

Wesleyan Eucharistic Renewal and Revival as Eschatologically Theotic

By Brent Peterson

Evangelism and revivalism in many parts of the evangelical church in North America in the later part of the Twentieth century was propositional, decisional, and individualistic. From four spiritual laws, to diagnostic questions (if you die tonight will you go to heaven or hell?) to knocking on doors, to yelling at crowds from bull horns, evangelism in some of these forms caused many non-believers and believers to run away. While it is likely many had good intentions, models and practices of evangelism can, should, and are being imagined much more broadly. For the Wesleyan tradition, sanctification as *theosis* is (should be) central to the *telos* of renewal and revival. Moreover, the evangelistic revival of John and Charles Wesley in Eighteenth Century England was deeply sacramental in thought and practice. For the Wesleys, the sacraments were the regular and ordinary way of ongoing growth in sanctification (renewal and revival). With the 2018 OIMTS focus on renewal and revival this paper explores how a Wesleyan eucharistic theology participates in the deep revival of continual sanctification as *theosis*. Along with exploring Wesleyan Eucharistic theology in regard to presence and sacrifice, some Roman Catholic scholars will be consulted to provide some dynamic insights and connections. Finally, as a case study this paper will give attention to the Church of the Nazarene in its more recent eucharistic renewal and revival.

Sanctifying Grace As Theosis

Within the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*, justification and sanctification are the two performative actions in the forgiving and healing of the church. John Wesley suggested that justification offers a *relative* change, while sanctification offers a *real* change.¹ While God seeks and woos creation's response all along the way, responses to God's sanctifying healing are the full *telos* of the *ordo salutis* in the Wesleyan tradition.² Moreover, sanctifying grace in the Wesleyan tradition is best imagined as a healing in love as part of *theosis*.

Healed and Renewed in the Likeness of God as the Imago Dei

Sanctifying grace emphasizes the continual healing of the sin-disordered tempers and the continual renewal of the image of God in the person. Wesley employs the image of the "circumcision of the heart" to describe sanctification.

That habitual disposition of soul which in the Sacred Writings is termed 'holiness', and which directly implies the being cleansed from sin, 'from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit', and by consequence the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus, the being so 'renewed in the image of our mind' as to be 'perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect'.³

¹ Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of Those That are Born of God," §I.2, *Works*, 1: 432.

² This is not to undermine the importance of repentance in accepting justifying grace. Without care it may seem that justification is not quite good enough, so sanctification really "does the job." This should not to be affirmed. However, it is Wesley's strong belief that God desires much more than justification. The call to love and holiness seeks to woo persons in the church to a deeper maturity and perfection in love. This affirms that the New Birth in the *ordo salutis* is moving into the growth of entire sanctification, also known as Christian Perfection.

³ Sermon 17, "The Circumcision of the Heart," §I:1, *Works*, 1: 402-403.

Sanctifying grace continues the healing from unhealthy self (or other creaturely)-centeredness to loving, the great gift of dispossession for God, neighbor, and world. This renewal in the image of God is a renewal to love God, love others, be loved, and care for creation.

Several Wesleyan scholars suggest that Wesley's view of sanctification is deeply influenced by the Eastern Orthodox understanding of theosis.⁴ Michael J. Christensen defines theosis as deification, literally "ingodded." "Theosis in the Eastern Orthodox tradition is a vision of human potential for perfection, anticipated in ancient Greece, witnessed to in both the Old and New Testaments, and developed by Patristic Christian theologians of the first five centuries after Christ."⁵ This potential of perfection is not some isolated state of ethical supremacy. Rather, theosis is thoroughly dynamic and relational. Christansen further suggests that "The idea of theosis is that God and humanity progressively achieve a *union* in Christ which in the end both blurs and preserves the distinction between Creator and creation, as in a mirror perfectly reflecting the source of its image."⁶ The healing of creatures to be who God created them to be in God's image describes the hope of salvation.

E. Byron Anderson asserts that John Wesley builds upon the Eastern fathers' teaching of *theosis* in fleshing out his understanding of perfection as eschatological.⁷ Theosis is the process of "being changed 'from glory to glory' and the character of the Christian life that is 'already but not yet.'"⁸ Randy Maddox concurs that theosis fits well within Wesley's understanding of sanctification.

For Wesley, then, the Spirit's work of sanctification was not merely a forensic declaration of how God will treat us... It was a process of character-formation that is made possible by a restored participation of fallen humanity in the Divine life and power. This understanding of sanctification has significant parallels with the Eastern Orthodox theme of deification (theosis).⁹

Growth in character is growth in the likeness of God, which properly names the gift of sanctification. Similarly, Anderson notes, "theosis is the gradual movement of persons toward the attainment of likeness to God in virtue, wisdom, and knowledge of God."¹⁰ Furthermore, Anderson suggests that divinization is grounded in three theological claims: that

persons are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:28), that humanity retains in its nature the essential quality of life graced by God, and that, in its freedom, humanity has the potential for losing or attaining a likeness to God. This process of

⁴ Steve McCormick claims that Wesley's notions of theosis is his "most comprehensive response to the question of the nature of the Christian life... it was faith filled with the energy of love." McCormick also claims that this strand of theosis comes "within his own Anglican heritage, a strand borrowed from the eastern Fathers, most notably John Chrysostom. ("Theosis in Chrysostom and Wesley: An Eastern Paradigm of Faith and Love," 52).

⁵ Christensen, Michael J. "Theosis and Sanctification: John Wesley's Reformulation of a Patristic Doctrine," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (1996):72

⁶ Christensen, Michael J. "Theosis and Sanctification," 72

⁷ Michael Christian comes to the same conclusions. In light of John's work and editing of the Patristic fathers "my own evaluation supports the notion that *what Wesley envisioned as Christian perfection, holiness, or entire sanctification is based in part on his personal vision of what his sources taught about theosis.*" "Theosis and Sanctification," 91.

⁸ *Worship and Christian Identity*, 175

⁹ *Responsible Grace*, 122.

¹⁰ *Worship and Christian Identity*, 175.

divinization is rooted in the past, ongoing, and future work of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.¹¹

Sanctification is growth in the restored ability to love God and others, and to care for creation more fully. Scholars agree this describes Wesley's understanding of the growth and healing of persons who were created in the *imago dei* to be conformed to his likeness.¹²

Eucharistic Renewal as Ecclesiological

In parts of evangelical pan-wesleyan traditions, revival and sanctification have been imagined individualistically. Keeping the center of sanctification as theosis helps to consider how being Christian is ecclesial. The Lord's Supper is a primary occasion whereby God offers sanctifying grace, healing persons to love God and others in unity in the church. Wesley believed deeply that in the celebration of the Eucharist God makes the church one: "For it is this communion which makes us all one. We being many are yet, as it were, but different parts of one and the same broken bread, which we receive to unite us in one body."¹³ The Lord's Supper and the sanctifying gift offered must never be seen as an individualized growth toward a higher rung of pious spirituality. Hymn 165 of the *HLS* affirms the Lord's Supper as the occasion of this unity.

1 How happy are thy servants, Lord,
Who thus remember thee!
What tongue can tell our sweet accord,
Our perfect harmony!

2 Who thy mysterious Supper share,
Here at thy Table fed,
Many, and yet but one we are,
One undivided bread.

3 One with the living bread divine,
Which now by faith we eat,
Our hearts, and minds, and spirits join,

¹¹ Ibid. Anderson's articulation of divinization aligns itself not only with Wesley's doctrine of sanctification, but also that of prevenient grace. Specifically affirming that "humanity retains in its nature the essential quality of life graced by God" speaks against a doctrine of original sin where human capacity for God is utterly abolished as a result of the Fall. This speaks into the important distinction for the East and for Wesley between the *image* and *likeness* of God. In some measure being "created in the image of God" can be understood as God's prevenient grace that God created us with the capacity to receive and give love. Likeness is best understood in the Wesleyan soteriological grammar as glorification, the result of perfection.

¹² While worthy of discussion, this project will not take lengths to separate the distinctions between image and likeness. While Wesley uses "image" more frequently, Anderson's connection to likeness is appropriate and enlightening for any discussion on sanctification. Wynkoop offers a brief exegetical and theological discussion on their similarities and distinctions. See *A Theology of Love*, 116-121. See also *Responsible Grace*, 68-70, and Dunning, *Grace, Faith & Holiness*, 151-160, for a discussion on the Image of God.

¹³ I Corinthians 10:17 in *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: Bowyer, 1755); Reprint ed. Wesley Center for Applied Theology (http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/notes/1Corinthians.htm). See also Wesley *NT Notes* John 17:23.

And all in Jesus meet.

4 So dear the tie where souls agree
 In Jesu's dying love;
 Then only can it closer be,
 When all are join'd above.¹⁴

Here, Charles and John speak from the center of the greater Christian eucharistic tradition affirming a primary gift of the Eucharist is that it joins believers together into the body of Christ. This unity and re-membering of the body of Christ occurs physically and spiritually at the Lord's Supper. While the Wesleys would not have had access to the *Didache*, several themes offer a striking similarity.

Here at thy Table fed,
 any, and yet but one we are,
 One undivided bread.

The *Didache*, recognizing the significance of the bread-sign, prays:

As this broken bread was scattered over the mountains, and when brought together became one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.¹⁵

An individualistic spirituality cannot renew persons in the image of God. Love moves one *for, to, and with* all others. Love unites. In contrast, separation within the body is, according to Wesley, a sin and a failure to love.

It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians with whom we were before united is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together, and the greater the love the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold that we can think of separating from our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause; otherwise they would still hold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.¹⁶

God's filling the believers with love fosters a close communion among believers and with God. In this communion, God renews the church into one as the body of Christ. This renewing in love occurs ecclesially and sacramentally both in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; both serve as divine events renewing our unity *in and as* the body of Christ. Even though Wesley does not specifically use the term "theosis," Anderson, Maddox, and others feel confident that the hope of theosis is implicitly consistent with John Wesley's teaching.¹⁷ As the Lord's Supper is an event of encounter and transformation the issue of presence at the table requires attention.

¹⁴HLS, #165, 138.

¹⁵ *Didache*, Chapter 9 in Jasper and Cummings, *Prayers of the Eucharist*, 23.

¹⁶ Sermon 75, "On Schism," §1.11, *Works*, 3:64.

¹⁷ See *Responsible Grace*, 66-67. Wesley resisted the term "divinization," because he sought to preserve the clear distinction between God and humanity. As an example, when translating the Macarian homilies, Wesley translates theosis as "perfection."

Doxologically Agnostic: A Wesleyan View of Christ's Presence at the Table

Much ink (and perhaps blood) has spilled arguing over presence at the Lord's Table. Ironically, much of that focus has been on the presence of Christ and not on the presence of the congregation. Both are worthy of attention. Now we consider a Wesleyan approach to Christ's presence at the Table.

While Borgen and Rattenbury resisted locking the Wesleys into any of the traditional positions on Christ's presence, I suggest that a proper linguistic symbol for the Wesleys' position on Christ's presence is a *doxological agnosticism* (or a joyful mystery) as to the metaphysics of how Christ is present. The Wesleys affirmed in thanksgiving and praise (doxological) that Christ is present, at the same time, remain in wonder, and awe as to *how* Christ is present (agnostic). Christ's presence is always a matter of doxology without metaphysical constraints.¹⁸ Not paying attention to the distinction between metaphysics and praise of Christ's presence has likely caused many Wesleyans, who were intentionally resisting any semblance of Roman Catholic eucharistic theology, to remain "pure memorialists" as defined by Rattenbury and Borgen, or just plain confused.¹⁹ Holding to a doxological agnosticism keeps Christ's presence central without reducing the presence to a scholastic metaphysical ontology. Christ's presence is a mysterious promise that must not be exhausted by ontology. In other words, this presence is active and relational while mysteriously substantial.

The Wesleys reflect on this glorious mystery of Christ's presence at the table in the *Hymns of the Lord's Supper* (HLS) #59, which draws upon a passage from Daniel Brevint. Brevint

¹⁸ In a letter to his mother, Wesley clearly rejected what he understood to be the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation. "We cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present [in the Eucharist] without allowing either con- or trans-substantiation" (John Wesley, Letter to his Mother [February 28, 1732], *Works* [Jackson], 12:13). Also see *Hymns of the Lord's Supper* (HLS), 63:1-2, 53. However, Owen Cummings and John Todd argue that Wesley actually is very close to the Roman doctrine regarding Christ's presence at the Table ("John Wesley and Eucharistic Ecclesiology" in *One in Christ* 35 [1999]: 143–151). Cummings suggests that the Wesley's opposition to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation was from an uninformed understanding. John Todd also suggests that both John and Charles had not mastered the scholastic terms and "it seems probable that John also did not know the doctrine of transubstantiation specifically excludes the confinement of God to a place" (Cummings, 147). This might be probable if all we had was the first line of HLS #63, st. 3 and concluded Wesley's concern there had to do with the spatial confinement of God in the bread and wine. However, John's concern was not simply on God being trapped or exhausted but that the substance of the bread changes to Christ's body. Not to be dismayed, Cummings finds continuity with the Roman Catholic position by highlighting not what Wesley rejected but what Wesley affirmed in the eucharistic hymns. "In their eucharistic hymns they brought the whole doctrine back in other language" (Cummings, 148). Wesley's promulgation that the bread and wine become signs of Christ's body and blood was both in line with Scripture and the position rooted in Patristic theology. "Here we see that what was called his body was bread at the same time. And accordingly these elements are called by the Fathers 'the images, the figure, of Christ's body and blood.'"¹⁸ Cummings claims that Wesley's reference to Biblical and Patristic theology is "an initial indication that Wesley did not view the eucharistic gifts as mere tokens or nude memories of Christ" (Cummings, 147). It seems historically ill advised to claim Wesley supported Transubstantiation. However, for the post-Wesleyan conversation an engagement with Roman Catholic eucharistic theology would be ecumenically and theologically fruitful. This is one of the major passions of Geoffrey Wainwright.

¹⁹ I contend the Church of the Nazarene is not intentionally Zwinglian in its liturgical and theological doctrine of Christ's presence. They have never really articulated a doctrine of Christ's presence. In many ways the Nazarenes have a null doctrine of Christ's presence. In other words, the doctrine of Christ's presence has reverted back to a popular evangelical memorialism by default. This is likely caused and exacerbated by a great deal of sacramental apathy in general throughout the first century of the Church of the Nazarene's existence.

describes the joyful mystery surrounding Christ's eucharistic presence by allegorizing upon the Gospel's narrative of Jesus healing the blind man: "Indeed in what manner this is done, I know not; it is enough for me to admire. *One thing I know* (as said the blind man of our Lord), *He laid clay upon mine eyes, and behold I see.*"²⁰ The Wesleys affirm in the corresponding hymn:

- 1 God incomprehensible
Shall man presume to know,
Fully search him out, or tell
His wondrous ways below?
Him in all his ways we find;
How the means transmit the power
Here he leaves our thought behind,
And faith inquires no more.
- 2 How he did these creatures raise
And make this bread and wine
Organs to convey his grace
To this poor soul of mine,
I cannot the way descry,
Need not know the mystery,
Only this I know, that I
*Was blind, but now I see.*²¹

This hymn captures well the spirit of doxological agnosticism. While not exhausting the mystery of the manner Christ's presence, mystery leads to worship—doxology. This hymn proclaims that God reveals all things necessary for healing, namely being seen *by* and then *seeing* Christ. Somehow their eyes are opened so as they are seen by Christ they are empowered then to see Christ, which describes all the illumination needed.

While John Wesley affirmed Christ's presence, he was not enthusiastic about making claims defining Christ's presence in regard to substance (metaphysical ontology). For John Wesley, the scholastic language of eucharistic substance was not clear in Scripture, and perhaps in his pastoral wisdom, thought discussions and arguments about substance and species would rob the Eucharist of its central *telos*, the healing encounter with Christ. Therefore, any discussions with an ontological agenda seeking to define whether Christ is bodily or spiritually present *in* or *around* the elements misrepresents the Wesleys. Borgen concurs: "Wesley needs neither a doctrine of ubiquity nor a philosophy of 'substance' and 'accidents' to explain this mystery."²²

Doxological agnosticism does not retreat from logic and reason, but shows that when responding to the Eucharist, doxology grounds all activity. Christ's presence in this new event comes yielding a doxological joy. Charles writes:

²⁰ "The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice," (Extracted from Dr. Brevint), in J. Ernest Rattenbury. *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*. (London: Epworth; reprint (updated grammar), Cleveland, OH: OSL Publications 1990) §IV.3, p. 151.

²¹ HLS, #59, sts. 1-3, 49 (Italics mine).

²² Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 185.

Sure and real is the grace, the manner be unknown;
 only meet us in thy ways and perfect us in one.
 Let us taste the heavenly powers, Lord, we ask for nothing.
 Thine to bless, 'tis only ours to wonder and adore.²³

Thomas Aquinas seems to affirm this notion of doxological agnosticism in his hymn *Pange Lingua Gloriosi Corporis Mysterium*. This is a hymn written for the feast of Corpus Christi and is also sung on Holy Thursday when the body of Christ is removed from the tabernacle until the celebration on Good Friday. In celebrating the active presence of Christ, Aquinas affirms the mystery of this celebration as to how Christ is present.

Word made flesh, the bread of nature
 By his word to flesh he turns;
 Wine into his blood he changes:—
 What though sense no change discerns?
 Only be the heart in earnest,
 Faith her lesson quickly learns.²⁴

In affirming the active presence of Christ, while one's senses may not be able to verify the change, faith affirms and celebrates it.²⁵

Along with an imagination that theotic sanctification is the telos of revival and renewal, inviting the Church to be renewed as the body of Christ at the Lord's Supper, it is necessary to consider how the Lord's Supper is sacrificial.

A Post-Wesleyan Grammar of Sacrifice

The Wesleys provide grammar to be celebrated and discarded in regard to how the Lord's Supper is sacrificial as a sacrament of evangelistic sanctification. The Wesleys were woefully committed to their contemporary penal and substitutionary atonement theories, especially as seen in the *HLS*.²⁶ While this is not the only image they use to speak of the sacrifice of Christ, such theories are persistent and unhelpful to the Wesleyan tradition, specifically considering the Eucharist as a sacrificial encounter

Sacrifice as Sanctification

A better Wesleyan grammar of sacrifice is to link it with sanctification, which in turn connects to revival and renewal. Such a move helps to re-locate this conversation within John Wesley's *ordo salutis*, and specifically to the claim that the Eucharist is a sacrament of sanctification. Recognizing the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is critical to considering the sanctifying healing of the sacrament.

In developing this connection between sacrifice and sanctification, the etymology of the Latin roots becomes helpful. Sacrifice in Latin is *sacrificium*, which is formed by the roots *sacer*

²³ Charles Wesley, "O the Depth of Love Divine," st. 4 (1745). Hymn #627 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. It is intriguing this hymn was written the same year as the publication of the *HLS*.

²⁴ This is a translation from Father Caswall in 1849. This was downloaded from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11441c.htm> on January 20, 2011.

²⁵ Thanks to the NAAL Eucharist Prayer and Theology Seminar for making me aware of such a connection between the Wesleys and Aquinas in this arena of doxological agnosticism regarding Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

²⁶ See especially *HLS*, #2, #10, #14, #17, #36, and #45.

(holy) and *facem* (to do or make). Literally sacrifice is “to be made holy” or “to make holy.” This is a helpful corrective grammar to recover the term “sacrifice” from images fixated on “bloody payment,” restoring honor, or “appeasement of divine wrath.” A sacrifice is the means by which one is being made holy.

This new grammar has far reaching implications not only for considering how Christ’s presence at the Eucharist is sacrificial, but similarly how the church sacrifices itself in the Eucharist. The church’s sacrifice at the Eucharist is the church’s response to God’s invitation of further healing and renewal in the *imago dei*. In other words, the church’s eucharistic sacrificial offering is a means for the church’s continual growth in sanctification. Therefore, this link between sacrifice and sanctification seeks to tear down any competitive or juridical barrier between the Father and Christ and between God and creation. The sacrificial emphasis is not juridical justification but healing.

Roman Catholic Illumination

In thinking about sacrifice and presence from the Wesleyan tradition, Robert Daly’s *Sacrifice Unveiled* and Nathan Mitchell’s *Real Presence* provide insights from the Roman Catholic faith.²⁷ Moreover, these insights can provide illumination for a Wesleyan revival and renewal. Three points of contact within the works of Daly and Mitchell are highlighted that are sympathetic to Wesleyan eucharistic theology.

- 1) Daly affirms the eucharistic (and thus soteriological) *telos* of Christianity is theosis. Eucharistic sacrifice is an invitation to sanctification.²⁸
- 2) With the goal of theosis, Daly suggests that presence of the divine Trinity is a kenotic sacrifice that invites Christians and all of creation to *eschatologically become what they already are*, the body of Christ. Rather than restricting the conversation about Christ’s eucharistic presence to the “change” that happens to the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine, both Daly and Mitchell assert the primary emphasis of presence, and really of the entire eucharistic event, is the formation of the church as the body of Christ.
- 3) This renewal and transformation of the assembly is a participation in the fuller consummation, the past and future being released to the present, of the kingdom

Transubstantiation As Doxological New Creation

Within this proposal of a Wesleyan affirmation of Christ’s *real presence* best conceived as doxological agnosticism, several Roman Catholic scholars argue that a proper focus of transubstantiation can actually guard against an ontological “knowledge” and move Christians to a mysterious doxology. In listening to these Roman Catholic conversation partners it appears that an idolization of ontological metaphysics concerning the bread and wine can and should be rejected when affirming Christ’s active presence through transubstantiation. Concerning Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, these conversation partners may implicitly suggest that doxological agnosticism may be right in what it affirms, but misguided in what it rejects.

Drawing largely upon the work of Daly and Mitchell I will explore *first*, how the primary *telos* of the eucharistic event is the transformation of the assembly into the body of Christ; *second*, how the change that occurs is an eschatological new creation; *third*, the ethical transformation of the assembly as the body of Christ is the verification and testimony to the

²⁷ Robert J. Daly, SJ, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009) and Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of the Eucharist* (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001).

²⁸ Daly, Robert J. SJ, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 5.

reality of Christ's presence; and *forth*, how this transformation is embodied by participating in God's ministry in the world through doxological extravagance.

Eucharist Telos as Formation of the Assembly

Robert Daly and Nathan Mitchell both claim to be offering a corrective to the popular understanding of Christ's presence through transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic tradition. In seeking to keep the centrality of Christ's active personal presence, they emphasize that a proper focus must not be on the changing of the bread and the wine, but encountering the Divine presence of self-offering that invites the church to become the body of Christ as gift.

Daly offers a theological rubric for conceiving of Christ's active and substantial presence and the transformation that takes place in the Eucharist. "The primary focus, indeed the very purpose of the transformation of the bread and wine, is the transformation of the assembly."²⁹ For Daly the full imagination of the Eucharistic celebration is the ongoing, deepening transformation of the worshipping assembly into the Body of Christ.

That the bread and wine are to become the Body and Blood of Christ present on this or that altar is not an end in itself, not the final purpose of the Eucharistic transformation.

The transformation that brings about the Eucharistic presence happens *for us*, that *we* may become more fully and more truly the Body of Christ. *The whole purpose is the eschatological transformation of the participants.*³⁰

The presence of Christ in the bread and wine is an eschatological *moment* in the present and further coming of the kingdom of God.³¹ The transformation that occurs in the epiclesis offers a vision beyond the bread and wine and even beyond the present assembly. "The epiclesis is not limited to the transformation of the gifts or of the community, but of all history into the body of the Lord."³² The eschatological imagination is not even restricted to local bodies of faith. The transformation and renewal of the assembly into the body of Christ is a firstfruits of the healing and redemption of all of Creation, participating as gift, in God. Nathan Mitchell thinking of Rahner notes "in a profound sense, the eucharist affirms that the world itself is destined to become the very body of God."³³

Eschatological "Change"

While prioritizing the transformation and renewal of the church to eschatologically become what they already are, this does not marginalize or negate the transformation of the eucharistic gifts. Even though Daly does suggest that the transformation of the members does subordinate the transformation of the gifts "the transformation of the gifts is the real foundation and condition of the transformation of the participants."³⁴ While a Wesleyan doxological agnosticism refuses to exhaust mystery, it also does not leave the church mute as to the "change" that occurs *at* and *around* the table. Mitchell positively affirms that the mystery of the Eucharist simply breaks language; it opens it up to new possibilities beyond causation or idolatrous

²⁹ Robert J. Daly SJ, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 18.

³⁰ Daly, 20.

³¹ Drawing upon the work of Edward Kilmartin's *The Eucharist in the West*, Daly highlights the specific grammar of "moments" as metaphorical and not temporal. See Daly, 5n5.

³² Victor Codina, "Sacraments," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. by I Ellacuria and J. Sobrino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 672.

³³ Mitchell, 29. See Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14, translated by Cornelius Ernst (New York: Seabury, 1976), 172.

³⁴ Daly, 22.

correspondence.³⁵ In transubstantiation, “Christ’s body becomes, that is, subverts and displaces, our language.”³⁶ This caution against an ontological “knowledge” of the eucharistic mystery is a primary concern of a Wesleyan doxological agnosticism and it appears Daly and Mitchell provide safe passage.

In light of this breaking of language, both Daly and Mitchell, upholding the active, personal, substantial presence, clarify the doxology of this confession of faith. “If one holds that the change in the elements of bread and wine is natural or physical, one has, in effect, overturned the very definition of sacrament.”³⁷ Mitchell draws upon Aquinas to emphasize this point. Aquinas concluded “the body of Christ is present in the eucharist not in the usual, natural, visible ways bodies are normally present, but rather in a spiritual, non-visible, substantial and sacramental manner.”³⁸ Moreover, Aquinas emphasizes that “the eucharistic presence is real, but not natural.”³⁹ Mitchell further notes that an emphasis should not be on transubstantiation as a central dogma. Mitchell highlights the work of McCabe. “The Council of Trent did not decree that Catholics should believe in transubstantiation: it just calls it a most appropriate (*aptissime*) way of talking about the Eucharist.”⁴⁰ Mitchell, in support of a “proper” understanding of transubstantiation, notes that “belief in the real presence is not tied to—or limited by—any single theological explanation.”⁴¹ Mitchell guards against the mysterious celebration of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist from becoming an idol of “cognitive mastery” in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Conversely, the celebration of Christ’s active presence is a doxological prayer and sacrificial encounter (mutual presence) of who God is inviting creation to be.

Mitchell suggests the act of creation itself is the only positive comparison to the “change” occurring in the Eucharist. “As a *theological* term, creation refers to God’s presence and action beyond the structures of cause and effect. God creates not by giving things the form by which they have their existence, but *by giving the act of existence itself*.”⁴² Drawing upon McCabe, Mitchell notes that there is not a chemical change in the bread and wine, “God utterly transforms *the meaning of change itself*. God causes not simply a change ‘in *what it is* that exists’ but a change in what it *means* to exist in the first place.”⁴³ In light of this comparison, it seems this eucharistic “change” appears much closer to a *creatio ex nihilo*, rather than God ordering chaos. Mitchell poetically imagines the change in the eucharistic consecration, “It is not that the bread has become a new kind of thing in this world: it now belongs to a new world.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, in the Eucharist, “the bread and wine do not change into something else (the mistaken view Catholics associate with transubstantiation); rather, they become *more radically* food and drink for as McCabe puts it, ‘Christ has a better right to appear as food and drink than bread and wine have.’⁴⁵ Moreover, the emphasis is not on the change that is occurring in God, or the elements, but the transformation and renewal of the members as the body of Christ.

³⁵ See Mitchell, 102, who also draws upon the work of David Power.

³⁶ Mitchell, 126.

³⁷ Mitchell, 99.

³⁸ Mitchell, 100. (See *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa.75.1, *ad quartum*; IIIa.76.2, *corpus*).

³⁹ Mitchell, 100.

⁴⁰ Herbert McCabe, “Eucharistic Change,” *Priests & People* 8:217-21 (1994), 217.

⁴¹ Mitchell, 101.

⁴² Mitchell, 103.

⁴³ Mitchell, 122. See Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 150.

⁴⁴ Herbert McCabe, “Eucharistic Change,” *Priests & People* 8:217-21 (1994), 220.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, 124 drawing upon McCabe, 127.

The sacraments are used by God as a means of grace, allowing the assembly to encounter this new world and through the assembly the entire world might be transformed into this new creation which is here and yet still coming. Sacraments draw

us into a world already and always possessed by God's presence, by God's self-bestowal, by God's self-communicating incarnation in the life, death and risen destiny of Jesus Christ. What begins as a ceremonial act in church leads the assembly into the kingdom.⁴⁶

The kingdom is nothing other than the activity of God in three persons, blessed Trinity, a kenotic love. In this way, the bread and wine become the language in which God speaks and into which the church is called to be spoken.

It is precisely this eschatological change in the elements that becomes the proper imagination for the telos of renewal and revival in theosis.

The Eschatological Ethical Verification of Christ's Presence

In light of the strong emphasis on the assembly becoming the body of Christ, both Daly and Mitchell emphasize the importance of this happening ethically in the world as a verification of Christ's presence *in* and *around* the table. Daly argues that a primary verification of Christ's eucharistic presence is the transformation of the assembly becoming more fully the body of Christ. As the church is renewed as gift at the table, the church is to be doxologically broken and spilled out in ministry to all the world by the power of the Spirit. This doxological offering enables the church to share and participate in Christ's sacrificial offering to the Father, for the world. Yet Daly pushes further to say that if this is not occurring ecclesially in a sacrificial ethic in the world, it calls into question Christ's presence at the eucharistic altar.

If the transformation of the Eucharistic elements is not having its effect in the virtuous dispositions of the participants, if the participants are not at least beginning to be transformed, at least beginning to appropriate the self-offering virtuous dispositions of Christ, then there is no Eucharistic presence.⁴⁷

Curiously, Daly seems to be pressing against a Protestant mis-understanding of the grace offered at the table *ex opere operato in persona Christi*. The work that Christ does in the Eucharist (*ex opere operato*) must always be connected to the *ex opere operantis*, the work and proper disposition of the ecclesia to receive the gift of Christ's presence. This cooperation in the Spirit between Christ and the church resonates strongly within a Wesleyan understanding of divine-human synergism.

Daly moves further, refusing to relent.

The transformation of the elements does not take place simply to have Christ become present upon the altar but rather, first and foremost, to have Christ and his virtuous dispositions become present in the hearts, minds, wills and lives of the members of the Eucharistic assembly. If this transformation is not at least beginning to take place, the transformation of the gifts becomes meaningless.⁴⁸

Daly seems to indicate fruitlessness, perhaps even a futility, of a ritual meal (perhaps called the Lord's Supper) that is not reaping results of ethical transformation of the gathered. This emphasis is consistent with his appreciation for theosis as the restoration and *telos* of creation. Daly squeezes tighter. "A Eucharist without transformation of participants is a Eucharist without meaning; and in Postmodernity, where there is no meaning there is no reality."⁴⁹ If the church

⁴⁶ Mitchell, 104.

⁴⁷ Daly, 20.

⁴⁸ Daly, 182.

⁴⁹ Daly, 22.

fails to respond by the Spirit and offer itself as an embodiment and testimony of its transformation into the body of Christ, the Eucharist in that local congregation has been found unfruitful and moving away from life. Daly's point is provocative, unless the gathered are becoming more holy, set apart as Christ's body ministering in the world, the ritual is dead and meaningless.

Within this ethical ecclesial verification, Daly is careful not to hold the Eucharist hostage to a "completed" and "finished" church as the body of Christ. The eschatological emphasis on the church's continual becoming celebrates with the Apostle Paul that by the Spirit the Christians must press on to take hold of that to which Christ has taken hold of us.⁵⁰ The church's self-offering in response to the offering of the Father and the Son-empowered by the Spirit is not completed, but ongoing. "Such a transformation can, at best, only begin in the here-and-now, and it can become complete only at the Eschaton."⁵¹ As a continual renewal and growth in grace, this transformation of the assembly is an eschatological becoming. Nathan Mitchell also describes the eschatological process of the assembly becoming more and more the body of Christ as an act of new creation.

Because the symbolic process is not a natural one, it points to the existence of something *absent* from this world, something *missing* that only God's action can create, and only faith can perceive. In short, the church's celebration of a ritual meal launches a process of *becoming eucharist*, a process that is completed only when Christians recognize their own identity as *Christ's body in the world*.⁵²

Mitchell describes this process as an awareness, seeing their vocation as Christ's body ministering in the main streets and margins of the world. Daly points to the United Methodist Great Thanksgiving's epiclesis as a prayer affirming this *becoming eucharist*. "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood."⁵³ Christ's presence invites, beckons, and seeks to transform the church to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry by becoming Christ's broken body and shed blood.

Transformation as Participation in God

Mitchell cuts to the quick in thinking about Christ's presence at the table as narrated in the New Testament. "In the New Testament, the primary sacramental question does not seem to be 'How is Jesus present in the species of bread and wine? but rather 'How does a Christian participate in Christ?'"⁵⁴ Mitchell supports this claim by considering the work of Paul. "For Paul, it is not a matter of making the Christ-event present to the believer; it is a matter of making the believer present to the Christ-event through grace, faith, and the Spirit."⁵⁵ The church being made present to Christ by the power of the Spirit in the assembly's sacrificial oblation at the table.

To illustrate the point Nathan Mitchell comments that the narrative of Mark's "Last Supper" was a colossal failure. Mitchell notes that in the Gospel of Mark, the Lord's Supper is largely a failure of the disciples to be present to Christ who is present.

⁵⁰ Phil. 3:12-14

⁵¹ Daly, 182.

⁵² Mitchell, 105.

⁵³ *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2003), 10.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, 58.

⁵⁵ Mitchell, 59.

The Last Supper, as Mark tells it, is not a beautiful tale about Jesus offering himself to others as food and drink but a scandalous story of stupidity and cowardice on the part of those who should have known better. The Last Supper in Mark is less an institution than an indictment.⁵⁶

In the words of Daly, it was meaningless and had no reality.

The proper emphasis must not be “what’s on the table but who’s at the table.”⁵⁷ The emphasis is not how is God or eucharistic elements changed, but are the people being changed, renewed as the body of Christ. The emphasis on presence celebrates a pneumatic rhythm of encounter and response. Jesus’ kenotic presence in Mark is voided by the disciples’ failure to be truly present to Christ. Mitchell powerfully asserts that as a foil to the disciples in Mark is the women bearing an alabaster jar of perfume (Mark 14:3-9) who anoints Jesus. “The woman’s extravagant deed of service and love is the true meaning of eucharistic dining.”⁵⁸ Mitchell notes that this woman’s example serves as a testimony of a proper table fellowship and response to Christ’s presence. The woman’s action is not to be repeated, but her faithful sacrificial offer moves Christ to command her offering never be forgotten. Mitchell suggests

In Mark’s view, ‘Do this in memory of me’ means ‘Do this in memory of *her*. Make your eucharistic table a place of lavish abundance and extravagant service, where the tired, the poor, the hungry, and all who are driven by despair and need may find real food, real rest, real comfort, real nurture. Indeed, it is the abundant presence of these things that signals the presence of Jesus, of God, as table partner.⁵⁹

The church’s response to encounter Christ and receive the gift of a *new existence* as the body of Christ is embodied by a presence *with* and *to* the poor.⁶⁰ The ministry of God in the world through the sacrament of the church testifies to Christ’s transformative presence. Mitchell explicates further, “Christ is not only *on* the table but *at* and *around* the table.”⁶¹ Hence, Christ is present in the members as His body.

The Church of the Nazarene will now be taken as a case study in eucharistic renewal and revival moving towards theosis.

Church of the Nazarene

Several holiness groups from across the United States joined together in 1907 in Pilot Point Texas to form the Church of the Nazarene. Phineas Bresee, a former Methodist pastor in Los Angeles, was a key leader in the nascency of the young denomination. The Church of the Nazarene believes one of the reasons God raised it up was to help proclaim the doctrine of Entire Sanctification. While the sacraments have been celebrated from the Church of the Nazarene’s inception, there has not been a clear link between the call to Entire Sanctification and regular participation of the Lord’s Supper (or baptism). Moreover, the strong and early influence of the American Holiness movement guided the church toward a view of sanctification that was individualistic, instantaneous (and complete), and legalistic. Moreover, this influence encouraged the teaching of Entire Sanctification as a second work of grace offering a sinless perfection. This position became untenable and with the resurgence of the Wesleyan view of

⁵⁶ Mitchell, 54.

⁵⁷ Mitchell, 54.

⁵⁸ Mitchell, 56. Mitchell also points to Leander Klosinski, “The Meals in Mark,” doctoral dissertation,” (1988), 120.

⁵⁹ Mitchell, 57.

⁶⁰ See Mitchell, 24-28.

⁶¹ Mitchell, 60.

sanctification new health and vitality to this doctrine is occurring. However, within this Wesleyan recovery of sanctification as ongoing perfection in love, there was not initially a faithful remembering and recovering of Wesley's Eucharistic zeal and passion. However, over the last 25 years this has changed. The Church of the Nazarene has also been influenced by the liturgical/sacramental reformation that has taken place across Christianity in the late Twentieth century.

A growing wave of Nazarene pastors and scholars has raised up a new awareness, passion, and zeal for the sacraments in the Church of the Nazarene. To date there is a facebook group called *Sacramental Nazarenes* which currently has over 2400 members. Out of this group several conferences have been initiated with the sharing of liturgical and sacramental resources. The Lord's Supper, while initially an ordinance celebrated quarterly, is celebrated monthly in most congregations, with many Nazarene congregations celebrating weekly. The Church of the Nazarene has recently revised its Article of Faith on the Lord's Supper and offered a new eucharistic liturgy.⁶² While all the fruit of linking the Lord's Supper and Sanctification has not been harvested, this new connection will help move us toward a more ecclesial and theotic understanding and practice of sanctification. More and more pastors are being taught and seeing how the Lord's Supper can serve as part of their renewal as God offers preventient, justifying, and sanctifying grace at the table.⁶³ Along with Baptism, this eucharistic recovery will continue to guide renewal in the Church of the Nazarene.

⁶² See appendix A and B

⁶³ Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §II.1, in *Works*, 1:381. Wesley also affirms that this is precisely the Church of England's teaching and doctrine. It is noteworthy that prayer, Scripture, and the Lord's Supper are in this place noted as the chief means of grace for the offering of salvation through preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace. Ole Borgen asserts that while Scripture is important, it is the Lord's Supper that is the primary means of grace. "The Word plays an important role in God's plan of salvation. But for Wesley, the Lord's Supper always remains the means of grace *par excellence*" (Borgen, 75). Later in the sermon "Means of Grace" John Wesley elaborates further. "Thirdly, all who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's Supper" (§III:11). See also Sermon 101, "The Duty of Constant Communion" §I:1. "A second reason why every Christian should do this [receive the Lord's Supper] as often as he can is because the benefits of doing it are so great to all that do it in obedience to him; namely, the forgiveness of our past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. This is also seen consistently in the *HLS*: #42, st. 4, #25, st. 3, #42, st. 5, and #91, st. 3.

Appendix A

Article 13 on the Lord's Supper⁶⁴

We believe that the [Memorial and Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is essentially a New Testament sacrament, declarative of His sacrificial death, through the merits of which believers have life and salvation and promise of all spiritual blessings in Christ. It is distinctively for those who are prepared for reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it they show forth the Lord's death till He come again. It being the Communion feast, only those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints should be called to participate therein.] *Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a sacrament, proclaiming His life, sufferings, sacrificial death, resurrection, and the hope of His coming again. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. All are invited to participate by faith in Christ and be renewed in life, salvation, and in unity as the Church. All are to come in reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it show forth the Lord's death until He comes. Those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints are invited by Christ to participate as often as possible.*

Appendix B

Paragraph 700 Lord's Supper Liturgy

The Communion Supper, instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a sacrament, which proclaims His life, His sufferings, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, and the hope of His coming again. It shows forth the Lord's death until His return.

The Supper is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. It is to be received in reverent appreciation and gratefulness for the work of Christ.

All those who are truly repentant, forsaking their sins, and believing in Christ for salvation are invited to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ. We come to the table that we may be renewed in life and salvation and be made one by the Spirit.

In unity with the Church, we confess our faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. And so we pray:

The minister may offer a prayer of confession and supplication, concluding with the following prayer of consecration:

Holy God, We gather at this, your table, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who by your Spirit was anointed to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, set at liberty those who are oppressed. Christ healed the sick, fed the hungry, ate with sinners, and established the new covenant for forgiveness of sins. We live in the hope of His coming again.

⁶⁴ Language in brackets is being replaced with language in Italics as action taken in the 2017 International General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene.

On the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said: "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, when the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, and said: "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Matthew 26:27-29, Luke 22:19)

And so, we gather as the Body of Christ to offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these your gifts. Make them by the power of your Spirit to be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the Body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

By your Spirit make us one in Christ, one with each other, and one in the ministry of Christ to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, let us pray:

(Here the congregation may pray the Lord's Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.