midst of the burning problems of the people, such as poverty, hunger, economic and political exploitation, and social inequality.\textsuperscript{238} The meeting explored the meaning of the Church in the struggles of the people for their integral liberation. Thereafter, a number of ITA meetings also tried to articulate the role of the Church in India in the context of its commitment to the liberation of the people.

3.5.1. Commitment to Incarnation and Liberation: The Identity of the Indian Church

The statement of the ITA meeting in 1996 that discussed the characteristics of an Indian ecclesiology presented its dream of an indigenous Church as follows:

\begin{quote}
We dream of a Church that is authentically local, autonomous and participative, committed to the promotion of the Kingdom. Such a Church will be a community of hope, guided by the Spirit, exercising its prophetic function, fully convinced that it is in a pilgrim state, ever evolved in dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies, and with a special attention to the needs of the oppressed and marginalized.\textsuperscript{239}
\end{quote}

In the context of India, ITA prioritizes two elements to structure an indigenous ecclesiology for India: incarnation of the Church in India with its commitment to inculturation, and a commitment by the Church to liberate the people of India from their oppressed and dehumanized...

\textsuperscript{237} ITA, “Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002),” no. 32; “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)” no. 41.
\textsuperscript{238} “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 1.
\textsuperscript{239} “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” no. 37.
structures. In a pluralistic context of India, to be an incarnated community, the Church needs inculturation within the Christian community and also in its relationship with the people of other religions, building a dialogical relationship to discover its own genuine identity and mission.\textsuperscript{240} ITA is convinced of the fact that it is the local Church that gives identity to Christianity in India and every segment, each diocese and each parish, must become truly a local Church “incarnating and immersing herself to the culture of the place and responding to the specific needs of the local community.”\textsuperscript{241} In Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, a theologian who was committed to inculturation and Indian-ness of the Church, ITA found an excellent model of inculturation.\textsuperscript{242}

For ITA, the identity of the Church is not something static, but a dynamic reality to be continually realized or achieved, coping with new and actual situations.\textsuperscript{243} The Church becomes a dynamic Church only when it is ready to fight against all kinds of evils, saying ‘no’ to all that impedes its liberation. ITA believes that being involved in human struggles makes the Church realize her authentic identity.\textsuperscript{244} This involvement in the life situations of the people helps the Church to recognize her role in the secular and social life of the people. Though there exist inequalities, injustices, marginalization of the poor, the Dalits, tribals, and women, child labor, bonded labor, lack of respect for human life, religious fundamentalism like Hindutva and Islamic

\textsuperscript{241} “Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013),” no. 43.
\textsuperscript{242} “Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: A "Hindu-Catholic": His Significance for Theologizing in India Today,” ITA, http://www.itanet.in/ITA%20Statements2007.html. Upadhyay, who was concerned about the stagnant state of the Catholic Church in India, wished the active participation of Christians in the social and political activities of the country. He was involved in the freedom struggle and tried to convince the Christians that being Christian and being patriotic are not contrary.
\textsuperscript{243} “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 13-4.
terrorism, etc. in the Indian society, a worldview in communion with nature, intimate family ties, respect toward elders, religious wisdom, mutual tolerance, etc. are also present in our society. “Indian-ness” comprises all these values and its challenges.245 This value system should encourage the Church to fight against everything dehumanizing in our society.

3.5.2. Scripture, Tradition, and Identity of the Church

ITA views Scripture as the model for creating a new identity of the Church in India. The Old Testament tells us the story of a people who looked back to their sacred history to refashion their identity at every stage of their history, especially in the moments of crisis. Each time they looked back into the Scriptural stories, they were affirmed of the loving and saving presence of God in their midst to help, guide, and save them.246 This story is the story of a people who were oppressed, enslaved, and marginalized, but God made them his own by giving them a new identity. When they were in exile they were hopeful because God’s miraculous interventions in their history gave them courage. Their worship was a response to the love of God that they experienced in their life.247 Though a patriarchal structure of the society is mostly found in the Old Testament, a home-centered picture of this people is found in the Book of Proverbs in which women are presented as having central role. “God’s role as Divine parent creating and maintaining the dwelling place of the human community” is presented there.248 Israel is also presented as God’s beloved, a feminine character, which is a recognition for women. In the New

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245 “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 17-9; Cf. also no. 16; Cf. "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006),” no. 8; Dhivyanathan, 206, 10.
247 ITA, “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 21-2; Wilfred, 279.
248 ITA, “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” no. 23.
Testament, the Easter experience was the source of the Christian identity and mission of the early Church. In Jesus, the messiah of all peoples and races, racial and ethnic discriminations and separations were abolished (Gal 3:28), accepting the dignity of all peoples as the children of one Father. Christians in India must be inspired by the experiences of Israel and the early Church in Scripture. It should be made possible in the Church by giving hope to the poor and the marginalized acknowledging the work of the Spirit in the Church and making her an egalitarian community. The prophetic images in the Old Testament and the Spirit-guided experiences of the apostles must encourage the Church to be prophetic in her mission in India with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

With Constantine the Church became institutionalized, and formed the model of the Western Church as it spread out in the West during the Middle Ages, and was later transplanted in colonized countries with the help of the colonial powers. The Catholic Church in India, as a communion of Churches, should be open to appreciate the traditions of the Churches in the Catholic communion, and also acknowledge the traditions outside the Catholic communion.²⁴⁹ Scripture and Tradition, the foundations of the Church, nourish and strengthen a living community. ITA believes that they are to be interpreted not only based on the past traditions, but also present realities, namely the manifestation of the Spirit through events and the riches of the living traditions.²⁵⁰ A critical understanding of the past should enable the Church in India to mold a new Church relevant to our times founded on the experience of Christ. Today, as disciples of Christ, the members of the Church in India should be the messengers of liberation to

²⁴⁹ Cf. Ibid., nos. 24-5. However, the St. Thomas Christians in India offer another model, in which people had more participation, and which existed in India until the arrival of the Western Church. The system of the Church administration prevailed among the St. Thomas Christians in India will be explained later in this chapter.
²⁵⁰ “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 29.
fellow beings, engaging in the struggles and sufferings of the people. This gives identity to the Church in India. This mission is to be realized by joining hands with the other Churches and the universal Church.\(^{251}\) A Church, which is overly sacramentalized and pietistic cannot fulfill this mission, but only an evangelized Church that lives the faith, for Jesus was not interested in costly temples and solemn liturgies for his honor, but seemed to be a secular person living in the heart of the world.\(^{252}\) His concern was to prepare human hearts for his Abba, and his highest liturgy was the love of neighbor.\(^{253}\)

### 3.5.3. Church as the People of God in Prophetic Action

Vatican Council II’s ecclesiological theme, Church as “the People of God” (\(LG\) Chapter 2), has inspired Christians to realize their duty in the functioning and the building up of the Church. \(Lumen Gentium\) prepares a common platform for all the members of the Church, cleric, religious, and laity, (\(LG\) Chapter 2; no. 40), being called to perfection.\(^{254}\) All who are called by God to be his people through their baptism in Christ, share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly duties of Christ. ITA argues that the theme of “the People of God” has not been developed sufficiently after the Council. Instead, differences between the common and ministerial priesthood were reiterated in the documents of the Church,\(^{255}\) and the result is that the

\(^{251}\) “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 26-8.


\(^{253}\) Ibid., 214.


\(^{255}\) ITA, "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 23; Cf. also Selvister Ponnumuthan, "Lay Models Participation: An Appraisal of Confraternities, Pious Associations and Movements," in \(Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today\), ed. A. Pushparajan and X. D. Selvaraj (Bangalore: ITA & ATC, 2010). Ponnumuthan presents few lay movements and commitments after the Council. ITA is of the opinion that these movements were not supported well by the hierarchical Church.
inequalities are not yet removed from the Church. The theme “communion ecclesiology,” presenting the discipleship of equals, also paves the way for an egalitarian and participative model in the Church.  

The People of God becomes a reality in the structures of the Church only when all members of the Church, bishops, clergy, religious, and laity work together, recognizing each other as members of the Body of Christ. Vatican Council II asserts that the Church cannot be fully alive and the sign of Christ when the role of the laity is not properly recognized in the Church (AG 21, 41; cf. LG 43; cf. also EG 102-8). The Church should also acknowledge the role of women, keeping away the centuries-old male-dominating attitude. ITA cites a need for the Church councils and bodies built up on the firm foundation of Gospel values with representation of people from all walks of life. “Greater honesty, transparency, and openness will result in the functioning of these structures at the level of the parish, diocese and nation.”

To realize the vision of a participatory Church, ITA feels the need of an alternative model of authority founded on Jesus’ model of servant authority.

Yogam or Palliyogam, a unique administrative system which existed among the St. Thomas Christians in India until the arrival of the Western Church, provides a participative

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256 ITA, "Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)" no. 22. However, the previous section on “the ecclesial context” confirms that inequality at various levels and discrimination among the members of the Church still prevails in India. A rediscovering of the meaning of the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II will help the Church in India to form the People of God without any divisions and discriminations.

257 “A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995),” no. 46; Cf. also “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 21; “The Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” no. 12; “Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)” no. 22.

258 “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)” no. 37.

259 “Concerns of Women: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2004)” no. 23.
model of an administrative system. The administrative body of the parish, which is known as Palliyogam, consisted of priests and adult laymen with legislative, administrative, and judicial powers. There were also two other yogams, Pradeshika Yogam (regional assembly of at least four parishes), and Pothuyogam (General Assembly), which had power over the whole Church.\footnote{Andrews Mekkattukunnel, *Legacy of the Apostle Thomas in India* (Kottayam/ Chicago, IL: OIRSI/ St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago, 2013), 58; Mundadan, 24.} In the administration of St. Thomas Christians, Palliyogam of the people had full legislative, administrative, and juridical powers over the temporal matters of the Church.\footnote{ITA, "Society and Church: Challenges in Theologizing in Indian Society (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2003)," no. 2; cf. "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," no. 29; see also no. 30. There are similar bodies in the Syrian dioceses today, but the lay people do not have significant involvement in them as they had it before the westernization.} In this system, the title of the bishop, the metropolitan of India from the East, was “the metropolitan and the gate of all India.”\footnote{Mundadan, 16. “Gate” signifies “sublime authority,” or “sublime and eminent power.”} But the “Archdeacon of all India” was the real head and governor of the St. Thomas Christians. He was a celibate priest who was also known as Jatikkukartavyan – the head of the race – with legislative, judicial, and administrative powers.\footnote{Mekkattukunnel, 58; Cf. Mundadan, 17.} He was also known as “‘the Prince’ of all the Christians of St. Thomas.”\footnote{19. There is a tradition that says that the position of the Archdeacon was enjoyed by a particular family converted by the apostle Thomas. The history of this Church testifies that the Archdeacons were the civil and religious leaders of the people until the eighteenth century. Cf. Scaria Zacharia, “Palliyogam as the Church Assembly,” in *Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today*, ed. A. Pushparajan and X. D. Selvaraj (Bangalore: ITA & ATC, 2010), 92-3; Mathias Mundadan, "Syro-Malabar Church and the Laity," *Tania* 9 (2001): 73.} With the Synod of Diamper and the establishment of the Padroado system, St. Thomas Christians came directly under the administration of the Portuguese. When the Church in Kerala was under the foreign rule, the community expressed its opposition to the foreign power. However, when the community got its own bishops, there was no change from the original understanding of power, because the indigenous bishops expressed their power, establishing an indigenous hierarchy.\footnote{Kuriedath.}
comments that even after the second Vatican Council and the renewal that followed it, “the centralized and highly bureaucratized structure” is still the reality in the Church structure.\textsuperscript{266}

While the country is now finding means for the full democratization through the introduction of \textit{Panchayathraj} and \textit{Gramasabha} to hear the voice of the oppressed and the marginalized,\textsuperscript{267} the recently promulgated CCEO and the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church have done nothing to integrate the essential and healthy features of the \textit{yogam} of St. Thomas Christians.\textsuperscript{268}

ITA, being committed to orthopraxis, considers the Church as People of God in prophetic action. The Church is a community of God’s people living out the faith with prophetic vigor. By nature she is prophetic (cf. \textit{LG} 31), i.e., “Christians who speak of Christ must embody in their lives the message that they proclaim” (\textit{EA} 23). The Church cannot fulfill her mission in the world if the members fail in “bearing witness to the faith and to the Christian life as a service to their brothers and sisters and as a fitting response to God” (\textit{RM} 11). “The living Church is meant to be a prophetic movement of people living in the world - the sacramental symbol of the Kingdom.”\textsuperscript{269} To make the Church a living and active Church, and the symbol of the Kingdom, there should be the cooperation of all members of the Church, keeping in mind that the Kingdom values are to be promoted and lived by all in their secular sphere. To achieve this goal in a India, which is growing fast in technology and communication, the ecclesiastical authorities in India have the special duty to recognize the potentials and skills of the professionals among the laity.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 183.
\textsuperscript{267} See ITA, "Laity in the Church, Identity and Mission in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2006)," no. 26. \textit{Panchayathraj} and \textit{Gramasabha} are the lower level bodies in the administrative system in India that is intended to hear the voice of all people by the government.
\textsuperscript{268} Mundadan, “Syro-Malabar Church and the Laity,” 80.
\textsuperscript{269} ITA, "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 21; Cf. "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 6; “Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984),” no. 17.
by including them in the commissions of the Church or decision-making for secular aspects like labor, family, mass media, peace, and social justice.\textsuperscript{270} This is the spirit of yogam.\textsuperscript{270}

3.5.4. Church as Communion of Communities/Body Built up by Organs

Communion ecclesiology, one of the important characteristics of the second Vatican council, acknowledges the relevance of the individual Churches, not as signs of division but of the unity of the Body of Christ. Though they have diverse spiritual and liturgical traditions due to various historical factors, they “are united in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, through Christian witness, works of charity and human solidarity” (\textit{EA} 9). Three individual Churches in India must be seen as a richness and not a division. The members of these Churches become an ideal community of love by sharing their riches capable of living and working together, and thus fulfill the common mission of the Church.\textsuperscript{271} Various ecclesial communities, coming out of absolutist claims and narrow-minded catholicity, can all work together for the common good and humanitarian causes.\textsuperscript{272} No Church can stay by itself, because the communion of Churches is the heart of the Church.\textsuperscript{273}

Ecclesial communion must become a reality in each particular Church even at its lowest levels, primarily in the diocese with the People of God around the bishop with their particularities where a vision of a communion of communities can be actualized (cf. \textit{EA} 25).\textsuperscript{274} Local Churches must be in dialogue with each other for “mutual learning, mutual control and

\textsuperscript{270} “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 6; Cf. also CBCI, "Appeal to the People of India (CBCI General Body Meeting, Madras, April 6-14, 1972),” 17-8.
\textsuperscript{271} ITA, “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” no. 34.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{273} Pathil, \textit{Theology of the Church: New Horizons}, 92.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.
correction and an ongoing convergence.”275 First of all, the individual Churches formed the Body of Christ, and the structures of government and worship of these Churches emerged from within their life. In the course of time these Churches were called “rites,” a term which diminished their ecclesial identity reducing them to certain groups of Christians among Catholics.276 The later developments such as liturgical celebrations, structures of administration, devotions, etc. are the expressions of the Holy Spirit in these Churches.277 In India, ITA recommends an open dialogue between the individual Churches with the conviction that what is needed is an indigenous Church recognizing, respecting, and accepting the differences between the individual Churches, working together for harmony and unity, instead of building administrative walls to protect their identities.278

ITA also criticizes the narrow understanding of catholicity and unity, i.e., the ecclesial tendency to explain unity as uniformity based on the external structure of power. ITA believes that pseudo-unity or the imposed unity crushes the originality and creativity of the Church.279 ITA argues that the Church, which is preoccupied with its inherited identity and hesitant to acknowledge and recognize manifold richness of the working of the Spirit among other peoples, is far away from a true catholicity that embraces “all that is good and noble in human life as an expression and manifestation of the universality of God’s plan and his Spirit.”280

275 ITA, "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," no. 19.
276 "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 13.
277 Ibid., 13.
278 Amaladoss, 25.
280 ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 18.
3.5.5. Church as a Community Led by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit who worked in the apostles in the early Church continues to be present in the Church today.\textsuperscript{281} ITA, being convinced that the Spirit of God has been operative (cf. \textit{RM} 29) in this country for centuries, wishes that the Church in India should be a Spirit-centered Church, which discerns “the spiritual dimensions of the Church and integrate[s] them with the movements of the Spirit.” This contrasts with an institutionalized Church.\textsuperscript{282} When the Spirit, who inspires the seekers of truth, is at work, the community sheds its superiority complex and dogmatic pride, and tries to reach out even to people of other faiths and ideologies, and especially the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized.\textsuperscript{283} History has shown that when the Church depended more on material wealth and powers than the Spirit of God she has lost her credibility in the world. When the Spirit of the Risen Lord is operative and transformative in the mission of the Church, it will be fueled by contemplation and renunciation.\textsuperscript{284} ITA is convinced that if the evangelization is based on the Christ experience and the working of the Holy Spirit \textit{(EG} 259), it will build up authentic communities. If the Church is not moved by the Spirit, there are only institutions and structures, or the sale of religion, a religion without God, which is very common today.\textsuperscript{285}

\begin{flushendnote}[281]{See Francis, no. 50. Pope Francis proposes that the approach of a missionary disciple amidst the challenges of today should be nourished by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit who strengthens and guides the Church (Rom 8:26-7).}
\begin{flushendnote}[282]{ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 19; cf. also no. 30; "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," no. 30; Cf. also "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 29.}
\begin{flushendnote}[283]{"The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," nos. 30-2.}
\begin{flushendnote}[284]{"Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 28; See "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 7.}
\begin{flushendnote}[285]{Augustine Mulloor, "People of God: Identity and Mission; Biblical Perspectives," in \textit{Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today}, ed. A. Pushparajan and X. D. Selvaraj (Bangalore: ITA & ATC, 2010), 2-3. According to Augustine Mulloor, the sale of religion is a situation of religion without God: “There is sensual religion to which sensuality is identified with religiosity. Self-transcendence, the characteristic trait of authentic religion is completely absent here. Rather religiosity makes one more and more selfish. It furthers enables one to get immersed in one’s..."}
3.5.6. **Church of the Poor**

The Church in India, though institutionally rich in many places, has always been appreciated by the people when she joined the side of the poor and raised her voice for them. It shows that the Church in India has a prophetic role to fulfill. On the other hand, the Church faces criticisms for her triumphalistic attitude in the decisions of parishes, dioceses, and institutions. Instead of imitating the simplicity and poverty of Jesus the carpenter (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55), the Church spends millions of rupees on constructing huge church buildings. When millions of people remain poor in the country, she is ready to spend huge amounts on the institutions and material things, but very slow to spend money for the uplifting of the downtrodden. The Church in India must realize that it is not the edifice, but the community of believers that makes the Church (Acts 2:44-46).²⁸⁶

Jesus’ ministry shows that he had special concern for the poor and the underprivileged.²⁸⁷ “If we are to be faithful to the inspiration of Jesus, we must make his option for the poor our own. It is only then that our theology will speak to people, and not by passing or going over them, and so will be liberating for them, and not subjugating.”²⁸⁸ God’s preferential option for the poor is revealed in his incarnation in Jesus becoming a poor man,²⁸⁹ and it implies that God is on the side of the poor and against poverty and injustice. In other words, “God is on the side of

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²⁸⁷ Naduvilekut, 65-70.
the poor in a way that excludes the injustices of the unjust.” The Church in India must become the “Church of the poor,” to be a witnessing Church in the country. ITA believes that the Christians in India encounter the crucified and risen Christ “by participating in the paschal mystery of the poor of the country,” and it would be an occasion for their renewal in the Spirit of Jesus.

3.5.7. Ministry as Service in the Community of Service

The Church cannot neglect the example of Christ Jesus, who though God emptied himself taking the form of a servant being in the likeness of a human, humbled himself, obedient to the point of death on the cross, and is in glory now (Phil 2:7-9). His servanthood explains the mission of the Church, the Body of Christ, because the Church is not just a community of worship, but also a community of service. ITA believes that the authenticity of the Church in India depends more in her orthopraxis than orthodoxy, and it should begin at the parish level where they interact with peoples of other faiths, seek the needs of the suffering brethren, and serve the community, using all the riches they have. This can be realized when the Church abandons triumphalism and authoritarianism, and embraces a servant Christology, i.e., Jesus’ kenosis for the liberation of the people, the poor, the marginalized and the outcast. Members of the Church, as the heralds of this kenotic service should be ready to go beyond the boundaries

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291 Cf. Francis, no. 186. Pope Francis says that faith in Christ who became poor is the basis for the Church’s concern for the poor. He warns that any Church community that has no concern for the poor runs the risk of breaking down (cf. *EG* 207). He invites the Church to recognize the suffering Christ in the vulnerable - the homeless, refugees, migrants, the addicted, the elderly, indigenous peoples, women, children, the unborn, nature, etc. (cf. *EG* 209-15).
292 ITA, “Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context (the Final Statement of the Meeting of the ITA 1990),” no. 23; “A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995),” no. 44.
293 “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” nos. 35-6.
of the Church, without any discrimination, to fight against injustices and oppressions in the society, seeing them as their own problems. In this mission, “the universal values of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom, which find their fulfilment in Christ” (EA 32). This should encourage the Church to work with people of other faiths, and to become the leaven in a multi-religious context of India. The Church in India has been trying for this goal, especially in the field of education, by upholding social justice and equality in her schools and colleges. In this context, John Paul II’s call for social charity which is above social justice is important (QA 88).

Ministries in the Church are opportunities to serve the People of God. Though Church authorities in India are aware of the need of the Church to be a servant Church avoiding authoritarianism, promoting dialogue, participation, and subsidiarity, this ideal has not been actualized yet. ITA is of the opinion that the involvement of the people in the selection of the candidates to the priestly ministry in the Church is needed and can make a change in their attitude towards the ministers. ITA also thinks that if the ministers are supposed to be accountable to the people regarding their ministry, and laity is involved in deciding the exercise and duration of ministers, there will be changes in the authority structure, because people in

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296 ITA, "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 5; Cf. "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 37. "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 6.8. “The Church as the sacrament, light, salt, leaven, etc., would endorse many forms of membership or affiliation in the Jesus community.” "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 39; "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 34.
297 Kundukulam.
299 ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 23; "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 36; "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," no. 60.
authority will have a change in their attitude toward their ministry. ITA also points out the need for accountability in the decision-making process in the Church.  

3.5.8. Church and Evangelization

Evangelization is being Church. The mission of the Church is the proclamation of the good news, the good news of love and reconciliation. ITA is concerned that the Indian Church views evangelization as prioritizing numerical increase and the institutional growth, while neglecting the prophetic mission of the Church. According to ITA, in the pluralistic context in India, the Church can become the leaven, living the gospel values. Instead of an institutionalized Church that aims at the number of the members, the Church in India should form a community of believers in Christ, or disciples of Christ, who could be agents of peace, justice, and fellowship, even if they cannot be fully part of the institutionalized Church through the sacrament of baptism.

In the pluralistic context of India, in which religion is at the center of the national ethos, Bandhu Ishanand Vempeny’s alternative to Western Secularism would be an enriching thought.

300 "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 22; Cf. also Mathew; ITA, "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," no. 37; "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 23.

301 John Paul II, "Ecclesia in Asia," no. 19. John Paul II says true evangelization contains the proclamation of Jesus as the Lord. For Paul VI, true evangelization contains the proclamation of “the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.” See Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation (Rome: December 8, 1975), no. 22. This basic task of the Church causes opposition, and makes people feel that the Church is communalistic. The reason could be that evangelization is carried out with a model of sheer proselytization. This model of conversion does not bring qualitative change in people. Cf. ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 37; Cf. Archbishop Felix Machado, "Fifty Years of Hindu-Christian Dialogue Following Nostra Aetate," in Asian Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate: Dialogue with Religions in Asia And Interreligious Marriage - Part 2, ed. William LaRousse (FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA), Redemptorist Center, Pattaya, Thailand: FABC, 2015), 18.

302 ITA, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," no. 19.

Vempeny presents an ideology called “Religiosity of Dialogal Liberation” which is axiomatic. In India, “religious” mean to be inter-religious, which tamps down fundamentalistic, exclusivistic, and self-righteous religion. “Dialogal Liberation” means cooperating with members of other religions to fight against the dehumanizing tendencies in India, and to work for a noble cause to make India a better place to live.\(^{304}\)

At this juncture, it is relevant to see the true meaning of spirituality and religion found in Sebastian Painadath’s evaluation of Indian spirituality. Painadath says that the Indian threefold marga – jnana-bhakti-karma – would be a paradigm that intertwines the essential elements of spirituality, which is at the heart of all religions. Jnana marga helps one to see the Lord in all things and all things in the Lord (\textit{Gita} 6:30) and harmony between God, world, and the cosmos (\textit{Gita} 4:8). Bhakti marga is an experience of the divine life (\textit{Gita} 9:29) and unconditional self-surrendering (\textit{Gita} 18:66). Karma marga is dedicating one’s action to the Lord (\textit{Gita} 9:26) with concern for the welfare of the world and all living beings (\textit{Gita} 5:25).\(^{305}\) For Pinadath, the Christian spirituality of contemplation and action, or solitude and solidarity, reflects this paradigm.\(^{306}\)

ITA categorizes three levels of faith life: “a) personal experience of Christ, b) formulation of this experience, and c) witnessing this experience.” The evangelization without the inclusion of the experience of the mystery of Christ becomes proselytization. Communities

\(^{304}\) Vempeny, 158-60.  


without this Christ experience are threats to other communities and provoke communalism, because they are highly institutional with imposed formulas and dogmas.\textsuperscript{307} ITA’s stand on evangelization involves making disciples of Christ to live out the gospel values, i.e., fundamental personal conversion versus institutional growth.

3.5.9. **Church in Dialogue with Other Religions**

“From One and the Only True Religion to Plurality of Religions,” was a paradigm shift that took place with Vatican Council II.\textsuperscript{308} The Council asks Christians to “acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture” (\textit{NA} 2).\textsuperscript{309} ITA comments that this is an invitation to “opening ourselves to the religious experience of others, sharing their life and concerns, facing the struggles and tensions of life together, journeying with them towards the common ultimate goal.”\textsuperscript{310} Paul VI, in his encyclical \textit{Ecclesiam Suam}, presents dialogue as the norm and ideal in the Church’s relation to other religions (cf. \textit{ES} 12-5). This is also an indication of the \textit{Samanya dharma} - common value system – existing in the world, and in India, a land of religions, the Church can fulfill its mission only in dialogue with other religions.\textsuperscript{311} In \textit{Fides et Ratio}, John Paul II showed the special place of India where Christians have the duty to derive elements compatible with

\textsuperscript{307} ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 38.
\textsuperscript{308} Pathil, \textit{Theology of the Church: New Horizons}, 33.
\textsuperscript{309} Cf. ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 41; "Hope at the Dawn of the 21st Century (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1999)," no. 24.
\textsuperscript{310} "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 41.
Christian faith from the rich Indian spiritual heritage that may enrich Christian thought \((FR 72)\).\(^{312}\) Christians are pilgrims in Christ, and they journey with many others to the fullness of truth \((cf. LG 16, 13; EA 24)\), a truth which is beyond all claims of expression and possession.\(^{313}\) In this pilgrimage, each one’s religion, that is part of the “Great Religion’ can never be totally identified with any of its expressions, though all of them are manifestations of it in one way or another,” helps in one’s search for truth and provides wholeness in brokenness.\(^{314}\) In this sense, dialogue is “not only discussion, but also includes all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment” \((DM 3)\).

Every Christian, by virtue of his/her human and Christian vocation, is called to be in dialogue with other people, which demands concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other respecting his/her identity.\(^{315}\) ITA believes that Christian fundamentalism in this richly religious country would not be Christian in itself, whereas, the relevance of Christianity is to be shown by living a Christian faith that is rooted in love and respect for other religions. A fruitful dialogue, especially the dialogue of action, is needed for a harmonious life together with other people, and

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\(^{312}\) In the same number \((FR 72)\), the pope also gives three criteria which are necessary: 1) universality of the human spirit whose basic needs are the same in all cultures; 2) the Church cannot abandon what it has gained from the Greco-Latin thought in its early stages, and if it is denied, it is against the providential plan of God; and 3) care should be taken, otherwise the Indian thought be confused “with the idea that a particular cultural tradition should remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions.” \(Cf. ITA, "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989)," no. 18; \(Cf. also CBCI, "The Communication from CBCI to the Synod of Bishops in Rome (CBCI General Body Meeting, Calcutta, January 6-14, 1974)," no. 6.\)

\(^{313}\) ITA, “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” no. 19; "Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context (the Final Statement of the Meeting of the ITA 1990),” no. 16.

\(^{314}\) "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” no. 20.

to proclaim Christ and his message meaningfully in India. In the past, Christianity could influence people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen who contributed to the social reforms in India. Knowing Christianity, they were also ready to rediscover the cultural, religious, and spiritual heritage of India. To continue the dialogue in India, religions having a common religious and moral foundation must come together seeing these commonalities as forces for communion and not division. So the Church must “enter into dialogue with the great and noble values of authentic Hindu traditions such as truthfulness (satyam), justice (dharma), equanimity (samabhavana), equality (samatva), non-violence (ahimsa), love (maitri), compassion (karuna) pluralistic ethos, openness to and tolerance to all that is good and noble in all religions and cultures.”

In the context of religious fundamentalism and communalism growing in the shades of political parties, the 2016 Meeting of the ITA presents the urgency of an inter-textual reading of the sacred scriptures of the different religions along with the Indian constitution to stimulate the country’s secular potentialities. True to its motto of being praxis-oriented, ITA invites the Church to engage in dialogue both “at theological and administrative levels through prayer meetings, joint community action and reparation for social and ecological injustices” to build up a society without division and fractions on the basis of class, creed, or faith.

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318 CBCI, "The Final Communication to the Synod of Bishops 1987 on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council (Goa, April 12-21, 1986)," I. B.
320 "Toward a Theology of Christian Minority in Indian Scenario Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2016)" no. 29.
3.5.10. Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

The foundation of the Christian faith is Jesus the Christ, the unique and universal savior, who is the incarnate Word (Son) of God the Father. The Kingdom of God was central to Jesus’ preaching which centered on the liberating love of God. God’s love, which was “made present in and through the person and the ministry of Jesus,” challenged the people to respond by a change of life (metanoia), which involves a freedom from everything that enslaves one. It brings about a new relationship among the members of the community recognizing the dignity of all: “outcasts become honored guests and the poor and the exploited experience God’s preferential love.” 322 In the OT, the Israelites discovered God’s identity from his saving works for them. In the same way, Jesus’ works point to his mission and identity as the messiah (cf. Lk 7:18-23; Lk 11:20). “The proclamation of the reign of God is the key to Jesus’ deepest identity” (cf. EN 6, 8). 323 The way of the kenotic Christ is one of emptying himself by which he showed the Father’s love for all. He has become the center and the goal of history through his resurrection and ascension. Now, he is present everywhere and he belongs to the whole of humanity, being part of the history and that is his uniqueness (cf. RM 6; EA 14). His presence is a transforming presence that forms a community of love respecting and accepting the other. 324 ITA notices that in the history of the Church, various Christian traditions experienced Christ in their cultural, philosophical, and

322 “The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998),” no. 2.5. ITA Meeting in 1998 examined the place of Christ in India in the context of other religions. 323 Ibid., no. 2.7; Cf. "Understanding Salvation in Indian Context (the Final Statements of the ITA Meeting 1980)," no. 6. 324 “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989),” nos. 26-7; Cf. "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 5.18.
theological milieu. They articulated the significance of Christ in their own theological languages and emphases.\textsuperscript{325}

The ITA believes that there are many claims of uniqueness in a pluralistic context, and theologians differ in their opinions on Christocentrism and Theocentrism. To solve this the ITA says, “Christ is constitutively the Way to the Father and as such he is theocentric. But one who is on the Way, the Way is also the goal,” and there are many people in India who accept Christ as a Way to the Absolute.\textsuperscript{326} The ITA meeting in 1998, which dealt with the uniqueness of Christ in the context of religious pluralism, states:

“He [Christ] is unique to the Christian in that he is the definitive, though non-exhaustive symbol of God experience in the world. But Jesus’ uniqueness does not necessarily displace symbols in other religions. The claims of his uniqueness must be seen as symbolic statements (religious language) which are made in faith, not merely by reason alone, and never in opposition to the affirmations of Vatican II (see LG 16, NA 2, AG 9) concerning other religions.\textsuperscript{327}

Athappally says that there is no difficulty in accepting the salvific value of other religions and religious figures while holding on the uniqueness of Christ because salvation is ultimately rooted in the paschal mystery of Christ and not bypassing him.\textsuperscript{328} While holding this argument Athappally is firmly rooted in Vatican Council’s view that in God’s mysterious plan, which is known to him alone, he calls all people to “the same destiny, which is divine,” and the Holy

\textsuperscript{325} "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Plurality in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," nos. 3.1-3.6. Jewish Christians with their historically oriented world-view, saw Jesus as the liberator both of history and of persons. For Hellenistic Christians who had soteriological concerns as the most important one, saw Jesus, the Logos, as the mediator who leads to deification. The Syrian Christian Tradition experienced Jesus as the liberator who liberates people from finitude and mortality, and sinfulness to deification. They found sacraments, especially the Eucharist as the means of deification. In the Latin tradition, Jesus Christ the God-Man re-established the divine law and order.

\textsuperscript{326} "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989)," no. 28-9.

\textsuperscript{327} "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Plurality in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 5.16.

\textsuperscript{328} Athappally, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Plurality of Religions," 97. Athappally says that the mediators of other religions “share in Christ’s mediatory efficacy.” Thus, they cannot offer salvation bypassing Christ.
Spirit offers them the possibility to become partners in the paschal mystery (GS 22). In a pluralistic context, preaching Christ as the unique and universal savior is a scandal and stumbling block for many. Concerning the theologian, who eliminates the scandal or the stumbling block at the altar of inter-religious dialogue, Athappilly says:

...[s/]he will be building [her/]his theological edifice without the corner stone and the foundation that God him[her]self has laid. Disastrous will be the fall of such an edifice (Lk 7:49). We are called to witness in all humility at frankness to our faith in Christ as the only Son of God Incarnate. St Paul had to face the same fate in preaching Christ crucified, “a stumbling block to Jews” (I Cor. 1:23). But he preached Christ crucified (I Cor. 2:2) for the salvation of the many. The stumbling block of the uniqueness of Christ may similarly turn to a stepping-stone in the service of truth and salvation of many.  

In the pluralistic context of India, Indian Christians, who experience the self-communication of God in Christ, keeping their hearts attached to the Christ-event, should be ready to listen to other religions and share humbly their own experience. At the same time, they should know that they cannot make a theoretical and abstract statement on the matter of sharing with all religions based on an indiscriminative theory, because the theology and context of each religion can be unique. Thus, each situation should be examined properly.

### 3.5.11. Ecclesiology is Eschatological

“The Church is the seed of the Kingdom of God and she looks eagerly for its final coming” (EA 17; cf. also CCC 567, 569, 764, 768; LG 5). This means that ecclesiology is eschatological, the earthly Church is in the expectation of the heavenly kingdom (cf. Rev 21-22).

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329 Ibid. Athappally is convinced that no claim of uniqueness stands equal to that of Christ, because “no one else has really claimed and been claimed as God Incarnate in the real sense; no one else also has been confirmed in this claim.” Even the concept of *avatara* in Hinduism cannot be considered as the same concept of Incarnation in Christianity, “because it does not have the concept of a real and everlasting becoming God.”

330 Ibid., 98.


The biblical understanding of salvation and the Kingdom of God are very much related. The wholeness of human beings and the well-being of all creation that we see on earth are signs of salvation. However, the final fulfillment is beyond the world or eschatological.\textsuperscript{333} ITA views the Kingdom of God as a reality of freedom, fellowship, and justice that emerges in this world and is to be fulfilled in heaven. The Church, the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God in the world, of which salvation is the goal, “should focus attention on the Kingdom that is being realized in the world in keeping with the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ dynamic.”\textsuperscript{334} In the secular world, it does not give the Church a privileged position or superiority over the world, but it shows the duty of the Church in the secular sphere.

T. K. John argues that Christian commitment to nation-building should be seen in relation to a Christian vision of life as ‘Kingdom of God,’ and the common good of the people, particularly the deprived. The common good can be achieved only when the needs and wants of every citizen are sufficiently or reasonably met or satisfied.\textsuperscript{335} It can be explained with the help of the Indian understanding of \textit{sarvodaya} and \textit{antyodaya}.\textsuperscript{336} Gandhi’s idea of \textit{sarvodaya} envisioned the betterment and welfare of the entire humankind and the living beings in the world. Welfare in his view envelops all walks of human life: religious, moral, political, social,

\textsuperscript{333} ITA, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 20.
\textsuperscript{334} “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 21; "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 31.
\textsuperscript{336} ITA, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," ibid. (Bangalore), no. 35, 40. "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 49; Cf. CBCI, "The Final Communication to the Synod of Bishops 1987 on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council (Goa, April 12-21, 1986)," I. A. \textit{Sarvodaya} comes from two Sanskrit words, namely \textit{sarva} and \textit{udaya}. Sarva means “all,” that is, every kind of living beings, and \textit{udaya} means “uplift” or welfare. Thus, the literal meaning of the word \textit{Sarvodaya} is “welfare of all beings.” \textit{Antya} means the last or the least one, and \textit{antyodaya} means the welfare of the least.
economic, cultural, etc. For him, it can be achieved only through the participation of all through the system of Panchayathraj. Christian initiatives to achieve this goal would demand that all our resources are channeled primarily towards antyodaya (welfare of the least), and in the present Indian situation, for T. K. John, soliciting the collaboration of all for all (sarvodaya through antyodaya). This would constitute the prime responsibility of the Christian community. Existing social evils like poverty, inequality, modes of discrimination, illiteracy, violence and every form of injustice, can be effaced only with an updated appliance of dharma; that is, the wellspring of diverse religious traditions which are capable of humanizing the dehumanized. For the quality of the life of the human community is in proportion to the influence of the ethical, moral, spiritual and humanizing sources and powers that are inherent in our cultures and diverse heritages.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter on ITA’s commitment to contextual theology and an indigenous ecclesiology for India was begun with the exploration of its origin and vision. It was the theological quest of Indian theologians to develop a contextual theology, which is capable of involving in the social life of the people, that led to the birth of ITA. The early members of the forum were influenced by the Latin American liberation theology’s attempts at social transformation based on gospel values, and doing theology from below, or from the experiences of life. For theology as “faith seeking justice,” a reality to be achieved empirically, the starting point is the human experience. ITA, believing that involvement in social issues is the duty of

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338 John, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building," 121.
theologians in India, views theologizing as a commitment to nation-building by involving in the struggles and sufferings of the people.

ITA also views theologizing as an act of liberation which is a participation in the liberative mission of Jesus (cf. Lk 4:18-9). This is a prophetic mission of the Church in India with its aim to bring about the reign of God on earth, which is the purpose of Jesus’ mission. In the liberative action of the theologizing, Indian theologians believe that holding the Indian “weapons” of satyagraha and non-violence give power in their protest and resistance for the establishment of justice in the society. In this sense, Indian contextual theology cannot be limited to the Western ideal of orthodoxy, but goes beyond to an orthopraxis fitting the Indian context. This is also a humanizing act because it condemns all dehumanizing situations in India and tries to restore human dignity (cf. DH 2), which is a divine act.

The effort of the third main section of this chapter was to sketch the social, cultural, economic, political, religious, and ecclesial context of India, because a contextual theology is not possible without taking the Indian realities seriously. The social, cultural, economic, and political context of India is very complex with many social problems which are intertwined, affecting the large majority of the people. Poverty is the primary evil that affects the majority of the people in India. The people affected with poverty are mostly tribals and Dalits, and so they are discriminated against socially, economically, and politically, and kept away from forefront of the society. Social evils, such as inequality, casteism, corruption, crime, gender discrimination, and violence, also affect mostly the poor and the weaker sections in society.

India gave birth to many religions and welcomed many religions, and this explains the religiosity of the people of India. However, fundamentalism and communalism leading to
communal violence and upheavals are realities of India which disturb the coexistence of the people of many faiths and the secularism of the land. Sometimes religion has become a weapon in the hands of political parties to work for their hidden interests. Religion also perpetuates discrimination and inequality based on caste and class. The ecclesial context of India can be explained only with its historical roots which go back to St. Thomas the Apostle who came to India in the first century, and also the St. Thomas Christians who claim his tradition, because they constitute more than one-third of the total Christians in India. In the Catholic Church, more than seventy percent of the mission works in India are coordinated by them. Today, the Church is divided into many individual Churches and there are conflicts between these Churches on the matters of power and evangelization. The hierarchy claims the leadership of everything in the Church and this keeps many people away from the Church. Inequality, discrimination, worldliness, institutionalization, etc. also affect the Church negatively as a sacrament of Christ in the world.

The annual meeting of the ITA prepares the platform for theologians to discuss the relevant social issues and also expresses the stand of the forum from a theological point of view. Thus, the yearly statements of the ITA unveil the theology of this forum. ITA believes that the social problems of India are human-made realities that could be solved by effective human efforts in which the Church can also play a significant role. Condemning the profit motive of capitalism, ITA believes that an alternative of Indian socialism taking the good aspects of Marxism and Gandhism can help the country to eradicate its poverty. In this endeavor, priority should be given to people over government and economy, and common good over individual good. ITA also condemns corruption, inequality, crimes, communal violence, and all kinds of discriminations that divide the society and annihilate community values. ITA invites the
Christian community to practice Christian values of *diakonia, koinonia, marturia*, and Eucharistic hospitality to fight against the social problems in the country.\textsuperscript{339} The forum also suggests to the Church that making people aware of structural sins, criticizing and publicly protesting against social evils, joining with other peoples and organizations, standing with the poor and the unprivileged for human rights and development, empowering women to bring changes in the society, etc. can bring changes in the social context of the country.\textsuperscript{340} ITA, which is convinced of the universal presence of the Spirit of God, views the presence of many religions in the country as the richness and beauty of the country. ITA has a pluralistic approach towards religion and which is the basis of its inter-religious approach to theologizing in India. ITA see the religious values of India, such as *satyam, dharma, samabhavana, samatva, ahimsa, maitri, and karuna*, as universal values possessed by all religions, and these values should help all religions in India to work for the establishment of peace and harmony in the country. ITA condemns the pharisaic mentality of the Church in India towards other religions which is not being sufficiently open to the teachings of Vatican Council II. ITA invites the Church in India to work together for the unity of the individual Churches, because all Rites are called to be the sacrament of trinitarian communion. Otherwise they are a mockery. The primary duty of all Christian communities is evangelization, and in India, if the individual Churches cannot work together for this purpose, the effect will be negative. ITA asks each Church to consider others as moral persons with rights and duties, to appreciate the works of each other, and to engage in dialogue, and promote collaborative works. In the power structure, ITA thinks that the Church in

\textsuperscript{339} ITA, "Corruption in Public Life: A Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2012)" no. 61.

\textsuperscript{340} "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 18; See also "Inculturation and Its Practical Consequences (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2001)," no. 15; "A Future Vision for an Indian (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1995)," no. 44.
India should move beyond its authoritarianism and domination and practice the servant leadership of Christ, to become a participative Church avoiding compartmentalization and internal conflicts. The building up of the Body of Christ is the duty of all members of the Church, so that she could be an agent of hope in the country.

The last part of this chapter attempted to gather the main characteristics of the indigenous ecclesiology in the vision of the ITA. Instead of the Western-imported ecclesiology, ITA believes that there should be an indigenous ecclesiology for India which touches the Indian realities and makes the Church relevant in the Indian context. The Church’s commitment to inculturation for her true incarnation in the country, and the involvement to liberate the people of India from their oppressed and dehumanized structures are two major concerns of ITA to structure an indigenous ecclesiology for India. The forum is confident of the values fundamentally present in the country as powerful enough to encourage the Church to fight against all dehumanizing situations in the country.

Scripture and Tradition, the foundations of faith, give identity to the Church. While the Old Testament explains the story of God’s people who refashioned their identity looking back to their history, the New Testament presents history of a people who experienced fruit of the redemptive work of the Christ, and thereby the dignity of the children of God the Father. Tradition is the living faith of the Church that is relived in all ages and places. ITA believes that both Scripture and Tradition are to be critically interpreted not only based on the past but also on the present realities. Two themes of Vatican Council II – the Church as the People of God and a communion of communities - are drawn from Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. ITA

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341 Cf. "Violence in Today’s Society: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2011)” no. 28.
thinks that the theme, the Church as “the People of God,” was not sufficiently developed after the Council. This has resulted in continuing hierarchical dominance and structuralism. The Council’s theme, the communion of Churches, understands the existence of different individual Churches not as division, but sign of communion of which Trinity is the model. The universal Church is concretely realized in the local Churches in their communities, and together they build up the Body of Christ. ITA believes that a rediscovery of the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II will help the Church in India on her way to be an authentic Church, being both a participatory Church respecting the dignity of all members of the Church, and also a Church working together for building up of the Body of Christ, acknowledging the individuality of the particular Churches.

The Spirit of God who guides and moves the Church is also present in other cultures and peoples. A Spirit-guided Church will appreciate the work of the Spirit in India for centuries, and will be ready to reach out to the people of other traditions and ideologies. When the Church is not open to the works of the Spirit, what is left are hallow institutions and structures, and the sale of religion without God. The result is that the Church fails in its mission to be an agent of liberation. ITA wants the Church in India, a country in which a significant portion of the population live in poverty and dehumanizing situations, to become a Church of the poor. To make it possible, the Church should concentrate on joining the side of the poor and work for their upliftment, rather than building edifices. Jesus’ servanthood must be the inspiration for the Church to engage herself in the service of society. The members of the Church should use their different ministries to serve the Church and the society, to make the Church a community of service. ITA believes that the Church can succeed only when it becomes a participative Church and open to dialogue ad intra and ad extra.
Evangelization is the mission of all Church communities and ITA thinks that it is also true with the Indian Church, but should not be limited to proselytization. Faith experience, touching the hearts of people and leading to conversion, should be foundation to the mission of the Church and it should become a witness in the life of the people. ITA believes that Christians’ life-witness rooted in gospel values is the best means of evangelization and making disciples of Christ in India. Dialogue with other religions is also the mission of the Church, because it involves the sharing of one’s Christ experience with co-pilgrims. ITA opines that a Christian fundamentalism that neglects the importance of other religions is not Christian. Instead, a constructive interreligious relation between individuals and communities, especially a dialogue of action based on the traditional values that all Indians accept, will lead to mutual understanding and respect (DM 3). ITA promotes interreligious dialogue and actions and holds onto a pluralistic understanding of religions without diluting the Christian understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Savior. Many Indian theologians believe that Christocentrism is not against Theocentrism, because Christ is the Way to God the Father.

A Theology of the Church without mentioning eschatology is only partial, because the Church is a pilgrim community on earth looking towards its eschatological fulfillment. For ITA, the Kingdom of God, of which the Church is a sign and sacrament, is a reality of freedom, fellowship, and justice. The purpose of the liberative works of Christ during his earthly life was to establish a community of freedom, fellowship, and justice, and this is also true with the liberative mission of the Church. The Eucharistic assembly that gathers together in Christ

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remembers the liberative and redemptive work of Christ as a community, celebrates it as partakers of the fruits of it, and proclaims its fulfillment in the eschaton.
CHAPTER 4

CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY IN INDIA

4.1. Introduction

The Church, the pilgrim people of God, has both internal and external realities that move her forward. The internal realities of grace and faith move the Church with spiritual power which the members of the Church experience in the worship of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. The external reality of the Church is clearly seen in her ministry, which is hierarchically structured and made visible in the Eucharistic celebration (cf. LG ch. 2). The internal aspects that energize the Church move the Church forward and they should always impact the external aspects of the Church. In the history of the Church, at different times, different aspects of the internal and the external realities are emphasized. This is the reason for different ways of sketching ecclesiology. Even the ecclesiology in the New Testament cannot be sketched in a single way.¹ The Church’s self-understanding has changed over the years according to the needs of time. However, the central nature and mission of the Church always remain consistent.

The growth of the early Church was around the Eucharistic table² that gathered the faithful, and when the faithful grew in number and new communities were formed, the

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Sacrament of Eucharist remained as a sacrament of unity. The Eucharist also formed the lifestyle of the early Christians inspiring them to practice the agapeic love of Christ. ITA, which is convinced of the need of an indigenous ecclesiology for India, emphasizes the prophetic aspect of the Church. A close examination of the Eucharist and the mission of the Church shows that the prophetic life of the Church cannot be separated from the sacrament of the Eucharist. This chapter attempts to present the challenges and the implications of Eucharistic ecclesiology in India considering the prophetic dimension emphasized by the ITA. This chapter is divided into three sections. It begins with a discussion of the similarities and differences of the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church and the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA. Next, it discusses the challenges of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in India. Lastly, it deals with the implications of the Eucharistic ecclesiology and their applications in India.

4.2. Ecclesiology of the Early Church and ITA: Differences and Similarities

The statement of the ITA Meeting in 1983, which discussed the need of an indigenous ecclesiology in India, stated that Christianity, being a minority religion in India, faces many challenges in India today, like that of the early Church. From outside the Church, the Church faces persecutions and oppressions in many places, prohibition of public proclamation and conversion, insecurity to her buildings and institutions, treatment as a foreign religion, etc. Inside the Church, many question the imported dress, customs, government, worship, and thought, while many others have different attitudes. However, the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church, which was prophetic and community-centered, remains as a model and inspiration to the

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3 ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 4.
Church in India in many respects. ITA statements have adopted the prophetic life-style of the early Church, at least in a limited way, even though the social, cultural, political, religious, and ecclesial contexts of India and the globe have changed drastically during the last twenty centuries.

4.2.1. Theological Emphasis: A Transition from Theology to Theologies

Christian theology has been evolving from the very beginning of the Church. There was a time when there were no scriptures, no liturgical or theological texts in the Church, but simply a living faith of the people, which is called “Tradition.” Though the time span of the composition of the New Testament books was not so wide, there was a change of theological emphasis from one book to the next. There were various factors that determined the emphasis of the theology of a book precisely based on the needs of the community in which or for which the book was composed. All this points to the ecclesiological diversity in the New Testament, while there were genuine attempts at koinonia between the members of different Christian communities. What is authentic to these communities that constituted the early Church was the unity that existed between theology, worship, and Christian living. Theology of the early Church, especially in

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4 During the apostolic period, the Eucharist appeared “to be the social milieu in which the Jesus traditions were narrated and shaped,” while a sacrament of unity during the time of the fathers of the Church. Cf. Roch A. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 230-1.

5 Cf. Bauckham, 34-9. In this work, Bauckham deals with the role of the eyewitnesses, who had an important role in the formation of the gospels when the Church had no books rather but a living “Tradition.” Cf. also Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 13.

6 Brown, 146-9; Sylvester Kanjiramukalil, *Ecclesial Identity of the Malankara Catholic Church* (Kottayam: OlRSI/Bethany Publications, 2002), 30-1. The New Testament speaks about different ecclesial communities that existed during the apostolic times. E.g.s. Communities in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:12; 12:15), Antioch (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), Caesarea (Acts 18:22), Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28), Churches in Asia (1 Cor 16:19), Galatia (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2), Judea (Gal 1:22), and the Churches to which Paul wrote his letters. In this sense, universal Church is a communion of churches and there is not universal Church apart from the individual churches. The unity that existed between these churches did not demand uniformity.

7 Foley, 29; Cf. Leon-Dufour, 28-30; Cf. also Kereszty, 230-1.
the first three centuries, was more liturgical in its nature, because it took the liturgical texts, its environment, structures, and actions as the source of theologizing. Thus, theologizing from rather than simply about the liturgical event itself was the characteristic of this period. One cannot separate the action, prayer, and the Christ-experience of the Christians of that time, because they encountered Christ in the neighbor through their action. Thus, theology, prayer, and life were linked together in such a way that the Christian life was an outpouring of the inner life of prayer and Christ experience. Though the Church began to grow larger and new communities were formed in the early centuries, they preached and taught the same faith. They were committed to perpetuating the unity and catholicity of the Church working together to build a communion between them.

During the last twenty centuries, Christian theology has developed vastly and in place of the liturgical theology of the early Church, which was very much ecclesiological, there are many branches of theology dealing with different aspects of the Christian faith and practices today. In this shift from the liturgical theology to many theologies, ecclesiology has become one of the branches of theology. Moreover, when the Church grew in number, there arose many ecclesiolgies that emphasized different areas of Church life. In the Catholic Church itself, the

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8 Foley, 349. It was a time when the Church was evolving and she had no theology as such. The fathers of the Church, the early theologians, took the scriptural texts and images seriously to develop the theology and to make the faith reasonable to the people in different contexts. Cf. Niederwimmer, 149; Milavec, 68-9; Antioch, "Letter to the Philadelphians," Ch. 4; Syrus, "Commentary on Genesis," XLIII.8.
9 Foley, 349. During this period, what determined the theology of the Church and the life of the faithful was lex orandi, i.e., the law of prayer.
12 The development of theology in the past centuries has led to the formation of different branches and sub-branches of theology, for example: scriptural theology, systematic theology, moral theology, Christology, ecclesiology, liturgical theology, sacramental theology, pneumatology, eschatology, Christian anthropology, contextual theology, pastoral theology, etc.
theological emphasis in ecclesiology varies from time to time.\textsuperscript{13} ITA, which is committed to building a contextual theology for India, based on theological praxis, considers ecclesiology as one of the branches of theology. This is a major difference from the understanding of the early Church.

Eucharistic theology has also been in the process of change. In its earliest form, which recognized the centrality of the worship as theology, the performance of the liturgy was not only theology but also action. The \textit{koinonia} of the early Church (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32) was going to explain this reality. Edward Foley presents how the three polarities of the mutual critique between \textit{lex orandi} and \textit{lex credendi}, i.e., local – universal, immanent – transcendent, and ethics – holiness work in the Eucharistic theology:\textsuperscript{14} First, in the polarity of the local – universal, the liturgical doctrines and the universal code of law regulate worship, the universal catechism explains it, and the universal Roman Rite prescribes this worship in the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{15} These all together constitute \textit{lex credendi}. However, the Eucharistic celebration (\textit{lex orandi}) is a local event. Though there were attempts of inculturation and recognition of the communal nature of the Church soon after the Vatican Council II, Foley says that \textit{lex credendi} (universal) seems to supersede \textit{lex orandi} (local) in the Catholic Church, particularly since the mid-1980s, with a new stress on uniformity. Secondly, in the polarity of immanent – transcendent, however, the \textit{lex orandi} (liturgical theology) is emphasized in the Catholic Church today following the trajectory

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Eric Plumer, "The Development of Ecclesiology: Early Church to the Reformation," in \textit{The Gift of the Church}, ed. Peter Phan (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 2000), esp. 43. Plumer examines the process of developments (e.g. Roman, Catholic) in the Church with special consideration to four marks of the Church – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Presenting the history of the Church, Plumer notices that now more than ever the idea of the Church as ‘one’ and ‘catholic’ seemed unreal and even a mockery.

\textsuperscript{14} Foley, 346-51.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 346. By “universal Roman Rite” Foley means all rites under Rome. This rite is expressed in different languages with certain adaptations and inculturations, but with the recognition of Rome who serves as the preserver of the unity of the universal Church.
of re-sacralising liturgy and the developments in sacramental theology.\textsuperscript{16} Thirdly, the recent theological flows that have touched both the personal holiness and the ethical life of Christians have contributed to a renewed linkage between liturgy and life.\textsuperscript{17} On the one hand, the liturgy and spiritual life are focused on personal holiness, and on the other liberation theology, feminist theology, and Dalit theology, etc. have emphasized orthopraxis and contributed to the expansion of the \textit{lex orandi, lex credendi} paradigm by including \textit{lex vivendi} and \textit{lex agendi}.\textsuperscript{18} A close examination of the Eucharistic theology of the early Church and the ITA shows that while the early Church tried to combine all these paradigms in a holistic view, the ITA, which emphasizes practical theology, gave priority to \textit{lex agendi}.

4.2.2. Life-witness as a Eucharistic Community: Reality vs Prophetic Vision

The institution of the Eucharist is presented by the New Testament as a prophetic action of Jesus at his Last Supper. As a memorial of his sacrificial death on the cross on the following day, Jesus shared himself in the form of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration is the sacramental celebration of his prophetic action.\textsuperscript{19} The early Christian community, which took the prophetic aspect of the Eucharist seriously, not only remembered the prophetic act of Christ, but also tried to imitate him with the expectation of an immediate union with him at his second coming. This witness of life, which excelled in reciprocal love, emanated in the power of

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 348-9. Two significant developments reshaped sacramental theology with a different trajectory: a) The shifting the understanding of sacraments from “nouns” to “verbs” and “things” to “encounters” that led to b) the move back to theologizing \textit{from} rather than simply \textit{about} the liturgical event itself.


\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Don Saliers, \textit{Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine} (Nashville: Abington Press, 1994), 187. Don Saliers adds one more, \textit{lex agendi} to show the relationship between liturgy and ethical action.

evangelization from the early Christians.\textsuperscript{20} Their prophetic witness led others to say, “see how they love one another!”\textsuperscript{21} For Chrysostom, this witness is closely related to the ethical life of Christians and was intended to establish justice in society.\textsuperscript{22} The word “koinonia” in the Acts of the Apostles is rich enough to explain the witness of life or the prophetic way of life of the early Christians.\textsuperscript{23} Leon-Dufour argues that the Lord’s Supper and the Breaking of the Bread – the two names used by the early Christians for the Eucharist – symbolized a communal life of faith accompanied with rite and service in justice and love.\textsuperscript{24}

Today, in place of this community life of the early Church, there is a lot of rhetoric of communal life, but not many living models of Christian communities. This community life in the early Church is presented as the goal in this rhetoric undertaken by Christian theology and communities. ITA as an intellectual movement tries to envision a prophetic community with the spirit of the early Church by proposing an ecclesiology proper to the cultural, social, and religious context of India. The limitation of ITA is that sometimes its proposal becomes one of the rhetoric or the repetition of the certain aspects of a rhetoric. However, ITA prepares a theological foundation for a prophetic life in the Church in India.

\textsuperscript{22} Chalakkal, 306; See Benedict XVI, "Sacramentum Caritatis, Apostolic Exhortation," nos. 88-92. esp. 89. Benedict XVI presents the social implications of the Eucharist in this part of the document. He says, that the “[s]acrifice of Christ is a mystery of liberation that constantly and instantly challenges us…”
\textsuperscript{23} Leon-Dufour, 28. For Leon-Dufour, the word koinonia cannot be translated as “communal gatherings,” nor to “the meals that took place during the liturgical assembly,” nor as the faithful’s relationship to the apostles, and nor as equal to the sharing of the material goods in the community; instead, it is “the union of all members of the community with one another in the same faith and the same salvation,” which leads to the sharing of their goods.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 30. The name “the breaking of the bread” signifies both a rite and a “sharing” which denotes the social dimension of the Eucharist. Whereas, “Lord’s Supper,” which refers a communal gathering without any class distinctions, presupposes that it is convoked by the Lord, and focuses towards the presence of God. Thus, these two names had convergent meanings that link cult and life.
4.2.3. Christocentrism, Theocentrism, and Pluralism

The early Church, which read salvific history in the light of the Christ event, believed that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). Christ was present in their yesterday (past) in different forms: in the life and hope of Israel and the history of the world, and their Christological reading of the Old Testament convinced and strengthened them in this faith. Christ was present to some of them physically, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. After his death, they also believed that Christ was present in their ‘today’ (present) in a unique way in the Eucharist, in the form of the bread and wine. In other words, their ‘today’ was the time of the “middle coming” of Jesus through human beings in their acts of charity. They also believed that Christ would be present in their ‘tomorrow’ (future). The celebration of the Eucharist was an occasion for them to be rooted in this faith of eternal presence of Christ. This centrality of Christ in salvation through ecclesiocentrism was at the heart of the Catholic understanding of salvation until Vatican Council II. The Council’s openness to other religions (cf. LG 16, NA 2, AG 9) made a shift from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism.

In the Indian context of pluralism, respecting the salvific claims of other religions, many theologians hold theocentrism with a conviction that christocentrism and theocentrism are not

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25 See Joseph Ratzinger, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. Philip J. Whitmore, vol. 2, From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 291. He adopts the term “Middle coming” from Bernard, and says that it takes place in a great variety of ways. The Lord’s coming through his word; his coming in the sacraments, especially in the most holy Eucharist; and acts of charity.

26 Cf. Jacob of Serugh, "Homily on the Transfiguration of Our Lord," in Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies (Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, 1997), nos. 253-4. Serugh says that through Moses and Elijah, who appeared during the transfiguration, Jesus brought to Him all ages so that in front of them he might reveal his glory before his disciples. See Joseph Erambil, The Eucharist and Human Christian Existence (Chalakudy Divine Publishers, 2005), 35. Erambil says, “a) ‘It is a commemoration of the cross and resurrection, the crucial events in God’s victory in the past,’ b) ‘it is a partnership with the living Lord who is now the Lord at his table.’ c) It looks forward to the final victory of Christ when he comes to establish the messianic kingdom. Hence Lord’s Supper guarantees the real presence of Christ, his second coming and believers’ real participation in the Christ event.” Cf. also Paul VI, "Solemn Profession of Faith," (June 30, 1968), 442.
mutually exclusive. However, there are different opinions about this. ITA’s solution that “Christ is constitutively the Way to the Father and as such he is theocentric,” holding that the Way and the goal are not two, but the same, is questionable, because it may dilute the fundamental mission of the Church, i.e., the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ. The basic content of the early proclamation was “…God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). Though theologians are able to differentiate theocentrism and christocentrism in theological language, the common people who interact with the people of other faiths are not aware of it. Thus, there is confusion for them which should be clarified with proper catechesis. Today, the Church is giving importance to the witness of life which is a need in a pluralistic society. However, the Church’s mission, which involves concrete proclamation of the gospel, must be continued to bring forth the reign of God on the earth.

4.2.4. Inculturation: A Question of “Need” and “Must”

The Church emerged as a movement in the Jewish community. Christian theology, worship, and practices have been indebted to Judaism in many ways. When the gospel

27 ITA, "Towards a Theology of Religions: An Indian Christian Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1988)," nos. 11-9; See also no. 31.
28 "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1989)," no. 28-9. ITA argues that there are many people (non-Christians) in India who accept Christ as a Way to the Absolute, and in this sense Theocentrism and Christocentrism are not exclusive to each other.
29 Cf. Francis, no. 110. Pope Francis says that there could be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as the Lord.
30 ITA, "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 5.16.
31 Kasper, 167-8. Kasper says that mission is “necessary for the sake of the eschatological rule of God among the nations; mission is necessary for the sake of the unity of the nations, because this unity and this peace is not only a political and economic problem but just as much a question of reconciliation of hearts; mission is necessary for the sake of the non- Christian religions, not to be freed from them, but to free them and to lead them to a new birth, which they particularly need today in order to survive in a secularized society; mission is necessary for the sake of vicarious service, which we Christians owe all men, especially the poor and the suppressed; mission is necessary for the sake of freeing and reconciling of man. Mission is necessary as service to the one, saved world for which we hope and which is promised to us through the gospel.”
encountered other cultures outside Israel, inculturation was needed for the growth of the message of the gospel. Many ‘Rites’ in the Catholic communion are the best expressions of the inculturation that happened in worship. ITA is convinced of the need of inculturation and uprooting the foreignness of the Church in India, a country which has its own rich religious heritage. However, the initiatives of inculturation after Vatican Council II show that an unselective and indiscriminative inculturation leads to certain dangers. The Church in India had been influenced by the Syriac and Western cultures for centuries and the liturgical traditions of the Churches in India are indebted to them. Today, both the Eastern and the Western Churches in India have a long history of liturgical, theological, and administrative heritage. After being acquainted with the current forms, which have been part of the Indian Church for centuries, they are familiar. These liturgical elements give an at-home feeling to the faithful. On the other hand,

32 Francis Vineetha Vadakethala, "What Is Inculturation and Its Need and Possibilities in the Indian-Kerala-Context," in Inculturation and the Syro-Malabar Church, ed. Bosco Puthur (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2005), 41. Vineeth says that the message of the gospel should become one with the cultures of the land and “transcend the limitations thereof in its orientations to God and to other cultures.”
33 See “3.2.6. Emphasis on Inculturation” in Chapter 3.
34 Few examples would be the following: 1) Marthoma Sleeva (cross): Marthoma Sleeva is an inculturated cross used in the Syro-Malabar Church with the adaptations of Indian culture. This cross is considered as a symbol of this Church. As a part of inculturation, when a number of bishops decided to place Marthoma Sleeva, which is also a symbol of the resurrection of Christ, at the center of the sanctuary instead of the crucifix, many priests and laity protested against it. It divided the Syro-Malabar Church into two groups: those who favor Marthoma Sleeva and who do not favor it. Cf. Mekkattukunnel, 38-9. 2) The “Indianized Mass” prepared by Dharmaram College in Bangalore and the “Indian Mass” prepared by Cardinal Parekkattil were rejected by the Congregation of the Oriental Church. The Congregation did not want the use of the expressions from the Hindu Scriptures, offering flowers to God, use of OM, Saccidananda, Dharma, Guru, etc. found in these texts. Cf. Antony Narikulam, "The Holy See, the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference and the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod on the Inculturation of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy: A Study," in Inculturation and the Syro-Malabar Church, ed. Bosco Puthur (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2005), 71-3. 3) Kalvilakku, Nilavilakku and Nilavilakku with Cross: Kalvilakku is a stone lamb in layers placed in front of the Hindu temples in India. This is also seen in some Christian churches as a part of adaptations. Nilavilakku is an oil lamb with layers used by Hindus in their houses for prayers. In some parts of India, Christians also used it in their homes and Churches especially inaugurating Christian gatherings lighting a Nilavilakku. Among Christians there are two opinions because there are people who favor it and also do not favor it considering it as a Hindu religious symbol. Nilavilakku with Cross is an adopted form of a lamb used in the Church. It has also two versions. Those who accept Marthoma Sleeva use Nilavilakku with Marthoma Sleeva and others use Nilavilakku with simple sleeva (cross). 4) Bharatiya Pooja is not allowed to use as part of the public worship. See “3.2.6. Emphasis on Inculturation.” Cf, also Mathew Paikada, Indian Theology of Liberation as an Authentic Christian Theology: Hermeneutical and Theological Perspectives on Dialogue, Inculturation and Liberation (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 2000), Chapter 4.
many newly elements, though Indian in origin make sense only to the intellectuals who work for their theological enrichment. But to most of the Christians in India, they seem to be foreign. In many respects, inculturation in worship, which is a “must” for a few, i.e., theologians and intellectuals, is not a “need” for the many, i.e. the laity who are acquainted with the present form of worship. Many people, especially the members of the Syro-Malabar Church, are hesitant about inculturation in worship, because any attempts of inculturation in the recent past have polarized the Church and thereby prohibiting to a witness of Christ in the society.

4.2.5. **Eschatology: A Transition from the Expectation of an Immediate Future to an Uncertain Future**

The earliest Church expected the immediate second coming of Christ, the Crucified and the Resurrected One, who had become the Lord. The Eucharistic celebration in the early Church was the proclamation of the death of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26). The Eucharist, as the image of what will be made manifest, was the prefiguration of the fulfillment in the eschatological kingdom (Heb 13:14), an expression of the reign of God in their midst, and an unending enjoyment of the Lord’s Godhead.\(^{35}\) It was the encouragement and the cause of perseverance in the persecuted Church (cf. Acts 7:55). The Eucharist, the greatest worship of the Church, in its eschatological outlook becomes – *marana tha* (1 Cor 16:22) - the greatest prayer of the Church.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{35}\) See McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology*, 7-11. McPartlan says that in the Sacrament of Eucharist, the early Christians anticipated the eschatological unity they hoped for. He says, for the Christians, by the work of the Holy Spirit, the *future* becomes the ground to face an uncertain *present*, and it is realized in the sacrament of the Eucharist. So, we experience God’s future kingdom sacramentally. This future is the triumph of Calvary and the Eucharist makes present the victory and triumph of Christ’s death. Cf. also Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, 339; Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 127-9.

For the early Church, the Eucharist was the life-giving sacrament that celebrated their union with Christ and the Church with the expectation of an imminent eschatological kingdom. The second coming of the Lord and the eschatological kingdom were anticipated in the immediate future of the early Church at least during the New Testament period. Today after twenty centuries, expectations have passed on to another stage. Though the same expectation moves the Church ahead, the uncertainty of the time of the second coming and the establishment of the future kingdom have generated a different attitude toward the eschaton, which is something to be always hoped for, but not a reality in the immediate future. This difference in the duration of the expectation of the eschatological kingdom effects a different ecclesiology between the early Church and the ITA. ITA statements indicate that ITA is more concerned about the social, economic, and political life of the people, though it believes that the Kingdom values of freedom, fellowship, and justice that emerge in this world, will be fulfilled in heaven.37

4.2.6. Salvation, Economic and Social Well-Being, and Social Action

Early Christians were waiting for the immediate coming of the Lord. This was a motivating force to perfect them in Christian charity and to share and serve their fellow beings without holding anything as their own (cf. Acts 2:44). By perfecting them in Christian charity, early Christians prepared themselves to appear worthily before the Lord at his second coming. The Church community that expects the eschatological fulfillment of the salvific experience, must commit herself to the transformation of the world and bring good news to the world, by

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37 ITA, "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 21; "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 31; Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, no. 11. Pope speaks about the need of the Eucharistic way of service with the goal of eternal life: Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing-space. Enclosed within history, it runs the risk of being reduced to the mere accumulation of wealth; humanity thus loses the courage to be at the service of higher goods, at the service of the great and disinterested initiatives called forth by universal charity.
participating in the mission of Jesus.\textsuperscript{38} In Eucharistic ecclesiology, salvation and human well-being are interrelated in such a way that the members of the Body of Christ work here and now for the unity of the Body, which is a sign of eschatological unity. In this hope, the Eucharistic celebration “urges Christians to cry out with their lives as well as their lips: Marana tha! Come, Lord Jesus.”\textsuperscript{39}

The ITA Meeting in 2002 said that the biblical understanding of salvation “is concerned with the wholeness of human persons and the well-being of all creation. Salvation as wholeness is realized in this world and finds its final (eschatological) fulfillment beyond the world.”\textsuperscript{40} ITA views God’s intervention in history, specifically in incarnation and revelation of “God’s self as Abba, Father, the embodiment of unconditional love,” is the force for the transformation of the world confronting injustice, violence, oppression, and exclusion existing in the country.\textsuperscript{41} In a pluralistic world, ITA believes that the Church committing herself to establish kingdom values, a new social order, and closeness to the Divine, has the mission to “promote the emergence of the Kingdom of God within itself and beyond itself.”\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} See Lk 4:15-6: Jesus’ Nazareth manifesto. Jesus mission of bringing good news to the world involved the transformation of the poor and the unprivileged and the establishment of justice in the world. In the Old Testament, God is a liberating God who defends the weak, the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. He delivered Israelites from the strong (Ex 3:8), and brought liberty to everyone (Lev 25); Nathan raises his prophetic voice against David’s injustice to Uriah and his immoral act; Amos called for actions to make justice and righteousness rolldown like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5: 21-4).


\textsuperscript{40} ITA, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 20.

\textsuperscript{41} "Inclusive Development: An Indian Theological Response (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2013)," no. 27; Cf. "Hope at the Dawn of the 21st Century (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1999)," no. 29.

\textsuperscript{42} "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 31; Cf. also Mulloor, 2.
Worship and sacraments and evangelization and preaching the word of God are as equally important as social action or charity in action in the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{43} ITA’s emphasis on orthopraxis\textsuperscript{44} and the prophetic life of the Indian Church, even adapting Marxian analysis, gives the feeling that ITA considers that sacramental life and the Gospel are secondary to the social action.\textsuperscript{45} In the context of India, even the use of the term Marxism, which ITA uses to describe social justice, gives a negative understanding because a large majority of the Indian Christians cannot support Marxist ways as they see the violent means adopted by the Marxist and Communist parties and movements in many parts of India.\textsuperscript{46} Secondly, though the Church is in the world, salvation can never be reduced to social and economic well-being. Salvation is much more than that, because of it is a gracious gift of God,\textsuperscript{47} and it has an eschatological dimension.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. Benedict XVI, \textit{Caritas in Veritate}; Cf. ITA, "Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)" no. 20; Cf. also Chauvet, Part I. In this part, Chauvet establishes the structure of the Christian identity with the help of symbolic order, which consists of scriptures, sacraments, and ethics.

\textsuperscript{44} See “3.2.5. Orthopraxis over Orthodoxy” in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{45} Cf. ITA, "Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1986)," no. 3; "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1985)," nos. 30-45.

\textsuperscript{46} Since 1995 to August 2017, 96 political killing have been reported in Kerala. 82 victims out of 96 were affiliated either to the Communist Party of India (CPI(M) 40) or BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) - RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) (42). Most of these killings occurred in Kannur. Cf. Arun Janardhanan and Shaju Philip, “In Kerala War, How RSS and CPI(M) Are Two Sides of the Same Violent Coin,” \textit{The Indian Express}, August 11, 2017 2017; Murali Krishnan, "Kerala's Political Murders Tarnishing Image of India's 'God's Country','' \textit{ABC News} (2017). Naxalite movement was begun by Charu Mazudarr from West Bengal in early 1970s inspired by the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of China held in April 1969. This movement is also called Maoism, because Chinese communist leader Mao’s thought is the inspiration of this movement to attain political power by violent means. Between 2006 and 2010 alone Maoists killed around 3,000 people in India. Ahuja, 479-81. These records mark the violence to which the Marxist Parties or the its affiliated movements confined to.

\textsuperscript{47} See Francis, nos. 112-4. Pope Francis says that salvation is the work of God’s mercy and not an effect of human merits. The salvation wrought by God is for all peoples and of all ages. The Church is sent by Christ to be the sacrament of this salvation (cf. \textit{LG} 1) in the world.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. ITA, "Christian Commitment to Nation Building (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2002)," no. 20; \textit{Redemptoris Missio Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (7 December 1990)}, no. 5. John Paul II says, “Now a days the kingdom is much spoken of, but not always in a way consonant with the thinking of the Church. In fact, there are ideas about salvation and mission which can be called anthropocentric in the reductive sense of the word inasmuch as they are focused on man’s earthly needs. In this view, the kingdom needs to become something completely human and secularized; what counts are programs and struggles for a liberation which is socio-centric, political and even cultural, but within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent. Without denying that on this level too there are values to be promoted, such a notion nevertheless
4.3. Challenges of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in India

Eucharistic ecclesiology, which is communal, prophetic, and eschatological by its very nature, has been always a challenge to the ministry, mission, spirituality, and life of the Church at all times and places. This is also true with the Church in India. This section is an attempt to sketch some of these challenges.

4.3.1. The Priority of the ‘People of God’ above the Institutional Structure

In the first three centuries, the word “ekklesia” primarily denoted the assembly of the Christian worship, or the Eucharistic community.\(^{49}\) The image of the Church as “the People of God,” which was emphasized by Vatican Council II, was a retrospection of the original understanding of the word “ekklesia.” This image brings forth the theological importance of all members of the Church who have become part of her through the sacrament of baptism (cf. LG, chapter 2).\(^{50}\) A Church that prioritizes the people of God rather than the institutional structure of the Church should be the primary characteristic of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, because the purpose of the sacrament of Eucharist is the building up of the Church, the people of God.

Against the Eucharistic model of building up the people of God, there is a tendency to prioritize the institutions and structures of the Church in India.\(^{51}\) This has been given shape in

\(^{49}\) Cf. “1.2.1. Institution Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels: Liturgical and Ecclesial Meaning” in Chapter 1. Cf. also Alexandria, VII. 5; Foley, 47-8.

\(^{50}\) Cf. the section “2.3.4. People of God and Body of Christ: Principal Imageries” in Chapter 2.

\(^{51}\) ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” nos. 10-1. The last chapter has discussed the ecclesial context of the Church in India that prioritizes the institutionalization in the Church. Cf. “3.3.3.2. The Institutionalization of the Church” and “3.4.3.2. Mission of the Church is to Build up the Community, Not Institutions” in Chapter 3.
two ways: 1) the Church’s over-concern to build up and maintain the hierarchical system, and 2) the Church’s concentration on building up physical structures and institutions, instead of building up the community of the people of God. There would be various reasons for the Church authorities regarding these matters. The Eastern Churches became *sui juris* Churches in the recent past and for them, it is the time of establishing new dioceses and constructing structures and buildings. On the one hand, they are necessary for the functioning of the Church, but on the other hand, people are not very happy about huge bindings and structures which is a counter witness in places where people in poverty struggle for their daily bread. It is also noticeable that in some places there are competitions between dioceses and religious congregations to build up institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. Interestingly, the drawback of these institutions would be that the laity may not have involvement in the functioning of these institutions in most of the places and they do not feel that they are part of this institutional Church. They expect a democratic and participative governance in the Church. That has been often evidenced on occasions when the faults of clericalism have been uncovered before the public in recent years. Though the Church talks a lot about participation and sharing,

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52 That the educational, social, and health institutions run by the Church in India have made tremendous contributions to the development of the Indian society is an undeniable fact. However, today, people are concerned about the profit motif of many of the Christian institutions. CBCI, which tells that the Christian institutions should seek meaningful ways to witness Christ, is aware of the deterioration of the biblical values of the Christian institutions. Cf. CBCI, “The Church's Response to the Urgent Needs of the Country (Mangalore, January 9-17, 1978),” no. 10.

53 Kuriedath, 184; See also 98-9. Kuriedath says that apart from dictatorships, only in the Catholic Church are the three branches of administration - legislative, executive and juridical - vested in a single person, i.e., the bishop and his representatives, in the modern world. Cf. also ITA, “The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996),” no. 36.

it is far behind in taking concrete steps for change.\textsuperscript{55} Eucharistic ecclesiology cannot be primarily institution oriented. It is person-centered and participatory in which everyone is part of Christ.\textsuperscript{56} The history of the Western Church may be a warning to the Church in India not to be overly concerned about structures.\textsuperscript{57} Only a participative Church will be able to make her members respond to God’s call with freedom, making use of the gifts God bestows on them. A people-oriented Church cannot be but participatory. The Eucharistic table is a sharing table and not a commanding table. The one who presides, or the one who has the power, is the servant of all (cf. Jn 13:14). Thus, the ministry in the Church must be used to unite the lives of the faithful with Christ by participating in “his act of giving himself to the Father in the form of giving himself up for all human beings and becoming food for all believers,” instead of touting special powers and social status.\textsuperscript{58}

\subsection*{4.3.2. Retrieving the Original Meaning of \textit{Corpus Verum} and \textit{Corpus Mysticum}}

Henri de Lubac explored the terminological change of “the body of Christ” in the history of the Church.\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Corpus verum}, which was originally understood as the Church, and \textit{corpus mysticum}, which originally meant the Eucharistic body of Christ, during the period of the Fathers of the Church, began to denote the Eucharist and the Church respectively in the second

\textsuperscript{55} Cf. ITA, “The Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” nos. 41-6; “Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983),” no. 3.


\textsuperscript{57} In the Western Church, when the decisions are against the public opinion, they are often ignored by the society. Cf. Kuriedath, 98-9. It took many years for this change to occur in the West. It will happen in the Church in India in the near future, because there are signs of this trend taking place in India.

\textsuperscript{58} Kereszty, 169-70; Cf. ITA, "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," nos. 6.2-3.

\textsuperscript{59} See the title “2.2.1. Body of Christ: The Sacramental and Ecclesial Perspectives” in Chapter 2.
millennium. De Lubac argues that this terminological change has altered the doctrine’s center of gravity. It diminished the realism while it specified the quality of the Christian mystery. De Lubac is of the opinion that the term “corpus mysticum,” when it is used exclusively, does not truly realize “members of Christ,” because it does not mean his “living body” animated by the Holy Spirit. The implication of his argument is that an understanding of the early Church, i.e., *Corpus mysticum* as the Eucharistic body and *Corpus verum* as the ecclesial body, will revive Eucharistic theology and ecclesiology. The advantage of this understanding is that it fosters a communitarian dimension in the Church, i.e., everyone serving the Church, the Body of Christ, living their particular call serve the Church for its building up (cf. Eph 4:12).

In the Indian Church, where the community was vested with more responsibility in administration, managing temporal things of the Church, and in priestly formation until the beginning of the westernization in the seventeenth century, the retrieval of the original

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61 *The Splendor of the Church*, 130.

62 Cf. *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 251. De Lubac says that *corpus verum* as the ecclesial body safeguards the Eucharistic realism and the eucharistic realism confirms the ecclesial realism. See McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology*, Chapter 3. McPartlan says that the history of the Church shows that the faith was celebrated in the weekly Eucharist. The influential figures in the early councils that defined our faith formula were bishops who lead Christian communities in the celebration of the Eucharist, i.e., in the living of faith they reflected upon it. The fathers believed that the Eucharist is where the Church mystically comes into being, and thus, the Eucharist is the mystical body of Christ. Also, the Church is defined by the sacrament of the Eucharist. The change happened in the scholastic period when the bishop took up the role of the governance of the Church, and the Eucharist became the job of priests. In this period, which is characterized by the slogan: “The Church makes the Eucharist,” the Eucharist became one among seven sacraments. However, with the Second Vatican Council, there is an attempt to go back to the understanding of the fathers.

63 Cf. Prusak, 91. See Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 124-6. Zizioulas says that there is a difference of opinion among the bishops and monks on the understanding of ecclesiology. Monastic ecclesiology gave emphasis to the theology of the self-purification whereas the bishops gave emphasis to the eucharistic ecclesiology, which is more communitarian. In the communitarian dimension, liturgy is the realization of the relationship to God. It also involves the saints, the fellow beings, and the entire world. In this context, a particular liturgical action, for e.g., the sign of the cross, mentioning a saint, etc., enjoy a living relationship with Christ, saints, and other members of the community.

64 See the administrative system which existed in the Syrian Church in Kerala, under the title “3.5.3. Church as the People of God in Prophetic Action” in Chapter 3.
understanding of *corpus verum* and *corpus mysticum* will be a theological impetus. These terms denote the communitarian aspect of the Church. The Church in India had a long history of community-centered life before an individualistic and authoritarian attitude arrived with the westernization of the Church. The individualistic and authoritarian attitude of the Church does not build the body of Christ, but instead results in confinement of members in the clutches of legalistic structures. In recent years, the erection of new oriental parishes in Indian cities, drawing people from the Latin parishes, also gives the feeling to the public that the Church is mainly constituted of its structures both Eastern and Western, and not *corpus verum*, i.e., the

65 Although it is not easy to sketch the history of St. Thomas Christians because of the unavailability of the documents that give a clear history of this community, there are certain documents that point to it. The historical search on the sources and evidences of St. Thomas Christians take us back to *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, the earliest record about the apostolate of St. Thomas, written in Syriac and Scholars have traced it back at least to third or fourth century (present form) Edessa. Cf. Frykenberg, 93; Mathias Mundadan, "Sources for the History of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period," in *The Life and Nature of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period* (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2000), 29; George Burke, "The Gospel of Thomas," in *The Gospel of Thomas for Awakening: A Commentary on Jesus' Sayings As Recorded by the Apostle Thomas* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015). Mathias Mundadan, an Indian Church historian, gives us the picture of a triple tradition that can help us to have a glimpse of St. Thomas Christians: 1) the tradition as it is recorded by the Portuguese may be considered as an amalgam of three as it draws on three distinct sources, namely, the Malabar (what the people of Kerala told the Portuguese). There are different local written and oral traditions that speak about St. Thomas Christians (eg. the Hindu accounts - *Keralolpathies* (Origin of Kerala), and the Tamil story about Kandappa Raja). There are some families that claim to have been converted from the Namputhiris, the upper class in the Kerala society. “They still point out their original compounds and localities in one of the places visited by St. Thomas.” Another important evidence to the St. Thomas connection to the Malabar Church is the feast of St. Thomas celebrated on July 3, which “is known among the St. Thomas Christians as *Thorana*, a malayalisation of the Syriac word *dhukhrana* meaning commemoration.” *Thorana* is celebrated in some places as *Chatham* (from *Sradham*), that is a Hindu annual funeral meal in honor of the deceased ancestor. The East-Syrian office for July 3rd remembers St. Thomas’ mission in India2) the East-Syrian (information from East-Syrian people or books). the East-Syrian books speak about St. Thomas Christians as there was a relationship between the Christians of India and the East Syrian Church of Persia from the early centuries. Unfortunately, they are not present today. Mundadan says that almost all of these local accounts, especially the Syriac books, were destroyed by “auto-da-fe program of the Portuguese,” before, during and after the synod of Diamper. 3) Mylapore (what the people of the Coromandel (South-East coast of India) told). The tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore is a unique evidence for the work of St. Thomas in India and the history says that the Christians in the western coast used to make pilgrimages to this sacred place in the eastern coast from the early centuries. Cf. also Mundadan, "Sources for the History of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period," 30-5; *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 6-7. George Nedungatt gives six proofs of the South Indian tradition: the Tomb of Mylapore, the Apostle’s Death, Palayur Story, Seven Churches, the Ballads (*veeradian songs, margam-kali-pattu, rambanpattu*) and the names - ‘Thomaschristians’ and ‘Nasranis.’ For some, St. Thomas Cross found in different parts of India serves as a link with the apostle and a proof for the apostolic origin of Indian Christianity. Cf. George Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India: A Reading of the Evidence* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2008); Frykenberg, 99.
people of God. The theological richness of *corpus verum* challenges the Church to be people-oriented and community-centered, in order to build up the body of Christ. It is also contextual, because the Orthodox Church in India has followed a Eucharist-centered ecclesiology for centuries, and maintains an administrative system in which the entire community has an active role.

4.3.3. A Shift from a Dictating Church to a Spirit-Guided Church

The unity of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. The preaching and the witness of the Spirit-filled apostles (cf. Acts 1:8) gave birth to a people formed as one body in baptism (1 Cor 12:13a). *Lumen Gentium* affirms the life-giving role of the Holy Spirit in the building up of the Body of Christ from its very beginning to the present day.66 It also affirmed that the universal Church is in communion with the Eucharistic communities or local churches by the Spirit (*LG* 23). This communion reflects the “divine communion” and the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.67 For De Lubac, the unity of the Church, which is brought about in the Eucharist, is the work of the Holy Spirit, because the Church is the ‘upper room’ where she has the experience of Pentecost.68 The transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of

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66 Most of the paragraphs of *Lumen Gentium* mention the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. See nos. 1-2; 4-9; 11-15; 17; 19-23; 24-28; 32; 34; 39-45; 48-50; 52-3; 56; 59; 63-65. See Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Athenaeum, 1976), 44. Johnson says that the leaders of the Church exercised their authority through gifts of the Holy Spirit and not through the office. Prophecy and teaching were two noblest gifts. “The apostles set the process in motion, then the spirit took over and worked through many people.” See Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 20. Rahner says that the Church is called to be the symbol of Christ in this world, doing the works of Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit. The Church exists in the full sense, in the highest degree of actual fulfillment of her nature, by teaching, bearing witness to Christ’s truth, making present the grace of the sacraments, etc. See also Duffy, “Sacraments in General,” 188.

67 Joseph Arumachadath, “Communion: God’s Dream for Mankind,” in *Compassion: Passion for Communion*, ed. Jacob Naluparayil (Kochi: Karunikan Books, 2010), 333. Cf. also 1 Pet 2:4-10: The Church as the spiritual house erected by the Holy Spirit. See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, 339. Cf. Didache 9, 4: Just as the bread broken was first scattered on the hills, then was gathered and became one, so let your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is glory and power through all ages.

the Crucified and the Risen Christ in the Eucharistic celebration is the work of the Holy Spirit.\(^{69}\)

It is the same Spirit who makes the people, who are many, into one Body of Christ in the Eucharist.\(^{70}\) Thus, the Spirit effects both the ecclesial body and the Eucharistic body in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The Spirit-filled Christians witness to the Risen Christ before other people as the apostles did in the first century (cf. \(DV\) 7-8).\(^{71}\) Pope Francis says that the Spirit-filled evangelizers are open to the work of the Holy Spirit so that they proclaim the good news not only with words, but by a life transfigured by God’s presence (\(EG\) 259). Unlike the early Church, which was a Spirit-driven Church, there are various elements and practices in the Church such as favoritism in the appointments of the staff and admission of students in the institutions of the Church, clerics’ attempts to control or monopolize the works in the Church, worldliness, catering to the rich and the powerful, etc., that make the people doubt the presence and work of the Spirit in the Church hierarchy in India today. Though the faithful do not have questions on the work of the Spirit in the Eucharistic Body and the ecclesial body, they do doubt when it comes to the administrative system, management of the temporal goods of the Church, involvement in the social issues, conflicts between individual churches, etc. Instead of the servant leadership model of the early Church, some clericalist leaders in India build and protect their hierarchical structures. Their attitude gives the impression to the public that they dictate everything to the people from above.

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\(^{69}\) Faith and Order Commission of WCC, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Faith and Order Paper 111," (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1982), no. 14; Cf. Sandanam, Chapter 4. Sandanam discusses the consecratory Epiclesis and the Communion Epiclesis in this chapter. He says that it is meaningful to have the epiclesis after the institution narrative which shows the eucharistic body that brings the ecclesial body together.

\(^{70}\) John Paul II, "Eucharist: A Sacrament of Unity (General Audience, November 8, 2000)," 115; Kasemann.

within a backdrop of laws. Openness to the Spirit will make changes in the policies and actions of the Church.

4.3.4. The Challenge of Combining Piety and Liberation-Oriented Praxis

God made a covenant with the people of Israel after their liberation from Egypt. Israel’s liberation from Egypt was a miraculous work by Yahweh for his people. In the Old Covenant, Israel, a community which did not have an identity and dignity, was made God’s own people, whereas in the new covenant, Jesus the Son of God instituted the Church, and united the covenantal partners as the members of his body. This corporate body gives a new identity and dignity to the members of the body. It implies a responsibility to seek the liberation of the marginalized and the oppressed, who are deprived of their livelihood, freedom, dignity, justice and rights, and endure physical and mental sufferings due to political, religious, economic, and social realities. In the long run, at the time of Jesus, some people of the old covenant became a community that was more concerned with observing laws than practicing the faith demanded by Yahweh. Like the people of the old covenant, the Church in India seem to be in the chains of legalism in many respects. In recent years, there is a sharp increase in the movements of popular pieties in India. Though they attract many people, the criticism is that the praxis of faith is not attached to some of these pieties. On the other hand, there is a minority who seems to be the advocates of social justice, who criticize everything in the Church in the name of orthopraxis. In this context, the sacrament of Eucharist is a challenge for the Indian Church, because it is a

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72 Monica K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 18. Every Passover was a remembrance and renewal of mirabilia Dei, “God’s liberating intervention on behalf of the habiru (Hebrews), the enslaved and deprived who had been kept from peoplehood, freedom and human dignity” for the people of Israel.

73 Cf. Ibid., 19-20.
“dangerous memory,”74 in which members of the Church in India “realize our identity as Church and as the Body of Christ by re-membering ourselves to the one who would not scapegoat or sacrifice others—the Body of Christ who stands with and liberates victims and scapegoats, and the Body of Christ who exposes, confronts, and resists all forms of victimization and violence.”75

The Church which is founded on the sacrament of Eucharist must be liberative, because Eucharist is all about Jesus’ messianic praxis. Jesus touched the lives of many by his prophetic works of healing, teaching, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, etc. and enhancing the lives of many. This mission cannot be separated from the life of the Church. The early Church still remains as a model for Christian life because it excels in combining life and worship. Today, the Church cannot fully be the sacrament of Christ, if it is a worshipping community alone or a liberative community alone. Instead, it has to combine both these aspects that cannot be separated from the very nature of the Church with faith that God is present in their midst.76 In the ecclesial context of India, piety that attracts a large number of people to the Church cannot be neglected, but should be channeled properly for the growth of the Church with the prudent involvement of the Church authorities. On the other hand, the Church cannot limit itself to piety,


75 Patrick T. McCormick, A Banqueter's Guide to the All-Night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 140; Cf. Pathil, "Ecclesial Communion and Eucharistic Communion," 317. Pathil says that the symbolic and prophetic meaning of the Eucharist is much more important than the question of the 'real presence,' because the Eucharist challenges the Church to discover Christ who is active in the world, and to create community with the values of equality, freedom, justice, peace and harmony, and thus to prepare the way to the Kingdom of God.” Cf. also Benedict XVI, "Sacramentum Caritatis, Apostolic Exhortation," nos. 88-92, esp. 89. Benedict XVI says that sacrifice of Christ is a mystery of liberation that constantly and instantly challenges us.

because the ecclesial life is much more than that. We live in a world where “the voice of the poor cries out that man does not live without bread,”77 and our proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus in the Eucharist becomes meaningful only when we lead a life dedicated to the welfare of the other by participating in the messianic praxis of Jesus.78 When Christian morality is separated from the Eucharist, the source and model of Christian life, morality tends toward mere legalism or an unjustifiable adaptation to a the morality of a particular culture.79 Christian life should become both the celebration of the faith of which the Eucharist is the climax, and an extension of this celebration fulfilling the commandments of love of God and love of neighbor.

4.3.5. Agapeic Love – “the Uniquely Unique” to Make Christianity Relevant in India

India is a secular country with many religions. Though they differ in their doctrines of faith and practices of worship, the fundamental values and moral principles of these religions frequently agree with each other.80 While respecting other religions, Christians in India have a responsibility to show the uniqueness of Christianity to the people of other religions. John Paul II says, “[d]eeply aware of the complexity of so many different situations in Asia, and ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Eph 4:15), the Church proclaims the Good News with loving respect and esteem for her listeners. Proclamation which respects the rights of conscience does not violate freedom, since faith always demands a free response on the part of the individual” (EA 20). This is a challenge before the Church in India with all its situation of complexities. In the present scenario, public proclamation causes divisions and conflicts in the society, because in many

78 Cf. See Gorman, 263; See ITA, "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 7. ITA says that the theological response includes both denouncing and announcing: denouncing all forces that are opposed to the Kingdom values and announcing hope to the suffering and struggling humanity. Cf. also Kuriedath, 110.
79 Kereszty, 202-3. Kereszty says that “[j]ust as in the historical sacrifice of Christ, worship of God and service of man are inseparably united in the Eucharist.”
80 Kuriedath, 107.
places religious fanatics control political parties and divide society, using religion for their political gain.

In the pluralistic context of India, the Church has the mission to build bridges between different peoples, religions, ideologies, and cultures nurturing “mutual understanding, appreciation and acceptance and thus to create a Community of Communities.” This could be possible only with the witness of life of the members of the Church. Indian Christian theologians and philosophers denounce religious fundamentalism and communalism that destroy the secular fabric of India, because they are rooted in fear, greed, and hatred. In a society divided on the basis of caste, religion, color, and status, the Church in India can make herself relevant in the Indian scenario as a prophet of agapeic love and witness to Christ. The Church should communicate with all religions and peoples in all levels, in a spirit of sharing instead of the attitude of instructing and converting, with the conviction that the salvation is the destiny of all people.

Christianity would be the first among the religions that considers love of fellow-beings so central to its message. Christian charity springs from this love which is expressed in nurturing values such as equality, freedom, justice, human dignity, human caring, etc. Today, in many respects, the Church in India is presented as a triumphalist Church, whose main concern is to protect and safeguard its power, institutions, and establishments in society. Unlike the early Church that was known for its dependence on God, the Church in India, which is known mainly

83 "Understanding Salvation in Indian Context (the Final Statements of the ITA Meeting 1980)," no. 8.
84 Kuriedath, 108.
for her institutions and establishments in many parts of the country, may give the impression that these temporal structures are the soul of the Church. When the government invited private participation in education and healthcare and to begin self-management institutions in India, the Church invested a huge amount of money for this purpose. This resulted in the commercialization of the Church’s some of the healthcare and educational institutions in recent years, making them instruments of power in India. This is a big challenge against Christian witnessing and the liberative and prophetic dimensions of the Eucharist. It is a prime reason for the opposition that the Church in India faces from many of the people, both from within and outside the Church. The Church’s answer to criticisms and opposition should be found in the Eucharist, the agapeic love of Christ. Agapeic love of Christ is found in its climax on the Cross of Jesus. We cannot separate his love and cross, which is the sign of his love for humanity. The Church that remembers the agapeic or sacrificial love of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration must excel in the praxis or the witnessing to it. Benedict XVI says, “Christianity is the present: it’s both gift and task, receiving the gift of God’s inner closeness and – as a consequence – bearing witness to Jesus Christ.”

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85 Ibid. The commercialization of the Church’s healthcare and educational institutions has become matter of criticism of the public and media in India these days. It does not mean that all institutions are drawn by the profit motive. If we examine the percentage of the health and educational institutions nationwide, the Church institutions will be at front. However, many a time, we cannot but accept the fact that these facts are faded out these days when people see the multi-story buildings and structures built with profit motive.

86 Spicq, 1, 11. The verb Agapan means ‘to love.’ It means to show respect and kindness. It can be even toward enemies showing them esteem, fair treatment, and help in time of need. Cf. Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953). Nygren presents four characteristics of agape which is found in Jesus: Agape is 1) spontaneous and “unmotivated” (it is divine and not ‘motivated’ one like the human love), 2) “indifferent to value” (e.g., love and concern for sinners), 3) creative (creation out of nothingness and make the creatures participants in creative love), and 4) the initiator of the fellowship with God. Cf. also Sebastian Athappilly, Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2007), 83; Carl R. Hausman, "Eros and Agape in Creative Evolution: A Piercean Insight," Process Studies 4, no. 1 (1974): 17.

87 Resurrection, 2, 282.
There are two things that the members of the Church in India should embody. First, they should have the personal experience of Christ (cf. \textit{EG} 3) which should help them to instill the love of God in them. Western secularism and urban culture have influenced the life of the Church vastly in recent years. In this context, only those who have personal experience of Christ can give witness to Christ protecting the traditional Christian values and working selflessly for the good of the Church and the society. Second, the Church should witness Christ in public.\footnote{John Paul II, "The Church Is a Prophetic Community" no. 7. John Paul II says “[e]very Christian must “acknowledge Christ before others” (cf. Mt 10:32) in union with the whole Church and maintain “good conduct” among non-believers, so that they may arrive at faith (cf. 1 Pet 2:12).” Cf. also \textit{Redemptoris Missio Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate} (7 December 1990), no. 2. The pope says that the entire Church should engage in the missionary activity of the Church.}

The Church has lost control over the non-religious aspects of the life of her members in recent years. To regain it, the leaders should come out of their authoritative approach and be ready to serve its members as servants of the people of God. In her external affairs, in the context of fundamentalism and communalism, the Church should be agapeic in her dealings with the people of other religions. The Church should be ready to serve them in their physical needs, joining the side of the poor and the oppressed so that she can be the leaven in a multi-religious context of India.\footnote{ITA, "Reconciliation in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1982)," no. 5; Dialogue. The document speaks about three different ways to understand \textit{Dialogue}: “Firstly, at the purely human level, it means reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or, at a deeper level, to interpersonal communion. Secondly, dialogue can be taken as an attitude of respect and friendship, which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelizing mission of the Church. This can appropriately be called “the spirit of dialogue.” Thirdly, in the context of religious plurality, dialogue means “all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment,” in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions.”}

4.3.6. \textbf{Make the Eucharist a Sacrament of Unity not of Division in India}

The Eucharist, which is the sacrament of unity in the Church, gives the impression that it is a sacrament of division in the Indian Church today, both inside and outside the Catholic
Church. The Eucharist was the fundamental characteristic of the early Christian community (cf. Acts 2:42). Afanasiev and Zizioulas argue that the plurality of local churches in the early centuries did not destroy the unity but safeguarded the unity of the Church, and this unity was experienced in the celebration of the Eucharist. However, “there is an intra-ecclesial communalism in India,” and Eucharist is one of the major causes promoting it, because Christians who proclaim the Lordship of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11:26), are not able to sit together around the Lord’s table today.

There are various factors that contribute to the division on the Eucharist and intercommunions at different levels in India. The disagreement on the doctrine of Eucharist and ministry is the main factor that divides the Catholics and the reformed churches in India.

Worship being the center of Christian life, this division is seen outwardly everywhere in the

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91 Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," 109-2; Cf. Zizioulas, 92; See also George, 229; Cf. Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 93.
92 ITA, "Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1987)," no. 17. The 1987 ITA Statement says that the Christian community in India is divided and subdivided into hundreds of denominations and each of them suffers “from divisions based on caste, class, rite, language, race, and the purity of blood.” Cf. "The Issue of 'Rites' in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993)," no. 8.
93 Senn, 322. Senn says that what we do is abstaining from communion in ecumenical assemblies in which full communion is not yet possible. Instead, what we need is a Confession of our sins and of the Church that keeps us from gathering at the one Table of the Lord. Senn’s logic is that there is need of an experience of unity and the wholeness of Christ is necessary if we lament the lack of it, and it necessitates occasions of communion together in ecumenical gatherings when it is possible. Cf. Luis M. Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1986), 323. The Catholic Church sees the Eucharistic celebration as 1) a sign that should reflect the existing unity of the Church; and, 2) the Eucharist is not only the sign but also the cause, the source of unity. See Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "Ravenna Document" (paper presented at the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna, October 13, 2007); See also Faith and Order Commission of WCC. The document discusses the following aspects of the Eucharist in detail: Eucharist as thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, foretaste of Parousia, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, and meal of the kingdom.
94 Ernest Falardeau, "Eucharistic Sharing: Recent Developments." For laws of intercommunion see John M. Huels, *One Table, Many Laws: Essays on Catholic Eucharistic Practice* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), Chapter 6. Cf. also John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint, Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, no. 46; "Word, Eucharist and Divided Christians (General Audience, November 15, 2000)." John Paul II explains the limits of intercommunion at the Word and the Eucharist as a call to purification, to dialogue, and to the ecumenical progress of the Churches. It should be a challenge to understand the desire of Christ, “that they shall be one.”
world. Though the Catholic Church accepts and recommends intercommunion between the Orientals and Catholics in suitable circumstances, most of the time they remain self-focused within their own sect which perpetuates division. However, the same people when they are outside India they do not have much problem with intercommunion or cooperative activities.

In the Catholic Church in India, which is a communion of three individual churches, there are tensions and competitions between the churches. They follow three ‘rites’ of the Eucharist. Until the erection of the parishes and dioceses of the Oriental Churches in the major cities outside Kerala, which occurred in the past few decades, the Christians in the Eastern Churches worked with the Latin Rite parishes. When the new eastern dioceses were established, often there occurred tensions between the priests and the laity of the Latin and Eastern Rite parishes. Many Eastern Rite Catholics also do not like establishing new parishes for them in these places, because having worked with the Latin dioceses for years, they have been comfortable with the way it is. They see it as a matter of politics and power. There are also divisions at the Eucharist in communities where casteism prevails. “Higher class” Christians in some places do not go the Eucharist in those parishes having mostly “lower” caste Christians. Thus, the Eucharistic table upon which Christ shares himself for all has become a table of division even among the Catholics in India. Considering these facts seriously, the Church in India has to work for the unity of all Christians in India, first among the Catholics and then at a wider level, so that the Eucharist can be a sacrament of unity in India.

2.1.1.1. 95 See “3.3.3.1. Conflicts between Individual Churches” in Chapter 3.

96 See “3.3.3.4. Compartmentalization and Discrimination,” and “3.3.3.5. Failure of the Church’s Response in the Social Issues and Local Realities.”
4.3.7. **Make the Church the Body of Christ/People of God, Not a Crowd**

Divisions in the Indian Church and compartmentalization give the feeling of a betrayal of the reality of the Body of Christ and the people of God – the children of the same Father.\(^97\)

Though the Orthodox Churches are called sister Churches, rarely do Catholic and Orthodox Churches act as sisters in practical life. They do not seem to be the daughters of the same Father.\(^98\) In the Catholic Church, the animosity that exists between Syrian Christians and Latin Christians in some places, between Tamil Latin Christians and Kannada Latin Christians, between certain groups of Latin Christians, liturgical polarization in the Syro-Malabar Church,\(^99\) etc. raise questions about the building up of the Body of Christ in India. In this sense, what we see in India is not the Body of Christ, but several bodies that never agree with each other; not the people of God, but a crowd consisting many peoples with many interests working for their own benefits.

The changes brought by the Vatican Council II in ecclesiology represent a hope for those who work for the unity of the Church. However, the present situation in India shows that the teachings of Council still remain words in a document. Bermejo says that even decades after the impulse given by the Council for ecumenism, the Catholic Church in India has not taken any initiative in this regard.\(^100\) The result is that instead of cooperation, the Catholic Church and other churches fight with each other and become objects of laughter before the people of other faiths.

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\(^97\) ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," no. 7.

\(^98\) There are many things, especially doctrine, upon which they agree, but in practical life they perpetuate hostility. Cf. Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

\(^99\) The Syro-Malabar dioceses in India are divided into two groups on the application of the liturgical reforms after the Council. A group of dioceses are for defending and exploring the Eastern liturgical traditions and the other group is for Indianization or the preservation of the “Latinised” forms.

\(^100\) Bermejo, 346.
Rediscovering the ecclesial aspect of the Eucharist, which is given importance in the Council (cf. SC 2, 10, 47) emphasizing the unity brought by the Eucharist, will help the Church in India to grow as the body of Christ and the people of God.

4.4. Eucharistic Ecclesiology in India: Implications and Recommendations

An exploration of the implications of Eucharistic ecclesiology will help the Church understand her being, mission, and goal. The Church in India has a prophetic mission to be involved in nation-building, safeguarding and promoting religious and social values inherited by the people of India. It has both intra-ecclesial and extra-ecclesial dimensions. It should be begun in the Church itself so that she could be an example. The sacrament of Eucharist helps the Church realize her being as - covenantal, communitarian, corporate, prophetic, and “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.” It will contribute to building the Church as the sacrament of Christ in India and also support to build a just and egalitarian society in India.

4.4.1. Implications of the Covenantal Perspective

The institution narratives bring forth the covenantal perspective of the Eucharist (cf. Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), which allude to the “covenant” in the Old Testament. Like the old covenant that formed Israel as God’s people, the “new covenant” forms a people and a “new meal” by building a bond between the participants of the covenant.

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101 Kereszty, 161-2.
102 At the place of the “covenant” in the Old Testament, Jesus instituted a “new covenant.” See the section “1.2.1.1. Passover and the Covenantal Perspectives” in Chapter 1.
4.4.1.1. Eucharistic community is a covenantal community

Meals had much importance among the Jewish community as signs of their relationship with God. The Passover meal in the Old Testament specifically brought forth the memory of a covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel. In the Eucharist, which is the new covenantal meal (cf. Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), Christ builds up a community by sharing his body and blood. For Paul, the communion (koinonia), which is established by sharing the body and blood of Christ, is a participation in the death of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:16), which is a redemptive act. Sharing in the body and blood in the Eucharistic symbols gives us a share in the corporate body of Christ. Thus, koinonia brings forth a new mode of existence to the participants in the new covenant. In both the old and the new covenants, the relationships between the partners are compared to a nuptial relationship. In the Eucharistic celebration, the groom makes himself present in the gathering of the bride as a body. The covenantal sign of drinking the cup allows the Father to claim those who drink the cup for the kingdom. The Church prays for its fulfillment and waits for it.

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103 Cf. LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke*, 123-4; Cf. McKenna, 27; also see 39. McKenna says that there was a concept of sharing meal with God among Jews and in this meal God was considered to be the host inviting to the banquet. “Eat ‘before the Lord,’ in his presence, and you share a common life with God (see Deut 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26; 15:20; 27:7).” See also ibid., 41-2. “The Passover celebrates what Israel had become under God’s saving, life-giving presence. It also has a quality of refusing to be relegated to the past. This celebration enabled Israel to express and experience itself as a nation in the face of ongoing stress and pressures from unbelievers. It was to set them apart.”


105 Chalakkal, 305; Cf. Ouellet, II. A. Ouellet says that in baptism, the believer is incorporated into Christ, “who is unique and universal,” whereas the Eucharist highlights one’s belongingness to the particular church, the concrete community in which the Eucharist is celebrated. However, “[t]his difference does not justify an opposition between two ecclesiologies, because the two sacraments of the New Covenant are ordered to one another.”

106 God is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride in the old covenant (cf. Is 54:6; 62:5; Jer 31:32; Eze 16:7-14; Hos. 2:16, 19), whereas Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is the bride in the new covenant (cf. Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19-20; Lk 5:34-35; Jn 3:29; 2Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25f.; Rev 3:20; 19:9; 21:2, 9; 22:17).

The Church that prays and waits for the eschatological kingdom, trying to build the world by promoting kingdom values. Religious values of love, sharing, service, and forgiveness, that underpin the sacrament of Eucharist, call the Church to prophetically involve itself in the history for human well-being and the economic and social uplifting of the people. McKenna says that service to one another is an integral part of the new covenant, and for Paul, the servant theme applies to the Christians and not only to Christ. Service is the power of the Church and it had been revealed in the early Church in its best form (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35).

4.4.1.2. The Church as “the People of God” and “the Body of Christ”: the covenantal names

The two main Pauline images of “people of God” and “Body of Christ” found in the documents of Vatican Council II are intelligible in the context of both the old and the new covenants. In the Old Testament, Israel is presented as “the people of God” and this title shows the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel. For Christians, the old covenant is a figure of the new covenant and the old people of God is a figure of the new people of God of which the hope is the eschatological gathering of the wedding feast of the lamb. Worgul opines that when Paul uses this title the “People of God” (laos tou theou) in his letters, he has relied on the Septuagint, in which the word laos specifically means Israel. It shows God’s

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108 McKenna, 69-70.

109 See “2.3.4. People of God and Body of Christ: Principal Imagery” in chapter 2. Cf. Worgul. In this article Worgul argues that the two titles of the Church in the Pauline letters, “People of God” and “Body of Christ” are very significant in the development of different ecclesiolgies in the history of the Church. See also, Jacob of Serugh, "Homily on the Great Sunday of the Resurrection," in Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Al Homilies (Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, 1997), no. 26. The old covenant was fulfilled in Christ with the institution of the new covenant in his blood, which forms “the body of Christ.” See McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology, 21.

election of Israel as His people. In Pauline usage, the title “People of God” includes both Jewish and Gentile Christians chosen by God in history with a specific purpose. In the biblical perspective, the covenant is not an individual covenant. It has a community dimension in which individuals participate. When the Israelites formed a nation after coming to the promised land, they celebrated their “being” as “God’s own people” through feasts, observances, and worship, and perpetuated the memories of the covenant. The memory of the new covenant is perpetuated by the new people by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, Christianity celebrates its “being” as “the people of God” in the Eucharist (cf. LG 11). However, “the people of God,” who are historical pilgrims who are not perfect and need continuous reforms, from its covenantal perspective “suggests an ecclesiology attentive to its origins and destiny.”

Paul very often uses the image “body of Christ” (soma tou Christou) for the Church. The identity of the new people of God becomes “body of Christ” in the Eucharist. The Church, as “the body of Christ,” is the new covenantal name that indicates the relationship between Christ and the members of the Church established through the eucharistic communion.

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111 Worgul, 24. The theological importance of the title “the people of God” consists of Israel becoming “God’s possession,” which was initiated by God (Ex 4:9), with his involvement in their history and deliverance from the bondage in Egypt (Deut 7:6-8). As to the part of the people, it involves a responsibility “to adhere to the laws of the covenant (Deut 7:9-11).”
112 Ibid., 25; See William C. Mills, Church, World, and Kingdom: The Eucharistic Foundation of Alexander Schmemann’s Pastoral Theology (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2012), 105-6. “The Church is the continuation of this Israel of God, those people called apart to follow Christ and serve his holy will (see Gal 6:16). The purpose for the gathering is for worship, prayer, and to offer thanksgiving to God.”
113 Hellwig, 56.
114 Cf. LaVerdiere, Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke, 137; Hellwig, 55. Hellwig says “[a] sacrament is always an act that establishes a covenant community.” In the sacrament of Eucharist, the Church as a community of God is celebrated and relived. Cf. Kedell, 66; Cf. Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae,” III. 73.3. Aquinas says that the res of the Eucharist is the unity of the members of the body.
115 Worgul, 27-8; Cf. Lubac, The Motherhood of the Church, 77.
116 By this time, this research has established that the Eucharist is the new covenant in Jesus’ blood and the Church is the body of Christ built up by the eucharistic communion. Cf. “1.2.1.1. Passover and Covenantal Perspectives,” and “1.2.5. Building up of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians,” and “2.2.1. Body of Christ: The Sacramental and Ecclesial Perspectives.” The Second Vatican Council very often uses the image “body of Christ” in its document Lumen Gentium (cf. nos. 3; 7; 12; 14; 17-18; 21-23; 26; 28; 30-33; 39; 43; 45; 48-50; 52; 54). Cf.
body of Christ” is intelligible only in the context of the Eucharist, because in reality, the Church “is nourished by, and conformed to, the real body of Christ in the Eucharist.”\(^{117}\) The new covenant was initiated by Christ sharing his own body for “the body of Christ,” the Church. The members of the Church are the members of this body of which Christ is the head (cf. Col 1:18; Eph 5:23).

The covenantal perspective in the Indian context presupposes a relationship between Christ and Church, i.e., all members of the Church in India. In this relationship, every member of the Church works together as responsible partners of the covenant. The covenantal perspective also shows that one’s individual existentiality is a communal existentiality, because the personal union with Christ in Holy Communion is accomplished only through union with the community.\(^{118}\) The images of the Church, “the People of God” and “the Body of Christ” underline this reality.\(^{119}\) The conviction that the people of God, though hierarchical in nature (cf. \textit{LG} Chapter 3), are the children of God can help the hierarchical Church in India to come out its triumphalist and authoritarian attitude. On the other hand, the conviction that they are parts of “the Body of Christ” may encourage the lay people to feel the importance of their role in the Church and to commit themselves for the mission of the Church. Thus, these images can also perpetuate an egalitarian concept of belongingness in the Church.

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\(^{118}\) Cf. Moloney, “The Eucharist Builds up the Church,” 137-8.

\(^{119}\) Worgul, 27-8. Worgul says, “Although different positions of authority and various functions are part of the People of God, the radical unity, solidarity and equality of all members takes precedence and priority over all differences and status.”
The covenantal perspective also points to a saving event. Yahweh made covenant with the people of Israel at Mount of Sinai on their way to the promised land. Around the covenant Yahweh also made his miraculous interventions in the life of Israel to save them. The new covenant is signed with the blood of Christ and its fruit, i.e., salvation, is to be enjoyed by all surpassing all ages and peoples. The Church in India, which enjoys the fruit of this salvific intervention of God in history mysteriously in the sacrament of the Eucharist, has to realize that her present advantage is not her merit but the fruit of the work of Christ. God can confer the fruit of his salvific work to anyone in this country according to his plan which can be mysterious to human eyes. This realization can help the Church to foster inter-religious dialogue and also cooperate with other religions for the building up of the country.

4.4.2. Eucharistic Ecclesiology Implies the Corporate Personality of the Church

The concept of corporate personality that existed in ancient Israel was founded on Israel’s specific call and covenant with God. The idea of the Church as a corporate person derived in Christian thought with Paul’s use of the image of the Church as “the Body of Christ,” and continued during the patristic period. In the last century, the Eucharistic ecclesiology of De Lubac and Zizioulas, which zoomed in on the image “the Body of Christ,” emphasized the corporate personality of the Church. The unity of “the Body of Christ,” for de Lubac and

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120 Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel, Revised Edition ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 27-44. Robinson presents the key traits of the corporate personality of Israel: 1) A sense of unity with the past and the future according to which the ancestors live through their offspring; 2) Realism of the corporate personality that accepted the same breath or soul that animated many members, and their common blood tie; 3) Fluidity that presented the individual in the collective and the collective in the individual; and 4) “[T]he maintenance of the corporate idea even after the development of a new individualistic emphasis within it.” See McKenna, 61-4; Cf. Worgul, 26.

121 The corporate presence of the Trinity is also considered the model of the corporate personality of the Church. Trinity, who is holiness itself challenges the Church to be transformed by the divine presence. Cf. McBrien, 165-6.
Zizioulas, is the work of the Holy Spirit,\textsuperscript{122} who is behind the principle of ‘One’ and ‘Many’ in the Church: the members of the Church (Many) becoming ‘One,’ in the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{123} The Eucharist, the new covenant, is the source that binds up the members of the Church as a corporate person.\textsuperscript{124} The members are constituted as a corporate body under the bishop, who is the head of the local church;\textsuperscript{125} the temporal administrative system of the collegiality of the bishops that represent local churches is an expression of the communal and corporate nature of the Church (cf. \textit{LG} 24-5).\textsuperscript{126}

The understanding of corporate personality that underlines Eucharistic ecclesiology can help the Church in India to solve the tensions between bishops, clergy, and laity and to work against the forces of compartmentalization. The idea of corporate personality gives all members of the Church a goal to fulfill as a community. Different ministries and duties in the Church should help in fulfilling this corporate goal. Therefore, no ministry in the Church can be seen unimportant or secondary, but all ministries are important and they are to be performed as a collaborative functioning open to the Holy Spirit who is working in the Church. If this approach

\textsuperscript{122} Cf. Lubac, \textit{The Splendor of the Church}, 130, 58; Zizioulas, \textit{Being as Communion}, 4, 110-1.
\textsuperscript{124} Kereszty, 177. Kereszty says that the Eucharistic assembly, which “shares in the body-person of the Crucified and Risen Christ,” enters into a sacred space and becomes “a Temple of the Lord in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).” Same as with the space, the assembly also enters into the time of the crucified and risen Christ. In the early Church, they didn’t have a place specifically erected for the celebration of the worship. When they had the suitable political and economic atmosphere, they began to build the buildings of worship, “\textit{domus ecclesiae} ‘house of the assembly’ so that the name itself would make clear that the building derived its sacred character from the eucharistic assembly (ecclesia), rather than the assembly becoming sanctified by contact with the sacred building.” See also Karl Rahner, \textit{The Eucharist: The Mystery of Our Christ} (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1970), 13. Rahner says, in each Eucharistic celebration, what happened at the Lord’s Supper “enters into our place and our time, and acquires presence and redemptive power within our own being.”
\textsuperscript{125} Ciraulo, 48.
is welcomed in the Indian Church by all members that will be a turning point because there are places where people seems to be tired of clericalism and welcome changes in the administration with more respect for participation of the laity. It has been noted that when certain issues arise in Christian communities and institutions, mostly it is the laity who criticize it because they are not satisfied with the present system. The idea of corporate personality also will give more responsibility to the faithful in the mission of the Church.

4.4.3. Collectivism Implied in “the Eucharist Makes the Church” and Its Impact on Rites

According to Moloney, there is an interconnection between the goals of incarnation and the Eucharist. The goal of incarnation is the transformation of the world, of which today, the Church is the greatest means. In the Church, the Eucharist is the means of transformation that makes her more completely the Body of Christ. Today, secularism and individualism are the two challenges that the Church faces in her transformation and living out the claim that “the Eucharist builds up the Body of Christ.” Moloney argues that measuring the Eucharist by a merely human measure would be a betrayal of its precious heritage. Individualism can be a divisive force against the corporate nature of the Church. What needs to be fostered is communion. Sadly, we are very far from attaining this ideal because individualism is frequently embraced. Moloney addresses the question how in our individualized world we can make our life in the body of Christ a living truth for the ordinary people of God. He examines the role of the liberation theology in Latin America, which considered the Eucharist as the Passover and the liberation for the people of God emphasizing social justice. Moloney says that “the truth of the Body of Christ is more than political and social responsibility,” because there is mysterious

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aspect that makes us members of one another being part of the Body of Christ of which “social
e ngagement for justice is only one of the fruits to be hoped for.”\footnote{Ibid., 132-3.} Moloney believes that this
mysterious and corporate way of thinking of the Body of Christ is more evident in the spirituality
of Therese of Child Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., 133.}

Moloney shows the importance of combining both the individualistic and the collective
attitudes in Eucharistic Communion. He addresses two approaches to Holy Communion: familiar
and personalist, and mysterious and corporate. The former, which is related to the death of
Christ, and the latter, which is related to the resurrection of Christ, are complementary in the
liturgy. There is a personal union with Christ in Holy Communion, but it is only through union
with the community that Christians are united with Christ.\footnote{Ibid., 137-8. Through baptism, Moloney argues, we become mediators of God’s grace and we belong to Christ
and to one another as members, in varying degrees, within the ecclesial Body of Christ. The theology of the
resurrection teaches us that the Eucharist is the effect of the resurrection of Christ, which was central to the patristic
understanding.} The resurrected Christ continues to
work out the redemption of the world in the ecclesial body in the sacrament of Eucharist. “At the
table of the Eucharist, the Risen Christ is caring for his own Body, feeding it with his own flesh,
so that we might be made more effective members of this mystery, and so become more fruitful
channels of his life to those other members of his Body who depend on us.”\footnote{Ibid., 138.} In this way, the
Eucharist and the Church are united inseparably and the Church emerges in the Eucharist ‘as
what she truly is’ (cf. \textit{EE} 61).

A collective or communion approach to the Church may be able to resolve the tensions
between the “Rites” in the Indian Church. The three individual churches that follow three
liturgical traditions in the Church, with all their particularities, form the “Body of Christ” in

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Ibid., 132-3.}
\footnote{Ibid., 133.}
\footnote{Ibid., 137-8. Through baptism, Moloney argues, we become mediators of God’s grace and we belong to Christ
and to one another as members, in varying degrees, within the ecclesial Body of Christ. The theology of the
resurrection teaches us that the Eucharist is the effect of the resurrection of Christ, which was central to the patristic
understanding.}
\footnote{Ibid., 138.}
\end{footnotesize}
India. Though they have three “Rites” of celebrations, they do not form three bodies of Christ, but only one Body, which is a part of the universal Church or the Body of Christ. The three individual churches, in their individual liturgical identity, form “three bodies” or communities. However, from a communion point of view, they form the one Body of the resurrected Christ. Though they seem to be different in their liturgical identity, they are fed at the table of the Eucharist by Christ who cares his body with his own flesh. Different “Rites” emerged at particular loci where local churches celebrated their Eucharist in the early centuries and entered into communion with Christ. It led them to share both their spiritual and material effects and thereby deepening the bonds of the community. Though a person is part of one Rite or individual Church, s/he is also part of other Rites or Churches, being a member of the one Body of Christ. If this understanding of the Body of Christ is taken seriously by the individual churches in India, many of the inter-ecclesial tensions could be solved easily. Moloney’s two approaches of communion, familiar and personalist, and mysterious and corporate, also helps us to encourage the ecumenical movements in India.

4.4.4. Eucharistic Body Builds up the Ecclesial Body with an Eschatological Focus

Examining the celebration of the Eucharist in the early Church, Otto Knoch argues that the principal task of the Church is to recover the eschatological orientation and the communion and unity of the Christians at the Eucharist. De Lubac’s concept “the Eucharist makes the Church” is a reality fulfilled in eschaton. For Zizioulas, the Eucharistic assembly has an

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eschatological movement and it is an indicator of the ecclesial hypostasis, i.e., not only of history, but also of eschatology; or “already” and “not yet.” In the Eucharist, proclaiming the death of Christ (1 Cor 11:26), the Church becomes a messianic community in which the saving power and grace of Christ are present and operative. In this sense, Jesus’ Last Supper was an anticipation and proclamation of the final banquet in the Kingdom (cf. Lk 22:30).

“Any Eucharistic celebration which centers on our earthly life alone stands in contradiction to the biblical witness,” because it’s focus is also the Kingdom of God. In the ‘already-not-yet’ dynamism of the Church, the Kingdom is the future fulfillment of the Church. Jesus began his ministry by preaching the Kingdom of God. However, it does not mean that the Church and the Kingdom are the same reality. The Church is also called to be the “symbol” and

135 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 4, 61-2; Cf. Padilla, 39. Padilla says that the Church is not a wandering Church but a pilgrim Church. The pilgrim Church will have a specific goal, i.e., the reign of God which will be fulfilled in eschaton. Cf. also Alkiviadis C. Calivas, "The Eucharist: The Sacrament of the Economy of Salvation," in One Loaf, One Cup: Ecumenical Studies of the 1 Cor 11 and Other Eucharistic Texts, ed. Ben F. Meyer (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 131.
137 Kereszty, 198; Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae," III, Q. 73, A 5-6. Aquinas views the Eucharist as the center of salvation history and the Eucharistic celebration is the sacramental celebration of salvation, because salvation is the fruit of the Jesus’ passion and death (cf. Rom 5:25), and it is sacramentally made available to the faithful in the Eucharistic celebration. All the sacrifices before the sacrifice of Christ, especially the Passover sacrifice of the Old Testament, prefigure the sacrifice of Christ or, in other words, the Eucharist was anticipated in them. In their prefigurative relationship with the Eucharist these sacrifices point to the eschatological meal joining the sacrificed and risen body of Christ. For Aquinas, the rituals of the old law are pointed towards the eucharist and they also possess the grace of the new testament sacraments, in so far as they are directed to the Eucharist. Cf. Ibid., III, Q 79, A 1.
138 Kereszty, 239.
139 Alexander Schmemann, The Eucharist, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 23; See For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 26. Shmemann says, “The liturgy of the Eucharist is best understood as a journey or procession. It is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom. We use this word ‘dimension’ because it seems the best way to indicate the manner of our sacramental entrance into the risen life of Christ.” See also “1.2.1.4. The Eschatological Perspective in the Building up of the Church” in Chapter 1. Marion, 174. Marion affirms that the Eucharistic presence has an eschatological dimension, because the Eucharist is “by itself, the absolute gift, whose perfection anticipates our mode of presence, surpasses our attention, dazzles our gaze, and discourages our lucidity.” Cf. also Sebastian Madathummuriyil, Sacrament as Gift: A Pneumatological and Phenomenological Approach (Leuven: Peters, 2012), 242.
the “servant” of the Kingdom in the world, fulfilling its historical mission. In this way, the Church promotes the Kingdom in the world.\textsuperscript{140} “The Church is only a humble instrument and agent” and may not be the “exclusive agent” of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{141} Thus, the goal of salvation history is not limited within the Church, but it is extended to the Kingdom of God. The Church, “the universal sacrament of salvation,” can mediate the blessings of the Trinity upon humankind “at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God’s love for men” (cf. \textit{GS} 4-5).\textsuperscript{142} The Church, the seed of the Kingdom of God, waits eagerly for its coming and works to accomplish Christ’s salvation, filled with the Spirit (\textit{EA} 17). The coming of the Kingdom “is not fixed, but that for which one seeks and orders one’s life.”\textsuperscript{143}

The eschatological focus of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in India has many implications. They could be sketched as follows:

1) \textit{The Church in India is a pilgrim Church with other individual churches in the world.}

The pilgrim Church cannot be a wandering Church, because she has a specific goal, i.e., the reign of God among them.\textsuperscript{144} This pilgrimage is a joint work of all members of the Church.

\textsuperscript{140} Amaladoss, “The Multi-Religious Experience and Indian Theology,” 174; Cf. also “The Kingdom of God as the Goal of Mission,” \textit{Vaiharai} 1 (1996): 277-92. The Eucharistic celebration is particularly important for the Church because it makes the Kingdom sacramentally present in the Church. Kereszty says, “[i]t is in the Last Supper that all his teachings about the Kingdom become reality: the Kingdom is communion with him and with each other, established in his free gift of the self through his impending violent death.” See Kereszty, 198.

\textsuperscript{141} Pathil, \textit{Theology of the Church: New Horizons}, 67.

\textsuperscript{142} Cf. Mulloor, 2; Vatican Council II, “\textit{Gaudium Et Spes}, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7 December 1965),” nos. 4-5; ITA, “Church’s Engagement in Civil Society: A New Way of Being Christian in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2008)” no. 21. The Meeting says that “[t]he Church community must desist from seeing itself as superior to the world. It speaks correctly of the rightful autonomy of the secular sphere. In fact, today it is the secular state that accords religious freedom to different faith groups in civil society.”

\textsuperscript{143} Bruce Chilton, \textit{Jesus’ Prayer and Jesus’ Eucharist: His Personal Practice of Spirituality} (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 13.

\textsuperscript{144} Padilla, 39. In the recent past, many attempts of inculturation have become a source of division in the Church in India among the Church authorities and have thrown the common people into confusion.
However, the people in the hierarchy and theologians have a leading role in this pilgrimage, because their service and sacrifices for the community lead the entire community more easily to the destination. Their prophetic life in the Church, based on the gospel values, can influence the life of the members of the Church and ease the pilgrimage. Like the life of Moses and Aaron, their life is not one of comfort, but to give comfort to other members on their journey. St. Thomas the Apostle, Knanai Thomman\textsuperscript{145} and the European missionaries, who preached the Gospel in India, are adventurous models for the present leaders facing the challenges of this pilgrimage. It is not their rhetoric but the life-witness that attracts the people and really gives them power. Though the context of the Church may be different and challenging in India, in her eschatological perspective, she shares the same goal of the other individual churches in the Catholic communion.

2) \textit{The Catholic Church in India is a communion of three Churches with equal rights.}

Though the individual churches in India, the Roman Rite Church, the Syro-Malabar Church, and the Syro-Malankara Church, have their own unique liturgical identity, huge differences in the total number of the members, and influence in certain parts of the Country,\textsuperscript{146} that do not make any difference in their being as a pilgrim Church. Their very existentiality as members of the Catholic communion makes them parts of the one Body of Christ. One faith, one ministry, and

\textsuperscript{145}Knanai Thomman or Canai Thoma appears as the link, which brought an intimate communion between East-Syrian Church and the Indian Church. History says that Some Christians from the Persian Church who believed in the apostolic foundation of St. Thomas came to Kerala as migrants in the fourth century under the leadership of Knanai Thomman. They were given warm welcome by the local St. Thomas Christians in Malabar. “He and the East-Syrian Christians who came with him allegedly played a key role in the organization and building up of the Church and community of Cranganore.” Cf. Mundadan, \textit{Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy}, 8.

\textsuperscript{146}The total Catholics of India is around 15.5 million and of it Latin Catholics are around 12 million, Syro-Malabar Catholics around 4 million and Syro-Malankara Catholics are around 4 million. Cf. "Christianity in India," in \textit{Wikipedia} (Wikipedia, 2018); "Population Statistics and Demography of Saint Thomas Christians, Churches with Historical References," in \textit{NSC Network} (NSC Network, 2014).
one hope in the heavenly kingdom unite them to be the sacrament of Christ in India. Any conflict between the individual churches may cause them to be unfocused on their journey.

3) *The Church in India should not be primarily bound up with building her earthly structures and institutions.* India is a fast-developing country now as reflected in the recent growth of new cities and towns, structures and buildings, enterprises and business firms, and also in the living standard of the people.\(^{147}\) The Church has shown its leading role by constructing new educational institutions, marvelous church-buildings, and structures. The complaint of the public is that many of these institutions do not cater to the needs of the poor. On the other hand, the Church in India, which has a large participation in the Church activities compared to other parts of the world, become a model to the Christians living in the rest of the world when she is really the “ekklesia,” the gathering of the people of God instead of structures. Now is the time for the Church in India to overcome the temptation to become worldlier by defining the Church by her institutions, and instead to look forward to the eschatological glory the Church hopes for. It has to be begun from each parish by building strong communities.

4) *There are many people who profess different faiths and are part of different traditions journeying with the Christians in India.* From the eschatological point of view, the multi-religious context of India, is an opportunity for Indian Christians to explore and to be rooted in their faith. The Indian context is an opportunity because other people’s thirst for salvation may lead them to explore the uniqueness of Christian faith. Co-existence and “co-pilgrimage” (cf. *LG* 16, 13; *EA* 24) can enrich each other by sharing one’s faith traditions and understanding with the

\(^{147}\) However, it is a contradiction that the result of this growth has not reached up to a vast majority of the population.
other. It also brings the attention of the Church on the need of inculturation that helps her to understand what is unique in the culture and already adopted or could be adopted from the culture, and also what is common in all religions.

5) Christians in India cannot neglect other peoples’ search for the divine. Truth is present in other religions and peoples because God’s Spirit is mysteriously working in this world (cf. AG 4, 15; NA 2; LG 17; GS 11, 22; cf. also RM 28; EA 15). The acceptance of the recognition of this work of the Spirit can help the members of the Church celebrate the universal presence of Christ and his Spirit. Chethimattam considers it as the presence of the divine in every person, i.e., the “recognition of Brahman as Atman.” According to this principle God is the ultimate reality or ground of all religions and he is manifested in different forms and he is revealed in different forms. When Christians accept other religions’ search for the divine and the ways of salvation they have put forward, this should help them to value their attempts. This approach can bring forth peace and foster co-operation among the people in India.

6) The faith in the eschatological kingdom implies the hope that all people – including the people of other faiths - will be part of that kingdom one day with their Father. The Christian understanding of creation, redemption, and salvation revolves around Christ, the universal and the unique savior. The question of the redemption of all creation presupposes God’s universal

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148 Cf. ITA, "The Role of the Theologian in the Church in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1991)," no. 4; "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1998)," no. 4.5.
150 Chethimattam, 87-8. According to the Indian concept, Brahman is the ultimate reality or ground of all things and Atman is the ultimate reality or ground of the human person. Thus, every person “is an instance of Brahman or Being Itself.” Cf. John B. Cobb Jr and Ward M. McAfee, eds., The Dialogue Comes of Age: Christian Encounters with Other Traditions (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 142.
Thus, the Christians in India cannot discard the participation of the people of other faiths in the eschatological kingdom, because the fruit of Christ’s salvific death is present to them in a mysterious way. This participation in the eschatological kingdom will be a proclamation of the brotherhood of the people of all faiths. If the Church in India can recognize this and educate her members in this view, today she can experience a foretaste of future fellowship.

7) Thus, eschatological joy is not the monopoly of the Christians or Catholics, but it is a free gift of God to his children. The Christian idea of salvation is not limited to the temporal world, but it is a participation in the eschatological joy, which is a gift from God. Thus, salvation is a work of God (cf. *EG* 112-4). Though the Church is the sacrament of salvation in the world (cf. *LG* 1), she cannot claim an exclusive monopoly, because the eschatological joy is a gift of mercy to the children of God. When the Christians in India accept the divine fatherhood of God the Father in the Trinity, they also accept the sonship and daughter-ship of each person in other religions as well. This can help the Church to come out of her triumphalism and authoritarianism. This eschatological outlook of salvation will help the Christians in India will be a starting point to bring good news to all people in the country by joining together for the kingdom values.

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151 Cf. Gerald O’Collins, *Salvation for All: God’s Other Peoples* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. Chapter 8. O’Collins says that Jesus saw his sufferings as characterizing the coming of the kingdom of God. By linking his immanent death with the divine kingdom (eschatological) at his Last Supper, Jesus implicitly interprets his death as somehow salvific for all. Temple, being the body of Christ, and the torn of the curtain of the Holy of Holies, God opened the way between heaven and earth and all people can now enjoy unhindered access to the divine presence. Institution words—‘new covenant’ in blood and ‘for many’ in its connection with the life and actions of Jesus show that his death is for all. Presenting OT concept that the suffering and violent death of righteous persons could bring healing and forgiveness to others and expiate their sins, O’Collins says, “through his martyrdom he could vicariously set right for all people a moral order universally disturbed by sin.”
8) *Christians are privileged in the sense that they participate in this mystery sacramentally in the Eucharist.* In the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the foretaste of the eschatological union between the bride and the bridegroom, the Church enjoys her glorious moments in eschaton mysteriously. In this celebration, the Eucharistic communion is a unique experience of the eschatological union and joy, which Christ offers to his ecclesial body. However, it is also a privilege for deeper service, which is expected from every Christian (cf. Jn 13:14-5), because Christian life entails service and it makes us sharers of this eschatological joy (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

9) *The sacramental participation in this mystery involves the duty to see others as brothers and sisters in their eschatological communion.* The eschatological communion in Christian understanding is a celebration of the lordship of Christ – the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (cf. Rev 19:16, 17:14; 1 Tim 6:15). The Church in India, who participates in “the marriage-feast of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7-9) mysteriously in the Eucharistic celebration, can truly become the sacrament of Christ by acknowledging the common brotherhood and sisterhood of the people of other religions. This does not mean that Christians should accept the rituals of the other religions as they do with the Christian sacramentals. However, they cannot neglect the salvific value of these rituals, because God’s mysterious works may be unknown to human minds (cf. AG 4, 15; NA 2; LG 17; GS 11, 22).

10) *This gives a social responsibility or prophetic duty to be involved in social problems of the country and to be the neighbors of those who are in need of us* (cf. Lk 10:25-37). The eschatological outlook can help the Church in India to involve more creatively in the social

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problems of the country. The Indian concepts of *sarvodaya* and *antyodaya*\(^{153}\) can help the Church in India to work for the welfare of all with a vision of the welfare of the least. It helps Christians to see all people as their brethren which will be celebrated in its full sense eschatologically.

4.4.5. **Eucharistic Community is a Prophetic Community**

The institution of the Eucharist was a prophetic action by Jesus. He shared his body and blood as a token of his love for his people. The sacramental celebration of the Eucharist involves two things: 1) a participation in the prophetic action of Jesus, and 2) a demand for prophetic life from the people who celebrate the Eucharist. For Paul, Eucharistic celebration is a prophetic action (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34).\(^{154}\) Thus, presenting the Lord’s Supper, Paul challenges the Corinthian community to judge their life and their proclamation of the death of Christ while they celebrated the Eucharist, and to live a life proper to the Eucharist.

The Church is Eucharistic and prophetic by nature, and these two natures cannot be separated. Eucharist is a prophetic memory in the Church that Jesus handed over to the Church through his apostles. Every Eucharistic celebration is a prophetic call to live the paschal mystery of sacrifice and service which can transform ourselves and the society expecting the eschatological kingdom.\(^{155}\) Schmemann says that “[t]he essence of prophecy is in the gift of proclaiming to people God’s will” and if the Church does not proclaim it to the world she betrays

\(^{153}\) See “3.5.11. Ecclesiology is Eschatological” in Chapter 3.

\(^{154}\) Paul criticized the Corinthian community when their eucharistic celebration did not take the real spirit of the Lord’s Supper. Cf. Vollert, 420.

her vocation and thus, betrays Christ.\textsuperscript{156} By celebrating the Eucharist, the Church also remembers and participates in the prophetic mission of Christ, which has been handed over to her, and each member of the Church is part of it (cf. Heb 13:15; \textit{LG} 12).\textsuperscript{157} The Eucharist is prophetic par excellence and insofar as all sacraments are intimately related to the Eucharist. If the Church does not revalidate the Eucharistic gestures of Jesus in day-to-day living in forms of self-giving, the rituals of the Eucharist can become empty gestures in her life.\textsuperscript{158} The same way the Church is called to be prophetic, she is “Eucharistic” as well. Balthasar says that Jesus, the Father’s eternal thankful (Eucharistic) Son, is ‘the Father’s substantial Eucharist.’\textsuperscript{159} The Church that celebrates the Eucharist is “Eucharistic” in her nature, because she inherited it from Christ, her head and spouse.

The early Church tried to be prophetic in its very being gathering around the Eucharistic table. These community gatherings were going to make self-evident “the dictum, ‘the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church.’”\textsuperscript{160} The gift of the Spirit brought about a community that realized the highest aspirations of human being: unity, peace, joy, and the praise of God. This ideal of the Jerusalem Church had an unparalleled impact on later Christianity that looked back to the apostolic age as the time when the Church was most perfectly realized.\textsuperscript{161} The apostolic witness of faith has been an inspiration to the Church in the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{157} John Paul II, "The Church Is a Prophetic Community" no. 1.
\bibitem{159} Nichols, \textit{The Holy Eucharist: From the New Testament to Pope John Paul II}, 120-1. Balthasar says that the very being of the pre-existent Son who is ‘eucharistic’ is reflected and extended in his incarnate life as the self-giving one which was culminated in his passion.
\bibitem{160} Pathil, "Ecclesial Communion and Eucharistic Communion," 316; Cf. Hellwig, 55; Fernandez, \textit{Eucharist: Step by Step}, 141.
\bibitem{161} Mathew Thekkekkara and Thomas punnapadan, "The Growth of the Community through Struggles (Acts 2, 42 – 4, 37): Challenges of the Church in India.," \textit{Jeevadhara} 34, no. 3 (March 2004): 139. The leaders of the early Church
\end{thebibliography}
following centuries. John Paul II says that “testimony is primordial and fundamental for the prophetic office of the entire People of God.”

At any time or at any place, a Church that witnesses Christ can become a prophetic Church. Church, as a Eucharistic community, that receives its energy from the sacrament of Eucharist, Eucharist is a challenge for her. The concept that the Church is the sacrament of Christ implies that what was visible in Christ has passed over into the sacraments of the Church.

In this sense both the “prophetic” and “Eucharistic” natures of the Church cannot be separated. The “Eucharistic” Church cannot but be prophetic, because the Church is the sacrament of Jesus and it has the duty to reflect Jesus in all its actions.

If the presence of Christ in India is not prophetic, the Church of Jesus ceases to exist in our land. The Church needs to take concrete steps to be a prophetic Church and to be the sacrament of Christ in India. First, the Church has to make sure that she has not become an obstacle to the liberative praxis in India. In India, often religions permit the maintenance of injustices or perpetuate the unjust structures. Casteism in Hindu society is very much tied up with their religious thoughts. It has also penetrated other religions to an extent. The discrimination against the Dalits, the poor, and women in the Church show that there are areas of liberation needed in the Church. A Church that is “Eucharistic” and “prophetic” will try to

preached the word of God not only through their words, but also through their life. They persevered in sufferings for Jesus sake. See 2 Cor 4:9-11: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

John Paul II, "The Church Is a Prophetic Community" no. 4. Cf. Vatican Council II, "Orientalium Ecclesiarrum, Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches (November 21, 1964)," in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2004), no. 3. The document says that the Church is called to witness the Risen Christ in our present situation so that it could be a sacrament of salvation in the world.

Cf. Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments, 18; Cf. also Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God, 45.

See Masure, 10.


correct the structural injustices knowingly or unknowingly perpetuated. To avoid the discrimination against the Dalits two approaches may be helpful: a) Educate all members of the Church that everyone is part of the body of Christ and there cannot have any division but all have become one in Christ (cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). b) Bringing seminarians together from different cultures and social background will help the future priests to foster mutual respect and consideration for all groups of people. It is commendable that the Church in India has begun to involve women in the parish administrative bodies. However, the Church in India has miles to go to have the equal participation of men and women in these bodies.

Secondly, the Church needs to become an agent of justice. The Church has the duty to work against the dehumanizing situations and bring good news to the poor and the marginalized. The establishment of justice and the transformation of the world with the participation of the people are part of the preaching of the Gospel. The Church in India has tried to involve in the social problems joining the side of the poor. The Church also has tried to educate the poor in villages and to help them to raise their voices for the establishment of justice in the society. This mission has to be continued with great enthusiasm. Thirdly, the Church can become an agent of Christian charity to be a prophetic Church in India. Christian charity has recognized the option for the poor and the solidarity with the poor that encourages the members of the Church to help the hungry, the homeless, the needy, those in illness and hopeless etc. (cf. LG 8; SRS 39-

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40).\textsuperscript{169} It also reminds the rich about their duty to share with the poor as the goods of creation are meant for all (cf. \textit{SRS} 42). However, today, many who are guided by religious fundamentalism with political motives are skeptical about the work of the Church in many places. It should not discourage her prophetic mission because the Church has to recognize “the image of her poor and suffering founder” and serve him in those who are poor and who suffer in the county (cf. \textit{LG} 8). Lastly, to achieve the goal of establishing justice in the country, the Church has to collaborate with the people of other faiths.\textsuperscript{170} The life of a prophet is always in threat. However, in every religion and society people come up with prophetic charism and it is true in India as well. When the Church cooperate with them, justice will not be a distant mirage for the people of India.

4.4.6. \textbf{A New Emmaus in the Indian Church: An Ontological Necessity}

The Church is “the People of God” who experience the challenges of the disciples of Emmaus.\textsuperscript{171} The Church in India faces a lot of struggles and problems. In a secular country that provides religious freedom, the Church is being squeezed, tampered, and slackened by the fundamentalist and communal forces in some parts of India. The attack on Christians in Kandhamal, Orissa in 2008,\textsuperscript{172} attack on seminarians in Satna in December 2017,\textsuperscript{173} vandalism of churches and Christian schools in Jabalpur and Delhi,\textsuperscript{174} discrimination against


\textsuperscript{170} ITA, “The Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” no. 36.

\textsuperscript{171} See Chapter 1, section “1.2.2. Emmaus Episode (Lk 24:13-35): Ecclesiological and Liturgical Reading for a Prophetic Life.”

\textsuperscript{172} Cf. ITA, "Indian Christian Perception on ‘Orissa’: ITA Statement 2009 on the Violence against Christians in Kandhamal, Orissa, India," 212-3. See also “3.3.2.3. Religious Fundamentalism, Politics and Communal Violence” in Chapter 3.


Christian Dalits, etc. are few examples. Like the disciples who went to Emmaus with fear and shaken faith (cf. Lk 24:13-35), Christians in some parts of India ask the question: “why does God allow this for his people?” Christians in India also try to find answers to the question of the unfaithfulness of the ministers, which is found in their sloth, bad examples, joining hands with the rich rather than the poor, political ties, luxurious life, and attempts to protect systems and organizations. In this situation, many Christians do not show interest in the Church and the sacraments and step back from the active ministry in the Church. Thus, the Emmaus event is not a past event in the history of the early Church, but it is an everyday reality in the life of the Church as a community and individually, in the life of every believer. At their juxtaposition, the sacrament of Eucharist must give the direction to move forward.

Jesus who accompanied the two disciples interpreted scriptures in a Christological point of view, so that they could understand the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. At the breaking of the bread their eyes were opened (cf. Lk 24:31) and they went back to the other disciples in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 24:33). In the struggles of the Christians in India, the Eucharistic celebration must help them to be faithful to their Lord and to profess his sacrificial death for them until he returns (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). The Word of God broken on the table of the Eucharist should inspire the Christians in India to face their challenges. The body and blood of Christ, which is shared on the altar, should help them to experience the presence of Christ in their midst and make them realize that they are all inevitable parts of the body of Christ. God’s sheer gift of a personal experience and a communion experience in the Eucharistic community, must help

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the Indian Christians become responsible Christians who can help others to strengthen their faith and experience of God, so that they will be the witnesses of Christ in their daily life. In other words, the members of the Church should have an experience emulating the two disciples of Emmaus. Though they were shaken in their faith in Christ for a while, once they experienced the “unexpected” in their life, they were confirmed in their faith.

When the two disciples went back to Jerusalem, their Christ experience strengthened the faith of the other disciples. Their reunion in Jerusalem or the “koinonia” that resulted from the Emmaus experience was “a response to the Risen Christ.” The community is strengthened with the reunion. This has great importance in the Indian Church. The reformed churches came to India during the colonial period and established their communities both by their preaching and converting Catholics and Orthodox Christians to their churches. The Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches in India have a critical and a judgmental attitude towards these Christians. If they, who were once Catholics, want to come back to the mother Church, they are not comfortable to do so because of the fear that they will be mistreated and ridiculed.

In the life of the early Church, internal and external forgiveness was a need of the time and the celebration of the Eucharist gave the message of forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus, the Eucharistic celebration was also a celebration of forgiveness. Like the early Church, the Indian Church should be concerned of internal and external forgiveness to build up the body of Christ in India. A few examples will be sufficient to present the need of forgiveness in the Church in India. 1) There are people who stay away from the Church because of the wounds they

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178 Kodell, 91-2; Cf. also LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, 84. See also the subtitle “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Building up of the Church” in chapter 1.
got from the authoritarian attitudes of the Church authorities. 2) Many people have experienced
discrimination in the Church because of their low profiles, poverty, belonging to a low caste, etc.
3) The Church’s legalistic attitude has wounded many. There are a number of people who seek
reconciliation from the Church for their inter-religious marriage. There are also people who keep
away from the Church as a result of their hurt feelings upon the neglect of a decent funeral to
their family members.\footnote{Until the recent past, the parishes in India did not offer the funeral rites to those who committed suicide or who kept away from the Church and sacramental life.} Some priests and parish administrative bodies have denied sacraments
or threatened to deny them to the members of the families that have not made their annual
offerings to the Church. This mistreatment also has wounded many Christians. 4) There are some
religious and priests who went out of their communities and dioceses without compromising
with the injustices in their contexts. Most of the time, their sincerity is questioned and they are
seen as culprits by many people who always support the official stand of the Church. However,
the Church has the duty to make reconciliation possible with them. 5) In the sacrament of
Eucharist, which is a celebration of love and forgiveness, the individual churches in India has to
learn love and forgiveness from Christ, her head, because the inter-rite and inter-ecclesial issues
in some places have become scandals in public.\footnote{Cf. Ipsita Chakravarty, "Church Groups Spar over Mass," The Times of India, September 20 2007. There arose certain misunderstandings between the members of St. Augustine’s Syro-Malabar Parish and St. Michael’s Roman Rite Parish in Delhi in 2007. The Syro-Malabar Christians had been using the church building of St. Michael’s Parish for their religious activities as they had no church building. When the tension grew, the Syro-Malabar Christians were not able to celebrate Mass on the Christmas eve of 2007. St. Augustine’s Parish held their Christmas Mass on the verandah of a Hindu temple in Rajinder Nagar, the Maharishi Valmiki Temple, dedicated to the sage who wrote the Ramayana.} 6) The Church in India also has to grant
forgiveness to Hindu fundamentalists and others who are influenced by communal forces and
have become her persecutors. Forgiveness is not possible without love and love is not possible without forgiveness.

4.4.7. From “Our Bread” to a “Common Home”

India is a “common home” for all the inhabitants though the country, but is divided in many ways. However, the concept “our common home” should be the driving force of the country at present more than ever, because there is a tendency to divide the country based on religion, caste, tribes, ethnicity, language, etc. in India. This has been acute with a “divide and rule” policy or the religious polarization of political parties. This tendency has also crept into the systems of the Church in different ways. It is a challenge of the Church to work against dividing forces and to foster a family spirit with an intention to make India a “common home” for all groups of people in the land.

The sacrament of Eucharist, “our (daily) bread” – a bread of our Christian identity and a free gift from the Lord – challenges the Church in India to make the country a “common home” for all people. Sharing the Eucharistic table and partaking of “our bread,” we who are many become one body. The Indian concept vasudaiva kudumbam, which means “universal family,” and in the Indian context, “a family of all Indians” perpetuates the idea of “our common home,”

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181 Blessed Rani Maria, the first woman martyr of the Church in India, is the fruit of the forgiveness of her family. Sr. Rani Maria was killed while she had been worked among the poor people of Indore for their social and economic upliftment. The rich landlords who exploited the poor did not like her works and it resulted in her assassination by Samunder Singh in 1995. Her sister Sr. Selmy visited the murderer in prison and it resulted in his conversion. Later he visited Sr. Rani’s family in Kerala confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness from the family. Sr. Rani Maria was beatified on November 4, 2017. Cf. "Killed in 1995, Sister Rani Declared 'Blessed' by Vatican," ibid., November 04 2017.

182 Pope Francis used the concept “our common home” in his encyclical Laudato Si to present the need of protecting the earth, our common home. He invites all people of good will to join together to achieve this goal. See Francis, Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home, Encyclical Letter (May 24, 2015).

183 ITA, "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 35.

184 Vasudaiva kudumbam Cf. Ibid., no. 41.
which is a gift from God. The Church in India, which shares the greatest gift in the Eucharist – “our (daily) bread” - should be open to the people of other religions to see the commonalities they all share in India, and to make the country a “common home” for all people. It is possible only by being ready to acknowledge and share the commonalities of religions and cultures for mutual understanding and enrichment.

The Eucharistic celebration, the sharing of “our bread,” becomes complete only through our sharing for the neighbor after the model of Jesus’ sharing in the Eucharist.¹⁸⁵ It means that the Eucharist involves a brotherly/sisterly responsibility to sense the needs of the other.¹⁸⁶ In a country in which the divisive forces have grown faster in recent years with the support of the political parties and governments, Christians should work for building bridges between all groups of people. Their participation in the Eucharistic gift, their “gifted bread,” should inspire them to work for peace and development in India with the vision that their “common home” is a divine gift that God has shared with all peoples of the land.¹⁸⁷ This attempt to establish justice, peace, equality, fellowship, and love will bring forth Rta,¹⁸⁸ and weave our way toward an experience of the new heaven and new earth in the Indian context and bring an experience of the

¹⁸⁵ Chalakkal, 306. For Paul, the Eucharist becomes real only with one’s love for the neighbor (1 Cor 11:17-22).
¹⁸⁶ For John Chrysostom, the celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist and the practice of justice are interrelated. See “1.3.7. John Chrysostom” in chapter 1. Cf. Ibid.; Cf. Benedict XVI, "Sacramentum Caritatis, Apostolic Exhortation," 88-91. In Benedict XVI’s view, social implications of the Eucharist are integral to the sacramental life of the Church. CBCI, "Appeal to the People of India (CBCI General Body Meeting, Madras, April 6-14, 1972)," 16. CBCI says that love implies an absolute demand for justice. Cf. Padilla, 35-6. Padilla says that the Church should be sensing Church – a seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, touching Church to be effective in its context.
¹⁸⁸ ITA, "Theology of Economics in the Globalized World: Indian Approaches (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 2009)," no. 38. Rta means “order.” Only a community that lives in harmony with fellow beings and nature can bring Rta. The Vedic and several Hindu scriptures emphasize that natural resources are meant for all and everyone has the moral duty to share them with everyone. Rig Veda says that everything in the material world is filled with God (Ishvavasyam), and they are to be used with a sense of renunciation. Rig Veda also says, “One who eats alone without sharing, is a sinner” (Hymn 10.6).
Kingdom of God among us. The vision of the “common home” also fulfills the prayer *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu* (may all beings everywhere be free and happy) and the concept of *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all beings).

If the Church takes initiative in the following steps that can contribute to make India a “common home” for all peoples without any discrimination by: 1) Conducting common prayer services on the days of national importance. 2) Holding joint prayer services during the time of special needs in the country. 3) Encouraging Christians to participate in the celebration of religious and community festivals of other people to have a better relationship between them. 4) Recognizing the contributions of the people of other religions to the Church on special occasions. 5) Welcoming non-Christians to the parish based economic and social welfare programs. 6) Offering scholarships and educational grants to the poor non-Christian students in the Christian educational institutions. 7) Offering jobs to non-Christians in Christian institution.

**4.4.8. The Four Marks - One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic – of the Church: Expression of the “Celebrative Being” in Eucharistic Ecclesiology**

The concept “the Eucharist makes the Church” offers a philosophical description of the Church. The Church’s “being” as “the People of God” and “the Body of Christ,” is manifested in the celebration of the Eucharist (*SC* 41-2). This “celebrative being” of the Church is not just

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189 Rayan, 16.
190 In many parts of Kerala, the southernmost state of India, Christians attending Hindu temple festivals and Hindus participating the Christian festivals are seen quite often. On the other hand, nowadays, with the growth of the Charismatic Movement in the Church, many Christians are forced to believe that they are sinning when they attend the festivals of other religions. Recently, a Catholic priest in Kerala lit lamps in a Hindu temple to show the religious solidarity in the state. Another priest was invited to a temple to give a talk on successful family life. During the last Christmas season, a caroling group was welcomed in a temple by Hindu priests. All these attempts of religious cooperation and fellowship were whole heartedly welcomed by the society and celebrated in social media.
191 In many places, especially in Malabar, Kerala, Hindus and Muslims helped Christians to build churches offering lands and building materials with free of cost. The recognition of their contributions at a later period will help the new generations to foster religious cooperation and solidarity.
192 The usage “celebrative being” is my own usage from the Eucharistic perspective.
one aspect of the mystery of the Church, but it encompasses the entire “being” of the Church, i.e., the faith, the life, and the mission of the Church (cf. SCar; SC 11). That is the reason the Eucharistic celebration has always been considered as the most important action of the Church in all cultures and contexts in the history of the Church. It is self-evident that in the Eucharistic celebration, every Eucharistic assembly is participating in the celebration of the “being” of the Church. Celebrating the same mystery of Christ in its own liturgical style, each individual church becomes part of the universal communion of the Church. This highlights the importance and the relevance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in Christian theology.

It is also noteworthy that the interpretation of the characteristics of the Church – One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic – could be more intelligible in terms of the Eucharistic ecclesiology. The Church does not possess these qualities of herself, but it is the work of Christ with the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 811). The Church is “One” because her source - Lord is one and faith is one. With the work of the Spirit, the Church is formed into “One Body” in one baptism (cf. CCC 813-6; 866). The oneness of the Church is celebrated in the sacrament of Eucharist, recognizing the fact that the people of God, though they are many, form one body. The Eucharistic celebration is the celebration of the unity and communion of the Church, because its intrinsic purpose is to unite the members of the Church with Christ, the head of the Body, and to each other, and thus, “to build up and strengthen the true body of Christ, which is the Church.”

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193 The universal Church exists in reality in the local Church. The local Church is the concrete realization and actualization of the universal Church. The universal Church is the communion of the local Churches. See Pathil, *Theology of the Church: New Horizons*, 92; Cf. also "Ecclesial Communion and Eucharistic Communion," 315. The new testament references of the early Church show that the Church was a worshipping community from its very beginning and tried to formulate a lifestyle pertaining to the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32; 10:40-41; 20:7; 1Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34). The people, gathered together, proclaimed the Lordship of Jesus through their life and worship.

The Church in India may have to think seriously about the hostility that has been evident at the Eucharistic table. A Church that was “One” with an undivided Eucharistic table until the sixteenth century has been divided into eight churches now. St. Thomas Christians in India, who followed same tradition and way of life, became divided when their administrative system and tradition were questioned. St. Thomas Christians in India, though divided into different churches today, being faithful to their liturgical and apostolic tradition, have to take up the challenge to come together around a Eucharistic table at which their forefathers were gathered together for many centuries. Though the reformed churches have influenced the theology and liturgy of some of the St. Thomas Christians, they can show that the faith handed over to them through the apostolic succession is much more important than the present power and structures, by coming to an agreement on intercommunion which may need a proper understanding and a mutual dialogue between them.

The Faith and Order Commission in the WCC’s paper on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" discusses the following themes of the Eucharist: thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, foretaste of Parousia, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful,

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195 Syro-Malabar Church, Syro-Malankara Church, Jacobite Syrian Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Malabar Independent Syrian Church, St. Thomas Evangelical Church, and Assyrian Church of the East are the eight churches in India having the apostolic tradition of St. Thomas.

196 There is an agreement between the Catholic Church and the Jacobite Church (Syrian Orthodox Church) upon the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick from lawful priests of either of these two sister Churches in case of extreme needs. Cf. John Paul II and Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, "Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas," in La Santa Sede (Vatican: Roman Curia, 1984), no. 9. The bishops of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Kerala have made an agreement with the Jacobite Church and the Orthodox Syrian Church leaders upon sharing churches outside Kerala for Sunday Mass and of sharing priests at funerals. Cf. "India: Ecumenical Agreement between Eastern Catholics, Other ‘St. Thomas Christians’," in Catholic Culture.org (Trinity Communications, 2009). Falardeau’s observation is noteworthy at this point: “Our understanding of the Eucharist has been founded on a deficient ecclesiology. Once we begin to think of the Church as one but divided, we will begin to see that in the one and divided Church we must come to Christ for the unity we seek. Unity is not achieved by human effort, it is given by God’s grace. Our task is to receive and accept it. And the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christian unity.” Cf. Falardeau; Cf. also Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae," III, Q. 73, A 3.

197 Faith and Order Commission of WCC.
and meal of the kingdom. It says that the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is a unique mode of presence (cf. BEM 13). It shows that the factors that unite Christians upon the sacrament of Eucharist is more than that of dividing. It is also true with the St. Thomas Christians in India. Churches with different positions on the sacrament of Eucharist, seem to be many bodies empirically, but are mysteriously part of the body of Christ in the eschatological kingdom. Participation in the Body of Christ should help us to think seriously about “the members of the body of Christ,” “children of God,” and “people of God” are concepts applicable to all Christians. “Communion in the [B]ody of Christ implies community in Christ.” It implies that every communicant is in relationship with the other members of the Body of Christ. If the communion is the self-gift of Christ and all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28), no human beings or institutions have the right to block it. The Indian Church, instead of causing hostility between churches, must try to redeem this sort of relationship for the growth and witnessing life of Christians in multi-religious context where Christianity is a small minority.

The Church is “holy” because her author and source, God, is holy. Her bridegroom, Christ, is holy. And her life-giver, the Holy Spirit is holy. Though her members may be sinners, her holiness also shines in her saints (cf. CCC 867). The unity of the earthly and the heavenly Church is sacramentally celebrated in the Eucharist, because the Eucharistic celebration is a worship offered to God by the earthly Church together with the heavenly Church. The Eucharistic celebration also purifies the Church being united to her spouse in a mystical way. “Holiness” has to become a “culture” of the Church in India, because the way the public look at

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198 Crocket, 32. See also chapter 1, note 120.
the Church has been changed tremendously during the last few decades. The Church had openings to society in different ways like education, social and economic welfare programs, rural development programs, etc. A few decades ago, because the Church was welcomed anywhere without any suspicion. However, nowadays when the state and the central governments have taken up many of the developmental programs and these governments are in the hands of communalist forces, church involvements are scrutinized with suspicion. In this context, it is the challenge of the Church to be transparent in her endeavors and build up a culture of holiness among the Christians in India. It has to be begun from the top and reach to the bottom.

The Church is Catholic in her esse. The presence of Christ, who is the Lord of all, and her mission to all people, is the basis of her catholicity (cf. CCC 830-1; 868). Christ’s presence in the Church is celebrated uniquely in the sacrament of Eucharist. Eucharistic celebration in each particular church is the celebration of the unity and catholicity of the Church. In India, the adjective “Catholic” has become a matter of “pride” instead of service and openness among the Christians. This tempts them to be part of a triumphant Church rather than a serving Church. The Eucharistic Jesus who becomes the servant of humanity challenges the Church in India to be truly Catholic not in name but in life.

Apostolicity is fundamental to each individual church in the Catholic communion. The Church was and it continues to be built on the foundations of the apostles, who were chosen and sent by Christ with a mission. Through the working of the Spirit in the Church, the apostles’ deposit of faith entrusted to the Church continues to exist in the Church (cf. DV 8). Thus, she

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200 John Paul II, "The Church Is a Prophetic Community" no. 6; Cf. Marion, 152-3. Marion says that it is in the Eucharistic hermeneutic that the functions of the ministers (apostolic) in the Church becomes meaningful. ITA, "The
is taught, sanctified and guided by the apostles today through their successors (cf. *CCC* 857-65; 869). The apostles handed over the tradition of revelation to the succeeding generations. The Church which received this tradition “lives by its tradition, it is woven around this tradition.”

The Holy spirit is the guarantor of tradition and the Church is the bearer of it. The apostolic heritage or tradition of St. Thomas Christians is known as *Thomamargam* (*Lex Thomae* or ‘Law of Thomas’). It was held in high esteem by St. Thomas Christians. They had a special concern to safeguard their apostolic heritage. “By this heritage they meant the sum total of their ecclesial life comprising their liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline.” They believed that their liturgy was composed from a language that was very much closer to Aramaic, the Lord’s language and they “esteemed their East Syrian liturgy as the most precious part of the ‘Law of Thomas,’ though they adopted or Christianized many of their local social customs so as to form the externals of their Christian life.”

Nedungatt says that the Syro-Malabar Rite was known as *Lex Thomae* before the 16th century. The believers who came to Christianity were known as ‘margavasikal’ (those who live the law (of Thomas)). Though the St. Thomas Christians in India are divided into different communities, they cannot neglect their apostolic link that unites them.

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Issue of ‘Rites’ in the Indian Church (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1993),” no. 15. For ITA, the apostolicity of the Church rests on the experience of the Risen Christ, rather than owing its origin to an individual apostle. Thus, by an ‘apostolic Church’ means, a community, which is “founded on apostolic community, mediated by a person to persons, who had in their turn an experience of the Risen Christ.”

Powathil, 21; CfSMB Synod, Fourth Gehenth Prayer. Fourth Gehantha of the Mass makes a remembrance of the tradition that has been handed over to the Church through the apostles. See Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 13. For Congar, “tradition is meant the doctrine of faith, the divine law, the sacraments and the liturgical rites, in so far as they are handed down by word of mouth and by example, from one man to another and from age to age.”

Powathil, 22. “By the word tradition is meant the doctrine of faith, the divine law, the sacraments and the liturgical rites, in so far as they are handed down by word of mouth and by example, from one man to another and from age to age.”


Ibid.

Placid Podipara, "Certain Questions Regarding the Syro-Malabar Church," in *Placidachan*, ed. Varghese Pathikulangara (Kottayam: Denha Services, 1995), 16; Cf. also Nedungatt, 381.
Reestablishing the lay participation in the administration of the Church\(^{206}\) that existed among them before the Romanization of the Indian Church can make the lay people involve in the Church with more commitment.

The Eucharistic ecclesiology in the Church in India implies the celebration of faith while acknowledging the particularities of the individual Churches in India. The four characteristics of the Church – One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic – must encourage these churches to work together for the accomplishment of the mission entrusted by Christ, her spouse. Though the individual churches are structurally and juridically many, they all bare the same marks that make them one. As the members of Christ, they cannot be many but one, and they cannot be sinful but holy, because they build one body of Christ and share the holiness of Christ. Individual Churches also share the same mission entrusted by Christ and preached and handed over to them by the apostles. The Church’s “celebrative being” with its eschatological outlook cannot exclude the people of other faiths. God revealed himself in history in different forms and ways. The salvific goal of other religions shows that they are also co-pilgrims of the members of the Church, though in different ways.\(^{207}\) In the multi-religious context of India, the Church must join the people of other faiths by living and promoting the Eucharistic values for the welfare of the society.

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\(^{206}\) See “3.5.3. Church as the People of God in Prophetic Action” in Chapter 3.

\(^{207}\) See the heading “3.4.2.2. Salvation: Goal of All Religions” in Chapter 3.
4.5. Conclusion

The Church is in the process of becoming and the theological emphasis of the Church changes from time to time and place to place according to its needs. The early Church maintained a Eucharistic ecclesiology, which was liturgic, community-centered, prophetic, and eschatological in nature. ITA, which envisions an indigenous ecclesiology fitting to India, emphasizes the prophetic dimension of the ecclesial life. A thorough examination of the ecclesiology of the early Church and the ITA shows certain similarities and differences between them. This chapter states that in the context of India, a clear understanding of the ecclesiology of the early Church will help the Church in India to be more prophetic in her vision and mission, because the prophetic life of the Church cannot be separated from the sacrament of Eucharist. The early Church, which synchronized theology, worship, and life, was a witnessing community. Their life-witness attracted many people to Christianity, whereas the ITA, as a forum of theologians, shapes ideas for the Church in India to be prophetic.

Christianity began as a movement in Judaism and it adopted many elements from the Jewish religion, especially in worship. ITA, which considers inculturation as an “entry into the total religiousness or ethos of the people,” believes that the Church cannot be the sacrament of Christ in the world without its inculturation in a particular context.\(^\text{208}\) The Church in India must become contextual by involving itself in the social, economic, and political problems in the country and by working for the establishment of justice in society. However, ITA’s insistence on inculturation in worship and Church structure sometimes seems to be very difficult in India in the present scenario. There had been various attempts at inculturation in worship, but most of the

time they ended up bringing divisions in the Church. The reason is that the so-called “imported” elements for theologians, being part of the worship and the Church system for centuries, are more familiar to the Indian Christians than the “Indian” of the theologians. Bringing back the centuries-old “Indian” elements have brought confusions to the common people, because these elements are not part of their life presently. Thus, what is needed in India is an openness to inculturation, which could be expressed in working with the people of other faiths by responding to the needs of the people, not a compulsory inculturation causing divisions in the Church. In this attempt, the Church cannot hold onto the attitude of ecclesiocentrism of the early Church, because it is going to break the “secular fabric” of India and divide the society fostering fundamentalism. ITA’s view that Christocentrism and Theocentrism do not exclude each other, but this still remains a problem to the common people. Respecting the people of the other faiths, while holding on a Christocentrism which is consistent with Theocentrism, is a need in the Indian scenario.

The Eucharist, being the sacrament of unity in the Church, challenges the Church to work for her unity. The ITA, which is committed to promote the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Council II, emphasizes the need of the unity of the Churches in India. This is essential for the fruitful mission of the Church in India for nation building. In the context of an “intra-ecclesial communalism” in India, the sacrament of Eucharist has become a sacrament of division in India, because it is in the celebration of the Eucharist that it is made visible in its highest form. This gives the feeling that the Eucharist does not build up the Body of Christ or the People of God, but crowds that are constituted of different interests without any particular goal. Rediscovering the teachings of Vatican Council II will help the Church in India to work for the unity of all Churches. In the multi-religious context of India, the Church cannot be a witnessing Church
without building relationships between the individual churches and practicing the agapeic love of Christ in society.

The implications of the Eucharistic perspectives of the Church - covenantal, communitarian, corporate, eschatological, prophetic, etc., and the marks of the Church - One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic - will help the Church to realize her mission in India. These implications agree with the ecclesiology of the ITA in many respects. The covenantal relationship, which is compared to a nuptial relationship, is remembered and celebrated in the sacrament of Eucharist. The images of the Church as “the Body of Christ” and “the People of God” are covenantal titles intelligible in the context of the Eucharistic ecclesiology. These images can contribute to the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA, because they serve as egalitarian symbols of the communal existentiality of the faithful. They nurture the values of love, sharing, service, and forgiveness, upon which perhaps all religions agree. They inspire them to be prophetically involved in the society for economic and social well-being of the people. The images of “the Body of Christ” and “the People of God” also involve the challenge to retrieve the Original Meaning of Corpus Verum and Corpus Mysticum, which will foster a communitarian dimension in the Church.

Eucharistic ecclesiology, which implies the corporate personality and collectivism of the Church, emphasizes the communitarian aspect of the Church. The unity, oneness, and participation that underline the corporate and collective nature of the Church prioritize the “People of God” over institutional structure, which is a challenge to the Church in India. It considers every individual person and every individual Church as partners in the body of Christ. This understanding can solve the conflicts between the Church hierarchy and the faithful, and between different “Rites.” Eucharistic ecclesiology also promotes the servant leadership of
Christ in the Church, instead of building and protecting hierarchical structures and dictating everything to the people from above.

There cannot be an ecclesiology that is not eschatological, because the Church is a pilgrim towards an eschatological kingdom. This mystery is celebrated in the sacrament of Eucharist too. The early Church was waiting for the immediate coming of the Lord and this expectation determined Christian attitudes towards other people. ITA’s indigenous ecclesiology, which is very much praxis-oriented and centered on social action, gives the feeling that salvation, the goal of the Church, is of this world. However, the salvation is much more than the establishment of justice in the world. Thus, the praxis orientation of the Church should be in tune with her eschatological aspect, but praxis alone does not make the life of the Church. It also involves the word of God, and sacraments. The eschatological outlook of the Eucharistic ecclesiology also inspires the Church to take the faith of the people of the other religions seriously. The Church in India cannot neglect the thirst of the people of other religions for salvation. The faith in the eschatological kingdom implies the hope that all people – including the people of other faith - will be part of that kingdom one day with the Father, because it is a free gift of the Father to his children. The Church participates mysteriously in this reality in the celebration of the Eucharist. It gives Christians a duty to consider others as brothers and sisters in their eschatological communion. It will help the Church for its prophetic mission and make India “a common home” for all people fulfilling the Indian concept *vasudaiva kudumbam*. To grow into this openness the Church must be ready to acknowledge and share the commonalities of religions and cultures for mutual understanding and enrichment.

The Eucharist is also a sacrament of forgiveness. The Eucharistic celebration made internal and external forgiveness possible in the early Church. In India, forgiveness and
reconciliation is needed at various levels: between the Church authority and the faithful, between conflicting individual Churches, between the Catholics and Orthodox Churches, between the Catholics and reformed Churches, between Christians and non-Christians, between the Church and her persecutors, between parishes, etc. The resurrected Christ, who accompanied the disciples of Emmaus, is working through his Spirit in the Indian Church and the Church should be open to the work of the Spirit. Forgiveness is possible only in a Spirit-guided Church. The four marks of the Church - One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic – are the effects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church (cf. CCC 811). These marks, which are the expressions of the “celebrative being” in Eucharistic ecclesiology, must inspire the Catholic Church in India to work with the Orthodox Churches who bare the same marks and have followed a Eucharist-centered ecclesiology for centuries, while developing an administrative system in which the community has larger participation.

This comparative study of the ecclesiologies of the early Church and the ITA shows that ecclesiology can never be the same at all places and times, because the theology of the Church was developed in different places and times according to the needs. In this sense, there are ecclesiologies and not ecclesiology, and they are contextual as they grew up in different ecclesial contexts. However, Eucharistic ecclesiology has a pivotal place in the history of the Church, not only because it was the ecclesiology of the early Church, but also because of the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the life of the current Church. When the centrality of the Eucharist is diminished, ecclesiology loses its credibility, because the Eucharist penetrates the entire Christian life. The indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA can be made more appealing to the society and more benefited to the Church if it better recognized the centrality of the Eucharist.
GENRAL CONCLUSION

As the Church grew worldwide from the first century to the twenty-first century, theology evolved significantly to make the faith both contextual and relevant. The Church was a worshipping community at its very beginning. In the different contexts which the Church encountered, it had to make the faith intelligible to the people. Multiple theologies resulted from this theological quest or search for understanding. The challenges that the Church encountered in different places and times were also instrumental in forming these theologies. Today, “ecclesiology” which is one of the branches of theology, has become an umbrella term, because no single explanation of the Church is going to explain the full mystery of the Church. Thus, we have various ecclesiologies that arose in various contexts, simply not one ecclesiology. In addition, from the perspective of the sacrament of Eucharist, after a long period of the emphasis on the sacramental, sacrificial, and ministerial aspects of the Eucharist in the Church, with the ressourcement and renewal of the Church with Vatican Council II that emphasized a communion ecclesiology rooted in Eucharistic ecclesiology, the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament of the Eucharist was renewed in the Church. In this context, this research argued that the relevance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology never diminishes, because of the centrality of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the life of the Church, both in faith and practice.

This research was a pilgrimage, exploring the relevance of Eucharistic ecclesiology in general, and in the context of India in particular. The research was divided into four chapters in order to address the central question of the research: what is the present significance of Eucharistic ecclesiology, which was the central characteristic of the early Church and which had a theological renewal in the documents of Vatican Council II? How does it enhance ITA’s
prophetic vision of the Church, in the context of the socio-economic inequalities, and the plurality of religions, cultures, Churches, and Rites in India?

0.1. Synopsis of the Chapters and Findings

In our attempt to present the importance of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, the first chapter entitled “Church as a Eucharistic Community: Experience and Witness of the Early Church,” presented an historical, literal, and analytical study of the institution narratives, the early Church, and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. The objective of this chapter was to answer two questions. First, how do the institution narratives and texts on the Eucharist in the New Testament explain the life of the early Church as a Eucharistic community? This research answered that the institution narratives were significantly influenced by the worship and liturgical practices of the early Christian communities. That is, these narratives had their distinct origins in communities that celebrated the Eucharist. The covenantal nature of the Eucharist emphasized by the evangelists throws light on the old covenant that established a unique relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and the Passover which led that covenant. At that first Passover, the blood of the lamb on the threshold of the houses of the Israelites was an identification for the angel of God to pass over them. In order to establish a new covenant, Jesus sheds his own blood and becomes the lamb (Jn 1:29). While the yearly Passover in the promised land was a remembrance of God’s loving election and a celebration of their identity for Israelites, the new Israel of the Church experienced God’s love and their identity in the celebration of the Eucharist. The institution narratives also point to the eschatological dimension of the Church in when the unity of the Body of Christ will be realized in its fulness.
The Emmaus episode in Luke consisted of sharing of the word of God and the bread of life. This liturgical structure throws light on the first century celebration of the Eucharist and the significance of the Eucharist in the life of Christians. Then in John, though there is no institution narrative, the Eucharistic theme and symbolism are clearly arranged in the Bread of Life discourse, the foot washing, and the opening of the side of Jesus on the cross. There is no better way to make Johannine “abiding in Christ” (Jn 15:1-17) possible in the Church except through the Eucharist. Or again, the Acts of the Apostles presents the Lord’s Supper as an integral part of the life of the early Christian community. The lifestyle of this community was formed and centered on the Eucharist, a total sharing with other members of the community. For Paul, the Eucharist, which is part of the sacred Tradition and handed over by Jesus himself (1 Cor 11:23-6), served as a moral paradigm for Christians as they gathered as a community. The image of the Body of Christ which Paul used for the Church would also exert an influence on the future of Eucharistic ecclesiology.

The second question addressed in the chapter is: what is the teaching of the Fathers of the Church on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church? The Didache and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, specifically Ignatius of Antioch, Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Cyprian of Carthage, Ephrem the Syrian, John Chrysostom, and Augustine, show that the idea of the oneness of the Church achieved in the sacrament of Eucharist persisted in the post-Apostolic Church. This chapter clarifies that the Church was a worshipping community from its origin, and the Eucharist was the central sacrament that permeated the theology of the early Church. This theological perspective ran through liturgy, the ministry in the Church, and the way of life of the members of the Church and made them a prophetic community.
Having explored the centrality of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the early Church, the goal of the second chapter, entitled “Church as a Eucharistic Community: A Theological Retrospective in Vatican Council II” was to explain the features of the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Council II, the factors that influenced it, and its effect in the years after the Council. The Council’s emphasis on ressourcement and renewal of the Church was instrumental in rediscovering the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church. This found expression in the communion ecclesiology of the Council. This chapter began by exploring the Eucharistic ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac, who was instrumental in rediscovering the teachings of the Fathers of the Church in the last century. De Lubac, explaining the sacrament of the Eucharist and the ministry in the Church, asserted that “Eucharist makes the Church” and “the Church makes the Eucharist.” For him, the building up of the ecclesial body happens in the celebration of the Eucharist, and the fulness of the unity of the ecclesial body is achieved in eschatological communion. Next, the research showed that the communion ecclesiology of the Council reaffirmed the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist in the Church. The Eucharistic celebration, which takes place in local communities, is an expression of the unity of the community, and also their unity with other local communities in the universal Church. In the context of the Eucharist, clerical ministry and hierarchical structure are vocations meant to serve the members of the Body of Christ. They are not platforms for exerting power. Communion ecclesiology also encourages the prophetic involvement by all members of the Church, because it helps each baptized member to realize his/her responsibility in the Church as a member of the Body of Christ towards other members of the Body.

This chapter also established that the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Council II aligns with the ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, the “Sister Church,” which considers the
plurality of churches not as a division, but as a unity that reflects the work of the Holy Spirit. For the convenience of the research, we have delimited the study, examining two great Orthodox theologians, Nicholas Afanasiev and John Zizioulas. Both showed that the Eucharist has been the foundation of the Church from its very beginning. For each of them, the Eucharist is an expression of both heavenly liturgy and the unity of the Church. They define the ministry in the Church, which is divine and an ontological necessity, in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist. Finally, the chapter dealt with the implications of communion ecclesiology found in the ecclesial documents and certain contextual theologies. Ecclesial documents since the Council have reasserted the importance of the Eucharist in ecclesial life. Though they have affirmed the prophetic life demanded by the Eucharist, some are still not free from pre-Conciliar attitudes of clericalism and hierarchical authoritarianism. For the contextual theologies, the Eucharist has been a powerful symbol that challenges the life of Christians. In contrast to the emphasis on ministry in ecclesial documents, contextual theologies such as liberation theology, feminist theology, and Dalit theology give more importance to the prophetic aspect of the Eucharist. This chapter illustrated that the Eucharistic ecclesiology is not at all outdated, but still relevant in all times and places. The challenge of the Church is to reconsider and affirm Eucharist as the core of ministry and the prophetic mission of the Church.

Moving from the thematic, literal, and analytic study of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, the third chapter, “Indian Theological Association: Heralds of an Indigenous Ecclesiology for India,” is an analytical, contextual, and critical study on the characteristics of ITA and its yearly statements. First, it sketched the major characteristics of the ITA. Indian theologians consider theologizing as a humanizing and liberating act, emphasizing orthopraxis over orthodox. For them, theologizing is a life-touching act. They believe that the Church has to be inculturated to
become an agent of liberation in India. Second, the *locus theologicus* - the social, economic, cultural, religious, and ecclesial context of India - is addressed. It shows that the social and economic problems of the country are intertwined and principally involve the weakest segments of society. Under various political parties, in recent years, India, once a land of religious tolerance, has become a place of religious fundamentalism, communalism, and violence. Religions foment discrimination and caste-ism among Indian people. This section has also examined conflicts between the Rites found in India, and between hierarchy and laity. All these are challenges to the unity of the Church in India. In addition, inequality, discrimination, worldliness, and institutionalization impede the Churches it strives to become the sacrament of Christ in India. For ITA, social and economic problems are human-made realities. They could be solved with human efforts in which the Church can play an important role. The “Eucharistic values,” namely *diakonia, koinonia, marturia*, and hospitality, and the common religious values of India such as *satyam, dharma, samabhavana, samatva, ahimsa, maitri, karuna*, etc. could coalesce to establish peace and harmony in the country. India needs a collaborative work of all religions. In order to solve the inter-ecclesial issues, the ITA recommends that individual churches consider each other as moral persons, promote collaborative works, and to appreciate the efforts of each other. Models of participation and servant leadership could solve many of the internal issues of the Church.

The final section of the chapter tried to answer the question: what are the characteristics of the indigenous ecclesiology envisioned by ITA? Inculturation and liberation are two principal features of the indigenous ecclesiology of the IT. That is, the incarnation of the Gospel is only possible when the Church takes appropriate steps toward inculturation, and liberation works in the fight against dehumanization. ITA wants a critical interpretation of Scripture and Tradition
that enables the Church to establish its identity not only based on past realities, but also on the present realities. This section noted that a rediscovery of the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II in India, especially the themes People of God and a communion of communities, will help the Church in India to be a participative Church and truly the Body of Christ, while acknowledging the individuality of particular churches. Responding to the Indian context, ITA wants the Indian Church to be a spirit-guided Church and not an institutionalized Church; not a Church of the rich alone, but also of the poor joining with the majority of the Indians who live in poverty; not a proselytizing Church, but an evangelizing Church by its witness; not a Church that closed to dialogue, but open to dialogue and action with other religions; not a Church focusing on this world, but focusing on its eschatological glory, which can help the Church in India to focus on the human values of freedom, fellowship, and justice. These values would make the Indian Church a liberative force in India and a sacrament of Christ in the world. In this way the Church in India can build a Eucharistic community in the truest sense.

Hence the final chapter, “Challenges and Implications of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in India,” pursued a comparative, thematic and critical study in order to explore how the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA could be made more significant and relevant by embodying the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist. The chapter begun by presenting certain similarities and differences between the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA and the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church. Just as life-witness was the heart of the theology of the early Church, ITA has been trying to make the Indian Church a witnessing Church. This section also made it clear that in the early Church, a prophetic life was grounded upon a Eucharistic-centered life. Both the early Church and ITA are Christocentric, but in the early Church, Christocentrism was also
ecclesiocentric. Amid the religious pluralism of India, many Indian theologians find that theocentrism and Christocentrism do not exclude each other.

We also noticed that the prophetic, witnessing faith in the early Church was tied to the expectation of the immediate coming of the Lord. In contrast, the ITA that engages in social action is more concerned about the establishment of the kingdom values at present. This section shows that sacraments, word of God, and social action are equally important in the Church. Next, presenting the important features of the Eucharistic ecclesiology, the chapter explained how Eucharistic ecclesiology is a challenge in India. Prioritizing the “People of God” over the institutional structure of the Church; retrieving the original meaning of *corpus verum* and *corpus mysticum* to regain the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist in the early Church; shifting from a dictating Church to a Spirit-guided Church; combining piety and liberation-oriented praxis; practicing agapeic love; understating Eucharist as a sacrament of unity instead of division; making the Church the Body of Christ and People of God rather than a crowd – these are challenges that the Indian Church faces in ministry, mission, and spirituality if it seeks to become a truly and fully Eucharistic community in India.

Finally, the research presented some timely implications of Eucharistic ecclesiology and a few practical suggestions and recommendations for the Indian Church. The covenantal perspective on the Eucharist implies that all members are equal partners in the covenant. One’s individual existentiality is a communal existentiality. This perspective can help the Church in India form an egalitarian society, first in the Church and then in the country. The corporate personality of the Church realized in the context of the Eucharist can help the Church to fight against division and compartmentalization in the Church. The “collectivism” implied by “the Eucharist makes the Church” could help to resolve the tensions between the “Rites” in the
Church in India. The Eucharistic community also implies an eschatological community towards which the ecclesial community makes its pilgrimage. From this eschatological outlook, the Church in India cannot simply disregard the people of the other religions in India who also search for the divine and their salvation. They are also the Children of the same Father.

A Eucharistic community is a prophetic community. The Eucharist demands a prophetic life from every believer. Thus, for the Church in India, the Eucharist can be an energizer to fight against all injustices in the country with prophetic voice. The Emmaus event is a message to the Church in India to be strengthened in its difficulties and also to maintain the community spirit, accepting everyone without considering their failures, and thus being an agent of forgiveness. In the Indian social context of divisions and separations which are growing because of the influence of the political parties, the Eucharist, “our bread,” challenges the Christians in India to make the country “a common home” for all peoples. Finally, the four marks of the Church express the “celebrative being” which becomes meaningful in the celebration of the Eucharist and encourage all individual churches to fulfill the mission entrusted to them by Christ.

This research has emphasized that the Church is a worshiping, prophetic, and eschatological community. These attributes of the Church are realized in the context of the sacrament of Eucharist. The Church is a “gathering” of the worshiping community and the Eucharist is the most important worshiping act of the Church. This research has also showed that the Church as a Eucharistic and a prophetic community are not exclusive, but a Eucharistic community is necessarily a prophetic community, because the Eucharist entrusts a prophetic mission to the worshipping community. The Eucharistic community is an eschatological community, because in the celebration of the Eucharist, the earthly Church has a mysterious vision of the heavenly Church, and the heavenly Church is mysteriously present in the
worshipping community on the earth. This unity of worship, prophecy, and eschaton are very important to Christianity, because together, they all constitute or define the Christian life. These aspects also show the importance of the community which is accomplished in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Eucharistic worship is an act of the community in which many are made one in the Body of Christ. Eucharist invites the entire community to a Eucharistic way of life which is a prophetic life. The moral life of the community is part of this too. Finally, though the Church is in the world it is looking forward to the heavenly kingdom. This eschatological aspect of the faith is also celebrated in the Eucharistic community.

From the faith perspective, this research has addressed questions on inter-religious, inter-ecclesial, and inter-ritual concerns. From the sacramental perspective, it presented Eucharist and ministry in the Church. The research dealt with social, economic, and cultural realities in India from a contextual perspective. The research also made conscious efforts to present the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA. The sacrament of Eucharist is the thread that binds all the elements in this research. In other words, the merit of the Eucharistic ecclesiology - which is presented as a reality in the early Church, a theological vision in the Vatican Council II, and a future vision in India in this research - touches the entirety of Christian life. The juncture of the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church and the ecclesiology of the ITA lies in the prophetic vision of the Church. In the early Church, the participation in the Eucharist presupposed and demanded a prophetic life. In the in the indigenous ecclesiology of the ITA, Eucharist energizes a prophetic vision. Eucharistic values such as love, sharing, service, forgiveness, witnessing, etc. make the Church in India both contextual and prophetic in more effective ways.
The Eucharistic ecclesiology also shows the importance of the worship in society. This research concludes that the scope of establishing a society of Christian values without the worship would be very limited. Christian values could be better perpetuated through a worshipping Christian community. A Christian community without proper worship will be easily divided, because it will only be this-worldly while neglecting the heavenly one. However, a community that tries to live the heavenly values that are celebrated in Eucharistic worship will expand and perpetuate these values in the context of this earthly world. This research also presented the natural and the supernatural dimensions of the Church which point to the fact that the Church with its supernatural dimension cannot be seen as this-worldly alone. Thus, the solutions to the problems and issues in the Church, and the external issues the Church deals with, cannot be found in worldly realities alone, because that will be a deficient methodology to work on. Sometimes, like the liberation theology, ITA is not free from over-dependence on this-world answers and methods. In the Eucharistic ecclesiology in which the earthly and the heavenly realities intersect, the message of the Eucharist become the solution to the problems of the Church.

0.2. **Certain Recommendations**

The following are few recommendations to make the Indian Church a Eucharist-centered Church based on this research on the Indian Church and the society. Some of them are already discussed in the final chapter, but this section summarizes them together.

1. *Endow the universal Church by sharing priests and religious.* The Indian Church is abundantly blessed with so many vocations to religious and priestly life in recent years. By contrast, the global Church, especially the Church in Europe and Americas, experiences a
scarcity of priests and religious. The dioceses and the religious congregations in India have to come forward to help the universal Church by sharing their personnel resources so that the Indian Church can fulfill its sisterly duty in the communion Churches. This should not be for any financial gain, but a free gift to the other members of the Body of Christ. In this way, the Indian Church that enjoyed the fruits of the mission work of many foreign missionaries can reward other lands today. Thus, the Church in India could serve to re-evangelize the lands and cultures that once evangelized India.

2. *Participation of the laity in the administration of the Church institutions.* A participative model is a characteristic of Eucharistic ecclesiology. It is ironic that though the Church in India has a large number of educational and healthcare institutions, many of the faithful are indifferent to them. Many people think that they do not have anything to do with these institutions and the advantages derived from them accrue to the clergy who are typical administrators. A participative model of Church act is needed in India to make sure that appropriate number of lay people are members of the administrative bodies of these institutions.¹ More lay participation would encourage people to actively engage in the mission of the Church. By the same token, the role of the women who actually constitute the majority of the active members of the Church, must be recognized. In a society which is predominantly male-dominated, the Church’s greater recognition of women’s role and efficiency would be an encouragement to them.

¹ Cf. Matters India Reporter, "Land Deal: Court Orders Probe, Cardinal Denies Charges" *Matters India* (2018), http://mattersindia.com/2018/03/he-orders-probe-against-cardinal-alencherry/. Recently, Kerala High Court ordered a police probe against Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry, the head of the Syro-Malabar Church for a land deal. The court made a comment that “the archdiocese’s assets belong to its people and that the cardinal is only their representative.” It also commented that the cardinal is not “a king” and he is subject to the law of the country.
3. **Reconsider separating the faithful from their original parishes and forming new ones.**

In last few decades, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches have formed many new parishes in places, especially in cities, where the faithful of these parishes were members of the Latin Rite parishes.\(^2\) Some of the newly formed parishes do not have even thirty or forty families. This caused divisions among the people who worked together for many years, as well as hostility between Rites. It also caused huge financial burden on the families of the new parishes. If these oriental churches reconsider erecting new parishes where they do not have a viable number of families, this would better indicate unity and communion among the churches in India. Latin and Oriental Rites could also consider sharing church buildings on special occasions, especially on the feast days of the saints of these churches.

4. **Participation of the faithful in the election of bishops and the formation of the priests.**

In Christian understanding, ministry in the Church is a divine call with a specific purpose. However, the divine call can emerge from the community to which the ministers belong. ITA believes that the participation of the faithful in the selection of candidates for the priesthood, their assignments, priests’ accountability to the community, etc. can improve the relationship between the ministers and the faithful.\(^3\) If co-participation were practiced in the Church, it could make internal relationships better. The faithful’s opinion could be also sought in the election of the bishops, as occurs in the Orthodox Churches in India, so that the Church may be pastured by the shepherds having the “smell of the sheep.” It can also give a sense of co-responsibility to the faithful in matters of Church governance.

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\(^2\) Cf. “4.3.2. Retrieving the Original Meaning of *Corpus Verum* and *Corpus Mysticum*” in chapter 4.

\(^3\) Cf. ITA, "Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1983)," nos. 22-3; "Theological Education in India Today (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1984)," no. 23; "The Church in India in Search of a New Identity (The Final Statement of the ITA Meeting 1996)," nos. 37; 60.
5. Church is the People of God and not the building of God. It is time for the Indian Church to realize that “the Church” is not a building but the People of God. The active participation of the Indian faithful in their parishes in India is greater than in Europe and North America. However, while small, the relative decrease in active participation of the faithful in India in recent years indicates that some people have begun to move away for various reasons. Meanwhile, the Church has been engaged in constructing huge new church buildings. The result is that many who do not like to make Church contributions at all become unwilling to contribute to buildings, and move away from the Church. At times, when the pastors concentrate on construction projects, the faithful are not well-tended or their pastoral needs go unresolved. The Church in India must concentrate on building the People of God, which is the mission of the Church, and not grandiose structures.

6. Evangelization is the joint-effort of all individual churches. Evangelization is the mission of the entire Church. Every member of the Church has the duty to be part of this mission entrusted by Christ (cf. Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-8; Lk 24:36-49; Acts 1:6-8). Until recently, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches were restricted in their right to evangelize. They were not allowed begin missions outside Kerala without the permission of the Latin Rite dioceses, even though these churches had personnel resources to do so. The Indian Church must now realize that it is not the particular “Rite” that matters as a result of past missionary work. All Churches and Rites belong to the one Body of Christ. A joint and collaborative mission work, which is the spirit of the Eucharist, can make the evangelization work easier, and meaningful and

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5 Cf. “3.3.3.1. Conflicts between Individual Churches” in chapter 3.
productive, by accepting the individuality of the churches, within the unity of Christ’s one Church.

7. Intercommunion among St. Thomas Christians. St. Thomas Christians in India had their single Eucharistic tradition until the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century. They are divided into eight churches now and, only two of these belong to the Catholic communion. It is not faith in the Eucharist, but administrative matters that separate the St. Thomas Christians today and block them from coming together around the Eucharistic table. St. Thomas Christians in India need dialogue to resolve intercommunion issues among themselves, which could be the beginning of an inter-ecclesial, collaborative dialogue with others.

8. Stop “sheep stealing” and become “caring shepherds.” “Sheep stealing” of the Catholic Church is a concern for Orthodox Churches in India, especially after the return of a group of Orthodox Christians to the Catholic communion and forming the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in 1930. If “sheep stealing” is seen as a policy of the Catholic Church in India, though many Catholics are being “stolen” every year by other Christian denominations, it is not going to do good for the Church’s evangelizing mission in India. The Church needs caring shepherds after the model of Christ, who offers his own body and blood to his flock, and not stealing shepherds.

9. Go back to the original spirit of serving the less privileged. Though India is growing fast economically and in infrastructure, development is not a reality in many parts of India

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especially in rural villages. The Indian Church runs a significant percent of the educational and healthcare institutions both in cities and villages. In recent years, instead of village schools and dispensaries or hospitals, the Church has been concerned with building international educational institutions and multi-specialty healthcare centers mainly in cities that benefit only the rich. The Church’s social commitment could be shown in refocusing its welfare programs and institutions in villages and rather than cities. The recent trend toward urban focus gives the impression that the purpose of these institutions is profit and influence, not service of the poor. It is high time for the Church to check this trend and to go back to the original spirit of serving the less privileged, imitating Jesus’ foot-washing.

10. *The Religiosity of the people of India cannot be disregarded.* India is the mother land for major world religions. If we examine them, we see that worship is an important part in these religions. Millions of worshipping places in India are evidence of the religiosity and the worshiping character of the people of India. Worship is a central facet of Indian life across religious lines. The Church is a worshipping community and the Eucharist is the most important worshipping act of the Church. The Church in India must place the Eucharist firmly at the center of the ecclesial life so that the faithful may grow in the spirituality of the Eucharist. Failure to do this, or succumbing to secularism in a way that diminishes the Eucharist in the Church, displacing worship with this-worldly social projects, would be a movement against the spirit of the Indian people. Undoubtedly the faithful would be searching for new places of worship that satisfy them.
0.3. Questions for Further Study

This research opens up certain areas that need further studies. The following questions will lead us to few of the important ones:

1. From the soteriological point of view, which cannot be separated from the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist, this research has made clear that the Eucharist envelops all peoples, races, and religions. The fruits of the universal salvific work of Christ will be enjoyed by all nations. Though this is an eschatological reality, a foretaste of this eschatological experience is mysteriously made present in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this context, would intercommunion among all Christians in India not be part of the plan of God? Jesus says: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (Jn 6:53-4). Doesn’t the Church’s denial of the Eucharist or the reluctance of Eucharistic sharing going to close the door of salvific experience to our brethren? Doesn’t the absence of intercommunion among St. Thomas Christians in India (members of both the Catholic Church and non-Catholic churches), having apostolic foundation and valid sacraments, indicate a division based on power? Doesn’t that which violates “ut unum sint” represent sin?

2. Inculturation is an important characteristic in the contextual theology of the ITA. There were many attempts of inculturation in the liturgy of the Eucharist in the past, but these attempts were discouraged by Rome or brought about divisions in the Indian Church. The communion ecclesiology accepts and appreciates the individuality of each church, and therefore each one’s liturgical celebration as well. However, wouldn’t it be appropriate to formulate an inculturated Eucharistic anaphora that could be celebrated on the important occasions of the
whole Indian Church with the guidance and supervision of Rome? Wouldn’t it help Indian Christians to gather around a Eucharistic table, a symbol of unity? Wouldn’t it be a recognition of the Indian culture and the people? Wouldn’t it be truly a prophetic witness?

3. This research has presented the equal importance of the sacraments, evangelization (word of God), and social action. However, in India, the hierarchical Church gives precedence to the sacraments, charismatic groups give preference to the word of God, and many theologians and social workers emphasize social action. How could they be united in the context of the Eucharistic ecclesiology which emphasizes the centrality of the Eucharist, the importance of the word of God, and social action that underlies a prophetic life?


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