Lukas Vischer:
Spirituality, Creation and the Ecology of the Eucharist

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2. Historical Context

After the 2004 ECEN consultation on creation theology ("Listening to Creation Groaning"), a second consultation (2006) asked for the spiritual force sustaining Christians in the struggle for a greater respect for creation. Attention concentrated on the Eucharist and its relationship to Creation.

3. Summary

The Place of Creation in Christian Spirituality: The meaning of spirituality (*ruach*) in face of today's ecological crisis – The present situation – Listening anew to Holy Scripture: perceiving new ethical responsibilities and rethinking fundamental theological positions – Biblical and theological insights: human dependence on creatio continua, the life-giving Spirit, Trinity, the special role of *adam* (earthling) within the whole of creation, the gift of land, Sabbath, death and new creation, the witness of non-violence – Hope and expectation: between *paroikia* and *oikodome* – Dimensions and elements of witness: admiration of God's work, a sober assessment of the state of the world, reduction of human claims on Creation, Sabbath as space for communion with God, neighbours, persons far away, and the whole of Creation – Spirituality of resistance: between leaving the society in monastic tradition and establishing signs of life in this world, hope not being dependent on success, love anticipating God's future.

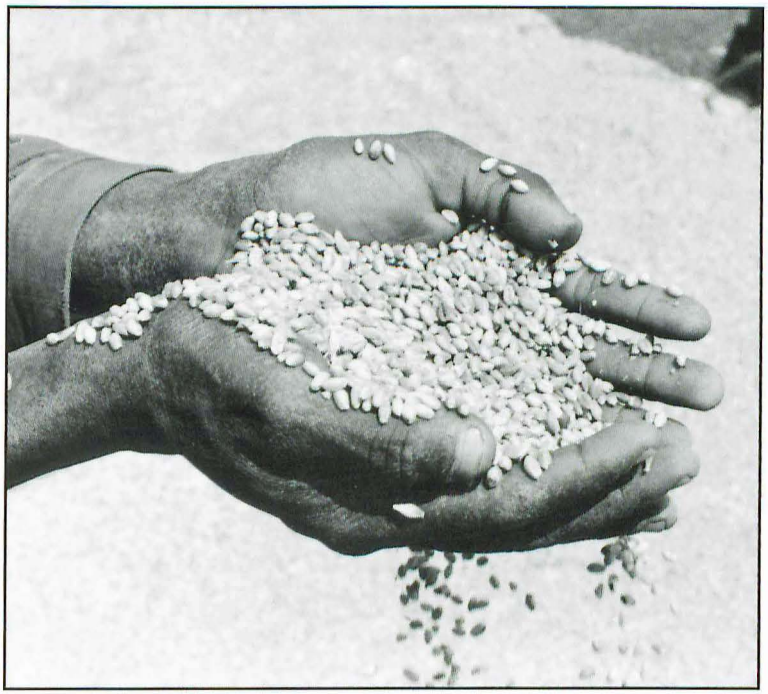
Celebrating God's Good Purpose for Creation: Findings of the consultation on the meaning of the Eucharist: Eucharist and our relation to Creator and Creation - Creation in present liturgies – New perspectives, seven considerations – Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry.

Bread and Wine – Signs of God's Creation and New Creation: Eucharist derived from Passover and from Jesus' table fellowship – Bread: manna, product of the promised land, blessing of the community, future communion, Jesus as bread of life – Wine: relief from toil, source of joy, gift of land, sign of the coming kingdom, Jesus as the vine and source of wider communion – Creation and new creation: Jewish tradition, new distribution of manna as beginning of messianic period, new covenant, praise of the continued table fellowship for the Creator of new things.

4. Editor's Remarks

The manuscripts of these four articles are available. The original manuscript of "Bread and Wine" was written in German: "Brot und Wein – Zeichen von Gottes Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung".

Spirituality, Creation and the Ecology of the Eucharist



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Spirituality, Creation and the Ecology of the Eucharist

Reflections of an international consultation convened by the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

from April 2 to 6, 2006

at the John Knox International Reformed Centre in Geneva

Geneva 2007

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Preface

How does the care for God's creation find expression in Christian spirituality? In face of the ecological crisis the question presents itself with increasing urgency. The destruction of the human environment caused by human activities calls for a spiritual answer

The debate on the ecological crisis is in full swing. For some time the churches hesitated to engage in the movement against the over-exploitation and pollution of the planet. Today they generally agree that the responsible use of God's gifts is an integral dimension of Christian witness. The Charta Oecumenica (2001) states it very clearly: "We recommend that the churches consider and promote the care for creation as part of church life at all levels ..." The answer can obviously not consist in mere statements. It also requires more than moral and ethical instructions. Care for creation must pervade the *life* of Christian congregations and every individual Christian. "Commitment to the care for creation, the *Charta oecumenica* continues, is not an issue among many but an essential dimension of all church life."

For some years, the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) has addressed these questions. A first consultation on creation *theology* was convened in March 2004 at the John Knox International Centre in Geneva. It sought to identify the challenges the theological reflection of the churches has to face today. The volume which resulted from the exchange offers a survey of recent theological developments.[1] But it was clear from the outset that more was at stake than *theological* considerations on the place of human beings in the whole of creation. Though efforts at theological clarity are indispensable, a further step was required. What are the implications of the insights gained for the *life, praxis and worship* of the churches?

Since its foundation ECEN has dealt with a wide range of specific issues such as climate change, mobility, water, eco-management etc. But what is the fundamental motivation behind these specific commitments? What is the spiritual force sustaining us in the struggle for a greater respect for creation? How do we respond to the challenges and new horizons, and also

1. Published in the series of the John Knox Centre under the title "Listening to Creation Groaning", n° 16, Geneva 2004

to the impasses and contradictions, of this struggle? What are the spiritual resources of the Christian tradition apt to sustain this commitment?

To address these questions ECEN convened in early April 2006 a second consultation at the International Reformed Centre John Knox in Geneva. Its purpose was to identify spiritual perspectives which are of particular importance for Christians and Christian churches in Europe as they face the ecological crisis. The participants came from different European countries and represented various confessional backgrounds and contexts, but all shared the concern to seek Christian answers to today's ecological crisis.

The consultation first engaged in a general debate on the theme. *Part I* of this publication provides a summary of this exchange.

Attention then concentrated on the Eucharist and its relationship to Creation. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of Christian spirituality and it is therefore of decisive importance to be clear on its meaning. Bread and wine are fruits of the earth transformed by human effort. They stand for the gifts God provides in Creation. At the same they are signs of the new life inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They point to, and anticipate, God's new Creation. The consultation engaged in an extended discussion on this subject.

Part II presents a summary of the findings and also the papers which were submitted to the consultation.

The discussion is bound to continue in the coming years. The material offered in this volume is simply meant as a contribution to this ongoing exchange and ECEN hopes that it will stimulate further contributions.

Geneva 2006 Lukas Vischer

Part I

The Place of Creation in Christian Spirituality

A summary of the discussion at the consultation

What does it mean to follow Christ as we are confronted with today's ecological crisis? In a few decades, a relatively short period, a new situation has arisen. God's creation, the source of all life, begins to refuse its services. The basis and quality of life of a constantly increasing number of people are called into question. The horizon of the future is darkening. And the reason for the disaster is not a blind fate but human beings themselves. They, created by God and equipped with capacities of creating, have brought about the change by their own action. They are responsible for exploiting the resources of the planet and polluting water, land and air beyond admissible measures. How do we have to understand this process? How do we respond to it in faith? Does the Gospel offer a spirituality capable of carrying us in this situation? The consequences of our own doing oblige us to raise these questions.

1. The meaning of spirituality

There is today much talk about spirituality. From all sides we hear a cry for new spiritualities. In face of the unilateral emphasis on material values, numerous attempts are made at developing ways and methods to overcome the constraints of modern life. Given the disastrous impact of human beings on the environment, nature, it is said, must again be recognized as a numinous reality providing guidance to human beings. Movements such as the New Age movement call for a radical change of orientation, often taking Asian religions as their point of departure. Though these new spiritualities deserve attention, Christians cannot follow their lead. Christians look for answers in harmony with the Biblical teaching. For them spirituality is inescapably connected with God's Spirit (spiritus). Their question is therefore: Where does God's Spirit lead us today?

> *When the Spirit of truth comes,*
> *he will guide you into all the truth;*
> *for he will not speak on his own authority,*
> *but whatever he hears, he will speak*
> *and he will declare to you the things to come (John 16,13).*

The Spirit accompanied the disciples, and continues to be present today. Our task consists in hearing what the Spirit intends to tell us. Spirituality

means to be guided by God's *spiritus*, the Spirit proceeding from God. Spirituality is therefore not a form of piety *we* choose but results from the guidance of the Spirit. It is the answer to questions arising from the situation now and here – now: at the beginning of the third millennium, here: for the churches in Europe.

Jesus calls on the disciples to read the signs of the time (Luke 12,54). What happens around us are not simply empty events, but signs calling for interpretation. Jesus does not invite the disciples to speculate about the future. Both for the disciples, as well as for ourselves today, historical events and developments are occasions for a 'conversion' (Lukas 13, 3 und 5). They raise the question how far we have lived and are living today in communion with God and his purposes. Jesus urges us to bring everything occurring around us before God so that we may be sent out anew as witnesses to Christ's Lordship of all creation.

The Latin term *spiritus* has, however, its problems, and it is important to be aware of them from the very beginning. It does not faithfully reflect the meaning of *ruach*, the Hebrew term for spirit. *Ruach* means wind or storm, life-giving breath, the power which is active in and among all things. It is a feminine term. In the first creation account we read that the *ruach* hovered over the waters (Gen.1.1). *Ruach* is the basic energy active in creation. And God said: Let it be light! Who speaks is bound to breathe. The *ruach* is therefore present already in the first word uttered by God. Through the word spoken by God the Spirit is at work. The *ruach* is the source of all life. The Latin term *spiritus* does not have this comprehensive meaning. Like the Greek word *pneuma* it establishes a contrast. The *spiritus* is higher than body and matter. It refers to the higher sphere of the immaterial and eternal. Who serves the spirit, must become free from the inferior level of the earth. This dualism can be dangerous. It can prevent us from realising that God's Spirit who is leading us today is the same Spirit who pervades the whole of creation. As we seek to define our place in creation this insight is of decisive importance. Our question must be: What is the *ruach,* God's creative power, telling us?

Christian spirituality finds expression in different ways. The ultimate source of all true spirituality is one and the same, and therefore all true

spiritual expressions are bound together in one and the same communion. The variety of spiritual gifts is meant to serve the common good (I Cor 12, 7). The response to God's call is determined by many factors. It will vary according to contexts and presuppositions. Every person responds to the Spirit in the framework of his or her gifts and limitations. The response in Europe will differ from the response in other parts of the world. Looking for a spirituality taking fully into account God's gift of creation does therefore not mean developing a blueprint besides which no other spiritual expressions have their place. The task is rather to identify insights and perspectives which today must not be missing in any true Christian spirituality. In one way or another the theme of creation is present in all confessional and spiritual traditions. Wherever the message of Jesus is taken seriously, the theme of God's creation is bound to be addressed. We must, however, admit that there are Christian confessions and spiritualities where the theme has been neglected or distorted. The task consists not so much in creating a new spirituality but rather in recovering existing references and enriching spiritualities by new insights and perspectives so that within the wide variety Christians are enabled to bear a credible common witness.

2. What can we say about the present situation?

What are we confronted with? The vulnerability of human life within the whole of Creation becomes more and more manifest. Let us recall some of the aspects:

- In the past centuries and especially in the last decades a plundering of the planet has taken place. In more and more areas we are now confronted with an increasing scarcity of resources, and it becomes clearer and clearer that the present course of exploitation cannot indefinitely be pursued. Even if the study *Limits to Growth* (1973) had to be corrected on certain details, its central message has by no means lost its validity. A growing world population with increasing claims on nature faces limits, and in the struggle for the remaining resources the first victims are the economically weak nations. The gap between rich and poor widens.

- The consumption of the resources causes waste which can only partly be absorbed by nature. Pollution calls into question the availability of pure air, water and soil.

- For a long time doubts prevailed, but today it is almost generally recognized that the climatic conditions of our planet are dramatically changing and that the emissions of greenhouse gases caused by human activity contribute to these changes. The increase of weather anomalies and catastrophes has become inevitable. They not only cause immense damage – again primarily in economically weak countries – but also threaten the security and wellbeing of millions whose homes and livelihoods are increasingly threatened by either long term drought or increased risk of flood.

- As the living space of the human species expands, the diversity of species – plants and animals – is put in peril. Many species have already disappeared, and many more are threatened with extinction.

- Through the rapid change of living conditions the stability of the structures of society are shaken. Traditional bonds disintegrate. Increasingly the injustice resulting from change is felt and denounced by the victims of oppression. But no synthesis is in sight. Conflicts explode in violent actions without laying the ground for new solutions. Violence and fear of violence prevent constructive planning of the future.

The list of threatening phenomena could easily be prolonged. The most threatening aspect, however, is the fact that all these phenomena are connected and tend to enhance one another. The total picture is beyond our capacity of perception. While we turn to one of the threatening dangers and seek for solutions, we realise that we are not in control of the whole.

How did we come to this point? It is evident that humankind has gone beyond the limits set by nature. For a long time the carrying capacity of the planet was regarded as inexhaustible. Air, water und soil seemed to be available without any limitation. This expectation has irrevocably turned out to be an illusion. God's Creation is finite, and the last decades have

shown that there are clear limits to both the exploitation and the pollution of the planet. Earlier generations have also done damage to the environment. Many practices during the time of the Roman empire, for instance, had devastating effects on the environment. But until recently it was possible to count on the restoration and healing of nature and where it failed, more untouched space could be claimed. This time has gone. In the course of a few decades the claims of humankind, especially the industrialised nations, have exploded. What are the reasons for this development?

- Science and technology have placed new powers into the hands of humanity, or rather, into the hands of the 'developed' part of humanity. The dominion over nature has been extended, and its further expansion is generally regarded as an indisputable gain and therefore as the highest goal to be pursued by society. The earth's bio-systems and regions are increasingly subjected to humankind and its use. Nature is more and more 'hominised'.

- The new achievements give rise to the illusion of human omnipotence. They reinforce the conviction that humans are the centre of the whole of creation. Today's generation regards humans as the measure of all things and tends to forget that they, despite all achievements, remain part of creation and have no future apart from it. And yet many continue to believe that humans are no longer bound to the earth *(humus, adamah)*. The virtual world they have created leads to the superstition that all obstacles can eventually be surmounted, and sustains the illusion that the problems science creates, science will solve.

- The rhythm of human life has fundamentally changed. The technological means which have become available today entail a new sense of time. More of the world can be experienced in a shorter time. Both communication and production have been accelerated. The increasing mobility and even more the capacity of worldwide communication loosen the ties to particular places. They nourish the illusion that we are connected across all boundaries with the whole of humanity – citizens of the world. The old question "Who is my neighbour?" must be answered in a new perspective.

- The economic system guiding political actions aims at constant economic growth. By justifying greed and competition it leads inevitably to ever increasing exploitation of the planet. The system is based on the interaction of production and consumption without regard for the real value of natural resources. In order to maintain the production, constantly accelerated by new technological means, consumption must be enhanced, and though the negative consequences of exploitation and pollution have long ago become manifest, the power of the system is too strong to allow for any new orientation.

- The ecological crisis has deep spiritual and religious roots in the rise of modernity. The 'eschatological' expectation that history will lead to new heights of human existence has become a driving motive in occidental thought. The conviction that we can count on constant progress has for a long time blinded society to the negative consequences of the dominant ideology for the environment, and though the expectation of constant progress is increasingly being called into question, it continues to dominate the thinking of decision-makers.

Our societies live in a strange contradiction. The reasons for the crisis are not only known but to a large extent recognised. They have again and again been analysed and described in all details. Perspectives and scenarios have been developed to show how the limits of exploitation and pollution can be respected. The notion of 'sustainability' has been, at least in principle, widely accepted. Nevertheless, despite better knowledge, the suicidal course continues. The powers humans have acquired over nature seem to have an irresistible weight on the human mind.

3. Listening anew to the voice of Holy Scripture

For a long time the churches hesitated to get involved in the new situation and even today the *theological* reflection on the challenges of the ecological crisis is far from being a matter of course. At a relatively early stage individual Christians such as Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) and Charles Birch issued warnings, and gradually the churches began to recognize the fact of the ecological crisis. For a conscience sharpened by

the demands of the Gospel it was impossible to ignore the damage caused by human greed, blindness and violence. The 'spirit' responsible for the ecological crisis was so evidently in contradiction with the central Biblical commandment of love that the churches were bound to reject it. But the crisis was first primarily perceived as an *ethical* challenge. Modern ethics with its exclusive emphasis on the vocation of human beings in history was revised and new dimensions added – the responsibility towards future generations and towards the whole of creation.

But soon it became clear that more was at stake. It became apparent that the ecological crisis called into question the dominating *theological* discourse of the churches, especially in the West. To respond to the present situation in a coherent and credible way, fundamental theological positions had to be rethought.

This applies especially to the exegesis of Holy Scripture. How are we to understand its message? The answer to this question is far from evident. Much depends on the expectations and presuppositions which guide our approach to Scripture. For a long time the opinion prevailed – especially in Western Christianity – that the central theme of the Bible was God's action with human beings. The emphasis was not on the communion with all creatures but on the dominating destiny and role of man. God reveals himself not in creation but in history. Holy Scripture is the witness to God's deeds in the history of Israel and above all in Jesus Christ. The essential content of the Bible is therefore God's encounter with man: a new life which finds its fulfilment in God's kingdom. The primary attention was on human beings, their power, their capacities, their failure, their justification and sanctification. Though these themes are of central importance in Scripture, God's concern for the whole of creation did not receive adequate attention.

To recognize the fullness of the Biblical witness, a change of perspective is required. What does the Bible say on the destiny of creation, and on the role of humans in God's creation? A new dialogue needs to be initiated. The ecological crisis confronts us in a new way with Scripture, and as we seek to decipher the witness the Bible, we also begin to see the challenges of the ecological crisis in a new light. To use a traditional metaphor: there

is on the one hand the *liber naturae*, the book of nature, and on the other the *liber Bibliae*, the book of books. Our task consists in relating them to one another in a constructive way. As we seek to perceive nature in its present state and confront it with the Biblical message, new horizons of understanding open up.

Much has already been undertaken in this respect. In almost all theological disciplines efforts are underway to develop new perspectives. There is a growing agreement that decisive dimensions of the Biblical witness, especially the Old Testament, have been overlooked in the course of centuries. Exegetical scholars bring to light Biblical insights which have for a long time received only minor attention. Systematicians engage in far-reaching reformulations of Christian doctrine.[2] The process is, however, far from concluded, and even if new insights are formulated, the question remains how theology, ethics and the actual behaviour of Christians can be brought into line. A more 'correct' theology is no guarantee for a clearer witness of the churches. The question is ultimately how we respond to the voice of the Spirit by the ways of life we adopt or in other words – what spirituality we develop today.

4. Biblical and theological insights

What are the insights the new dialogue with Scripture leads us to? What perspectives can we identify?

- God has called the world into being at the beginning, but God continues to be at work in creation as the sustainer of all that is. When we speak of Creation, we tend to think of the first chapters of Genesis – the coming into existence of the universe, heaven and earth, and all forms of life including human beings. The very first sentence of the Bible "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" can easily induce us into the assumption that Creation in the perspective of the Bible is no more than an initiating act *(creatio prima)*. But the Bible speaks in many places of God's continuous creation *(creatio continua)*. "When you send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the ground (Psalm 104,30)." Everything, including we human beings, is created and constantly re-created. We depend on God's creating and sustaining power. All power human beings may enjoy is derived power.

2. As survey of recent developments resulting from an international symposium can be found in, Listening to Creation Groaning', John Knox Series 16, Geneva 2004.

- The scriptural witness of life-giving Spirit acquires new significance. We have to learn anew that the Spirit is at work in the whole of creation, and also in ourselves, human creatures. The indissoluble connection between Spirit and life becomes a central and crucial theme. The Spirit brings salvation not only to human beings, but reconciles, heals and liberates all life created by God. The Spirit is the bond which connects all God's creatures with one another.

- A comprehensive approach to today's crisis requires a consistent emphasis on the Trinitarian understanding of God. Redemption through Jesus Christ must not be isolated from creation and new creation as the ultimate goal of God's ways. The New Testament speaks of Christ as the firstborn of Creation, involved in God's creating action (Col, 1,15ff) and the Spirit witnesses to Jesus Christ, the lamb of God. The *ruach,* present in creation, is the same Spirit dwelling in Jesus Christ in baptism. What Jesus achieves through his incarnation, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection, marks the way the Spirit acts both in creation and in the midst of the disciples. God the Father, the creator of all things, remains the sustaining power of creation. Jesus is one with him and in the new creation which is inaugurated by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the creation is restored through the materiality of the Incarnation. As Gregory Nazianzos says "what has not been assumed cannot be healed" (*Letter against Apollinarius*). The Trinitarian understanding of God provides the framework for a comprehensive view of creation and salvation.

- Human beings are part of God's creation and have at the same time been given a special place within creation. The phrase that we are created 'in God's image and likeness' (Genesis 1,27) underlines this special position and role. Both aspects need to be taken seriously. Human beings are created but are at the same time set apart from, and even over against, all other creatures. To be human inevitably entails interfering with nature.

In the course of centuries humankind has transformed the world. What we today call creation is to a considerable degree of our own doing. However the *excessive* degree of interference is the primary cause of today's ecological crisis. As human capacities and technological power increase, a new kind of responsibility is therefore required. While in former times nature itself reminded us of the limits we have to respect, today the responsible use of the resources of the planet is only possible if humans succeed in consciously respecting the limits required for their survival. But are we capable of such self-control? The letter of James puts it very succinctly: "For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue – a restless evil (3,7)." The exercise of true responsibility poses almost insurmountable problems. They can only be overcome by consciously remembering that we are creatures among creatures, not called to dominate but to live in communion with the whole of creation. It is within this wider communion that human beings bear their special responsibility. They are never exclusively individual beings but have been created to live in communion – with other human beings and at the same time with the whole of creation. Faced with this dilemma we realize the need for renewal by God's Spirit. We have to recognize our failure and the need to be pardoned and accepted by God. In Christ we can count on the gift of a new creation.

- It is important to recognize that according to the Creation story in Genesis 1, human beings are the *last* of God's creatures. The intention is no doubt to underline their special status among all other creatures. Other texts such as Psalm 8 state the same conviction. At the same time the Genesis account makes clear that the whole of creation had to be there before human beings could be created. As the last of God's creatures human beings are in a certain sense the first, but also remain the last creatures which are dependent on light, heaven and earth, and all living creatures. For too long Christianity exclusively insisted on the dominating role of human beings. Lynn White's accusation that Christianity, more than other religions, places human beings in the centre of the universe does certainly not apply to the Biblical witness in its entirety but holds true for the ways

this witness has been interpreted in the course of centuries.[3] Human beings were seen as conquerors. According to the Biblical witness they are first because they have been given the capacity to give honour and praise to God. They have not fulfilled their role. They have rebelled against God, and have through their fall lost communion with God. Their sin has affected the whole of creation. God's redemption and grace restores their relationship with God, and at the same initiates the redemption of all creation. God now expects them to be 'first fruits of his creatures (James 1,18)."

- The view that human beings are the crown of creation can easily lead to disregard of the rest creation. Animals are no longer co-creatures. In a sermon Martin Luther, delivered on May 12, 1538 we read: "Was Christ born for the sake of geese, cows and pigs? No, he became a man. If he had wanted to help the beasts, he would have taken on the shape of a cow", a statement which was repeated by many theologians in subsequent generations. But the Biblical view is different. The father in heaven cares even for the smallest of animals, and the prophets describe the future world as a peaceful communion of humans and animals.

- The Old Testament underlines the close and indissoluble bond of human beings to the earth. The second creation account speaks of man as an ‚earthling' (adam). He was created out of the soil *(adamah)* and as soon as the spirit leaves him he must return to the earth. His life depends on the earth and its ecological services. As he rebels against God his relationship to the soil is disturbed. The land which nourishes him is cursed. Redemption does only consist in him being again accepted by God, but it includes the end of the curse imposed on the land. "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among those with whom he is pleased (Luke 2,14).

3. Two examples: The Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes of the Second Vatican Council declares: "Believers and non-believers are in general agreement that *everything on earth* is ordered toward man, the summit and central point of creation (§12)." The sentence was written and adopted forty years ago – but the Constitution continues to be celebrated as a milestone in Roman Catholic teaching. - Recently the WCC Faith and order Commission published a study on Christian anthropology. It concentrates exclusively on human beings made in the image of God without even raising the question of their relation to the whole of Creation, Faith and Order Paper 199, Geneva 2005.

- A central theme of the Scriptures, often overlooked by Christians, is the promise of the land (e.g. Genesis 15,7ss). There are in the Old Testament different interpretations of this promise. But basically it underlines God's gift of life. God leads the people into the land – a fertile place where they will be sustained. The Old Testament is not primarily interested in Creation as an abstract concept, but much more in the interaction of Israel with the land. Israel experienced Creation in the first place through a piece of land. Numerous laws in the Old Testament concern the care for the land. The land is the source of life for the people, its loss an expression of God's wrath. In the New Testament the promise of the land no longer plays any significant role. The emphasis is now on the expectation of the ultimate goal, the land beyond all lands. But the emphasis on the earth and its gifts of life remains. By choosing bread and wine as signs 'in remembrance of him' Jesus refers to the fruits of the land.

- The land was attributed to the people as a whole. It was to bring life to all, including the foreigners. The promise was given on the condition that justice can be enjoyed by all. Both the exploitation of the neighbour and of the soil jeopardises the survival of the people on the land they have been given.

- No commandment in the Old Testament occurs as frequently as the injunction to respect the Sabbath day. In creating the world God also creates a particular rhythm for all life. The sequence of succeeding days is regularly interrupted, the seventh day is holy; in other words human beings are called to bring themselves and the whole of creation in regular intervals into the harmony with God's rest. The Gospels tell us that Jesus broke the Sabbath on various occasions. The Jewish tradition of the Sabbath was therefore for the Christian church no longer a matter of course. But was this development really justified? Was Jesus' critique rightly understood? His intention was not to abolish the Sabbath; his vision was rather the radical sanctification of all days. In as far as the Sabbath contributes to this vision it keeps its significance. It sets limits to human activity. It liberates from the constraint of time and serves at the same time to restore the communion with the whole of Creation.

- Death has two faces. On the one hand it is part of creation. All life is transitory and bound to die. As mortal beings, humans cannot claim eternity. "His life lasts seventy, and by reason of strength eighty years (Psalm 90, 10)." The limits imposed on human life must be accepted. On the other hand, through human sin against God, death has become a threat. The Bible speaks of death as a curse and Paul regards death as a consequence of sin. But death is not the last word. Life, given by God's *ruach,* is destined to be redeemed by the Spirit. Christ's resurrection opens the door to a new creation. The whole of creation, now suffering and groaning under the burden of its limits, waits for the moment when God's eternal kingdom will arrive and human beings will be fully accepted as his children. Death has lost its threatening character. The double message of the Bible calls into question the modern obsession with life and longevity. The life we have received can be committed to God.

- But death has not always the same meaning. Death can mean a peaceful end in harmony with life. But death can also be the consequence of greed, profiteering, oppression and violence. Humans constantly succumb to the temptation of violence. The Genesis story is clearly aware of this temptation. Cain slays Abel, and the spiral of violence continues. "If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold (Genesis 4,24)." Just like Abel human beings at all times became victims of violence. Just like Abel millions of people die also today. "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground (Genesis 4,10)." Several passages of the Bible clearly indicate that God takes sides with the victims of violence. The daughters of Israel lament Jephthah's daughter every year during four days (Judges 11,40). Jesus identifies himself with the long chain of people innocently killed "from Abel, the just, to Zachariah, the son of Barachiah who was murdered between the sanctuary and the altar (Matthew 23,35)." Belief in God, the Creator of all living beings inevitably leads to a witness of non-violence. We care called to identify with the victims of violence in order to be empowered by the life-giving Spirit.

5. Our hope and expectation

The kingdom of God has come near. The hope of Christians is a renewed world. God's creation is being transformed into a new creation. We are entitled to hope for renewed life, not only for ourselves but for the whole creation. Christian spirituality is nourished and sustained by this expectation.

What does this mean for our responsibility in face of the threats to the environment? The expectation of a future created by God inevitably implies a certain distance to everything occurring in this world. Our hope reaches beyond the horizon of human history. It is not for us to direct the course of history nor to 'save the planet'. The ultimate foundation of our certainty is in God. We place our confidence in the assurance that the Spirit is at work and will eventually bring about God's kingdom. We rely on the Holy Spirit who is capable of creating new things – surpassing all understanding.

In certain circles of Christianity the expectation of God's future world leads to indifference towards the destruction of the environment. The ecological crisis is interpreted as the sign that the end has drawn near. Destruction and disasters confirm that we have reached the last times. This world therefore no longer counts. It will pass away and Christians have no other task than to direct their attention in faith to God's kingdom. Our responsibility no longer consists in efforts to care for God's creation and to contain violence and disintegration. The eyes of Christians are firmly fixed on the God's final intervention.

This kind of piety is clearly unacceptable. Though Christian spirituality counts on God's future, it remains faithful to the earth. It resists the attempt to withdraw from this world on account of apocalyptic visions. Though everything is transitory, the environment remains God's creation and gift. It is the basis of life and destined to be renewed by the Spirit. At no point human beings can be separated from the totality of creation. As we have been created as part of creation, we will also be saved as part of creation. Creation, now groaning in travail, will be set free from bondage and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8, 20). Redemption takes place in communion with all creatures.

Our relationship to God's creation and its gifts is therefore characterized by a deep tension. On the one hand we are called to participate in the building-up of this world. We work for communion, peace and justice and undertake whatever is within our power to respect and keep alive God's gift of creation. On the other hand we know that these efforts are not the last word and that the fulfilment of God's kingdom is not dependent on them. God's ways are higher than ours. The certainty that the work of the Spirit surpasses all understanding, helps us to face in freedom and confidence the events of history with all their uncertainties.

The tension is present throughout the New Testament and can be described by Biblical images in various ways. It can, for instance, be illustrated by the two Greek terms *paroikia* (home away from home) and *oikodome* (building-up). On the one hand the authors of the New Testament leave no doubt that Christians are *paroikoi*, strangers, guests whose ultimate and real home is in God's future world. They live decidedly *in* this world, but are ultimately not *from* this world. On the other hand they are called to build community here and now. The term *oikodome* originally refers to the building of a house or the organisation of a household. In the New Testament the term is used for the building up of Christian communities. Paul reminds members of Christian communities that they should serve one another in the spirit of *oikodome* (Rom 14,19). They are called to use their specific gifts and talents for the *oikodome* of the body of Christ.

Christian spirituality is shaped by both perspectives. Christians affirm God's love for creation and seek to share in it. They know that the Spirit is at work to redeem all things and look therefore for traces of the Spirit both in creation and human history. They seek to get acquainted with the ‚geography' of the life-giving and liberating Spirit and to establish a map of its presence. But they also know that true love requires a certain distance. On account of their ultimate hope they can take a step back from both the beauty and the problems of this world.

In face of the ecological crisis this double attitude is highly relevant. How can Christians bear a credible witness in this world without identifying with its needs? On the other hand the distance to the gifts of creation is no less

important. We do not *own* the earth. Only as we recognize ourselves as guests on this earth, as stewards and not owners, can we really appreciate creation as God's gift. The ecological crisis shows us that our claims on the resources of creation exceed by far admissible scales. The present generation in Europe is engaged in a course of over-consumption. How can a change occur? The responsible attitude to God's gift of creation requires an inner freedom, and this freedom grows from the insight that the goods of this world are not the ultimate reality.

6. Dimensions and Elements of Witness

How can we describe the spirituality which is faithful to Scripture and at the same time responds to today's conditions? What are the signs of life which it seeks to establish?

- God's creation is in the first place a gift inviting our admiration. We are called to praise God for the wonders he created. Creation is not primarily an object of dominion, investigation and manipulation but the overwhelming theatre of God's glory *(theatrum gloriae Dei)* calling us to gratitude and praise. We have to approach it with humility and gratitude. We communicate with it through all senses – listening, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching and being in motion. Praising in communion with the voices of all creatures (Psalm 148) will lead to a fresh look at ourselves. What have we done? How have we interfered with God's creation? As we communicate in admiration of God's work, the Spirit will open new and wider space for us. Admiration is the presupposition for the responsible interaction with the gifts of creation.

- An important part of Christian witness consists in pointing to the true extent of the crisis and resisting the temptation to minimise the threats confronting humanity. What dimly emerges at the horizons of the future exceed human ability of perception. We are therefore tempted to repress the dangers we are facing. With Christians this repression often occurs in theological, or rather theological-ideological, terms. On the basis of the Christian message, it is claimed, we proclaim hope for the future. Christian faith necessarily includes the expectation of a better future, and

it is therefore the duty of the Church to announce hope to all people. But faith in God implies on the contrary a sober assessment of the state of the world, an assessment which does not succumb to painting the world in entirely black or entirely rosy colours.

- The challenge we face not only consists in securing our own survival. What is at stake is the future of the whole of humanity and, indeed, of all creatures. An important aspect of the present crisis is the fact that risks are unevenly distributed. Christian spirituality cannot resign itself to the status quo of injustice. It will continue to struggle for conditions which secure a fair future to underprivileged nations. Their future conditions of life belong to the criteria of a Christian assessment of the present. But the concern extends to the whole of the created world. Thousands of species have already been extinguished by human actions and if the present course continues the diversity of species is bound to diminish drastically. Christians will naturally join all those who defend the right of other creatures, less powerful than humanity, to continued existence.

- Christian spirituality cannot consist in providing society in its present form with a 'spiritual foundation'. Almost as a matter of course, the churches are confronted with this expectation. Institutions of all kinds – political and social – tend to obtain from the churches 'spiritual legitimation'. The churches in Europe, we are told, have the task to provide Europe with a soul. But Christian spirituality is not in a position to fulfil this expectation. It claims freedom to diverge from the ideologies of the present. By opting for alternatives it deprives society of Christian legitimation.

- Christian spirituality seeks to anticipate what, according to standards of reason, society as a whole is called to realise. The limits of both exploitation and pollution of the planet have long been transgressed. For Christian spirituality it is not enough to denounce the excesses, to write reports and to produce documentary films. It is essential to develop a life style which respects the scales of exploitation and pollution necessary for the future of the earth and life. In many respects these scales are

known. It is true that the limits may be extended through new technological achievements. But it would be an illusion to put our trust exclusively on the progress of technology. The claims of industrialised nations on God's creation are in any case too high. Our 'ecological footprint' must be reduced. Christians must seek to provide the proof that this reduction is possible in part through a spiritual orientation which moves away from materialism and resists greed.

- Christians must resist the illusion of ubiquity. Though horizons have widened, though events throughout the world are part of daily information and though the network of relationships of every human person has been extended through mobility and new means of communication, the fundamental bond of human life to particular places and contexts has not been abolished. Human beings exist primarily in families and neighbourhoods, and it is essential to cultivate these primary forms of communion. The commandment of loving our neighbour applies to all human beings – but its test is the persons in our immediate neighbourhood. One of the major challenges of our time is ability to bring into line the love for our neighbours and the love for persons far away, to connect efforts to build communion locally and worldwide.

- To relate to creation we need to give more time to meditation, adoration and quietness. In this perspective the Sabbath acquires new meaning. It is true that Jesus subordinates the observation of the Sabbath to the commandment of love. But this does not mean that the Sabbath has become irrelevant. The reminder that the fulfilment of God's Creation does not lie in human activity but in God's rest on the seventh day calls into question today's approach to time. It prevents the maximisation of exploitation, production and material gain. It creates a space for communion with God, our neighbour and the whole of Creation.

- All these aspects imply an attitude of moderation towards God's Creation. We are called to be satisfied with the things needed for life. The Lord's Prayer makes this clear: "Give us today our daily bread!" And in the spiritual tradition of all churches the rejection of over-consumption has

at all times been an essential motive. "The custody of the garden was given to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition that, being content with the frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain."[4] Christian spirituality withstands the vicious circle of exploitation of resources, production and consumption.

- Who deviates from the general line must count with conflicts. Christian witness today will also not be exempt from negative reactions. In a world in which the readiness for violence and oppression increases, conflicts tend to become tougher. Though Christian spirituality does not shun resistance, it rejects at the same time the use of violence. The great challenge consists in finding ways to combine resistance with love. How do we avoid that the arrogance of power, the absurdity of options and the recklessness of the world do not cause our hearts to become bitter? How do we prevent our love 'from growing cold'?

7. A Spirituality of Resistance

It is evident that these Biblical emphases are pointing in a direction diametrically opposed to the priorities of today's society. Against the glorification of the power of man is needed a biblical emphasis on radical dependence; against dominion over nature is needed recognition of responsibility for the communion of all creatures; against the flight into a virtual world modern humans need to recover a sense of their living bond with the earth; against the constant acceleration of life daily prayer and weekly worship provide reminders of a God given rhythm; against the fatality of poverty the Gospel announcement and enactment of the Kingdom of God recalls the centrality of social justice.

The distance between the Biblical perspectives and the goals pursued by today's society is so great that it is difficult to consider any synthesis. The Christian witness finds itself inevitably in contradiction with the forces which inspire and drive forward the present development. Christian witness today is therefore bound to be a counter-witness, and the spirituality

4. Johannes Calvin, Commentary on Genesis, 1554

sustaining this witness will inevitably be characterised by advocating alternative approaches and ways in today's society.

The question arises how this witness is to be borne. Some Christians choose the road of radical resistance. They 'leave' society. Their witness no doubt deserves respect. The witness corresponds to the monastic tradition of earlier centuries. Francis of Assisi, hailed by many as the saint of the ecological movement, led in fact a radically ascetic life. But can the Biblical perspectives also be witnessed to *within* the framework of today's society? And how can it be done? It is highly unlikely that society as a whole will ever be guided by a consensus entirely corresponding to Biblical perspectives. Nevertheless it is essential to recall them at all moments and opportunities and thus to set limits to today's suicidal and life destroying course. Today, the response to the Spirit consists in establishing signs of life in this world committed to dominion and destruction.

Will this witness of resistance succeed? An unequivocal answer is not possible. The future does not lie in our hands. Though the power of humans has been extended, though the area of human responsibility has been enlarged, the future remains radically hidden to our eyes. Though more and more has become feasible, it is not for us to determine the course of history. Because we are aware of our limitation, we cannot confidently engage in forecasts. Many signs seem to confirm that humankind is committed to a course of self-destruction and that all efforts of resistance are unlikely to prevent the catastrophe. Who, however, is in a position to affirm that these signs are the last word?

True hope does not depend on the chances of success. Hope can live with uncertainties. "The hope that is within us" extends beyond this world and its history. It has its roots in the confidence that God will not abandon his Creation but is committed to leading it into his own future. It is based on the conviction that the life created by God will ultimately not be lost.

Love anticipates God's future. The value and the significance of every act of love lies in its relationship to God's world. The engagement for God's

threatened planet counts on God's faithfulness: it is a window that allows us to be connected to a greater future.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19,41). He foresees the ruin of the city. The work of destruction has already begun. Much irreparable damage has already been done. We have much reason to lament. But in the midst of mourning remains the joy over every sign of love which announces God's new creation.

Part II

Celebrating God's Good Purpose for Creation

Findings of the consultation on the meaning of the Eucharist

The consultation devoted particular attention to the Eucharist. During three days, the papers reproduced in this volume were extensively discussed. The following memorandum summarizes the main points of the exchange.

1. Introduction

Life on earth is exposed to increasing threats. Human activity introduces disorder into God's creation. Its impact on future generations is uncertain. What does it mean in this situation to affirm God, the Creator and Redeemer of *all things*? How is faith in him reflected in Christian worship? More specifically, what has the Eucharistic meal to say about our relation to the Creator and Creation?

As we reflect on these questions, we come to a double conclusion. On the one hand, the theme of creation has an important place in both the Bible and the worship traditions of the various churches. The sacrament of the Eucharist, in particular, has much to teach about God's good purpose for Creation and our role in it. Bread and wine, gifts of Creation, are used to point to the fulfilment in God's new Creation. On the other hand, we come to the conclusion that this message does not find sufficient expression in the spiritual and liturgical life of the churches. It is our hope that through a common ecumenical effort renewed attention will be given to the theme of Creation both in theology and liturgy. We are convinced that a stronger emphasis on God the creator and on his continuing creating power, will open new horizons and avenues and help the churches to overcome the split between the realms of worship and daily life.

Christians continue to be divided at the Lord's table. Substantial consensus has been reached on the meaning of baptism enabling more and more churches to recognise as valid the sacrament of initiation administered by other churches. But the churches are unable to offer to one another genuine Eucharistic hospitality. Though they agree on many aspects of the meaning of the Eucharist, their disagreements on the understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church prevent them from sharing the meal instituted by Jesus Christ. *As we are called to respond to today's ecological crisis, this division becomes increasingly unbearable.* This situation constitutes a scandal which must not be taken for granted and there is no room for complacency or uncritical acceptance of it. The rediscovery of the cosmic implications of worship and the Eucharist, in particular, may help us to develop new common ground for the churches' witness today.

2. The theme of Creation in present liturgies

Praising God for the gift of Creation is an essential theme in the worship of all church traditions. The singing of the psalms has a firm place in liturgical life. The affirmation of God Father, Son and Holy Spirit recurs throughout the worship and provides its structure. The annual circle of the church year, and in particular, the unbroken sequence of Sundays are a powerful reminder of God the creator and our dependence on him. The Eucharistic prayers recall the goodness of the Creator.

A few examples mentioned by participants in the consultation may illustrate this fact:

a) *Orthodox:* "It is truly fitting and right, suitable and profitable to praise you, to offer hymns to you, to bless you, to worship, to glorify you, to give thanks to you, the Creator of all creation, visible and invisible ... God and master of all (from the Anaphora of the liturgy of St. James)."

b) *Roman Catholic:* "Father in heaven, it is right that we should give you thanks and glory, you alone are God, living and true. Through all eternity you live in unapproachable light, source of life and goodness, you have created all things, to fill your creatures with every blessing and lead all people to the joyful vision of your light (Roman Catholic Missal, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 1975)." "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer which earth has given and human hands have made, it will become for us bread of life. Blessed be God forever. By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity, blessed are you Lord, God of all creation, through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink. Blessed be God forever (Roman Missal, Eucharistic liturgy, preparation of gifts, 1975)." Or: "All things are of your making, all times and seasons obey your laws, but you chose to create man and woman in your image, setting them over the whole world in all its wonder. You made them stewards of creation, to praise you day by day for the marvels of your wisdom and power (Roman Missal, Optional prayer for Sunday, 1975)."

c) *Lutheran:* "Blessed are you, Creator of every living creature, Blessed are you, Lord of space and time, Blessed are you, the source and end of everything, You who are like a mother and a father for everyone of us and have called upon us to be your co-operators. Give this beloved world a new face in justice and peace wherever people live together (from the liturgy of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sweden)."

d) *Reformed:* "O almighty eternal God, honoured, venerated and praised by all creatures as their author, Creator and Father (from the Reformed liturgy of German speaking Switzerland, following Zwingli)." "Thanks are due to you for this world which you made in beauty and which you keep, across all sufferings, in your promise that it may be transformed into your kingdom (Reformed Church of France, Recueil de textes liturgiques 1985 (3), preface 6). Other references to Creation occur in the epiclesis and the thanksgiving prayer at the end of the celebration.

Such references are often overlooked. But they can make us more fully aware of our responsibility toward Creation, and the churches should therefore draw out the fuller implications of these formulations for the life and the spirituality of both communities and individuals. In our view churches will gain insights and depth by addressing questions such as these: How do your liturgies focus spiritual attention on God as both Creator and Saviour? On Jesus Christ as Saviour of the whole of creation? What links are made between these two great themes of the Eucharist in your teaching and praying? What movements within the Eucharistic liturgy express these themes and their connection?

3. Discovering new perspectives

But more needs to be said. The Biblical evidence on the Eucharist is much richer than the liturgies of the churches suggest. Eucharistic celebrations are often conceived as a response to the words of institution. They re-enact the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. It is the memorial of his death and resurrection. Therefore the designation of bread and wine as his body and his blood is no doubt the central meaning of the Eucharist: His body broken and his blood shed *for us*. But there are

in the New Testament many more events and images referring to and describing the meaning of the Eucharist. Many of them suggest that the Eucharist was meant to celebrate the transformation of creation into the new creation "until he comes".

Generally, a rich symbolism is connected with bread and wine. They represent the gifts of the earth, destined to nourish the people, and they were the objects of thanksgiving and blessing at every Jewish meal. If Jesus interprets in a new way bread and wine at his last meal, this does not mean that they entirely loose their original meaning. They are not just 'elements' but remain fruits of the earth and represent God's creation. The Eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* expresses this understanding. Bread and wine point to the new creation God has achieved in Jesus Christ and will fully achieve when the kingdom comes.

The Eucharist can be compared to the *manna* received as a daily gift during the desert pilgrimage. Jesus calls himself the vine.

In Old Testament times, the temple symbolised God's care for the whole of creation; it was the visible sign of God's covenant with the whole cosmos. Sacrifices were meant to uphold its order. Jesus takes the place of the temple. In the Eucharist we celebrate him as the lamb and at the same time as the priest of the new covenant in relationship to the whole of creation.

Most important is the fact that Jesus participated in many meals during his life time. It was a characteristic of his ministry to share meals both with his disciples and with other people. The similarities of some of these meals with the last supper are striking. When Jesus fed the five thousand we are told that "he lifted his eyes to heaven, said the prayer of thanksgiving and broke the bread". There is a connection between the many meals and the last meal before he was betrayed. Without the meal tradition of his ministry, we cannot fully grasp the meaning of the final meal. Meals are generally an important element in Jesus' teaching. They provide material for parables (e.g. Luke 14,15) and instructions addressed to the disciples (Luke 14,7). Jesus develops a kind of 'meal discipline' which needs to be taken into account as we seek to determine the implications of the Eucharist for daily life.

Jesus directs the disciples to the future kingdom. In his descriptions of the fulfilment the image of the meal returns. "They will come from East and West and North and South and sit at table in the kingdom of God (Luke 13,29)." And he expects to celebrate the meal and to drink from the vine again in the kingdom of God (Luke 22,14 ff). Creation will reach its fulfilment. The meal we celebrate today anticipates this promised future.

What lessons can we draw from these dimensions of the Eucharist? The following seven considerations may serve as illustration:

a) The Eucharist invites us to place ***full confidence*** in God the Creator. The Lord who created heaven and earth can be trusted. The commitment to his creation stands. The cosmic covenant has been confirmed by the new covenant in his blood. God cares for his creatures. The bread of the Eucharist reminds the disciples of the manna the people received daily in the desert. By teaching us to pray 'Give us today our daily bread' he reminds us of God's daily faithfulness.

b) New emphasis needs to be placed on the Eucharist as a ***common meal***. Having shared in meals Jesus invites the disciples to share the Passah with him. The message of Jesus is addressed to each individual guest but it seeks primarily to gather people in communion. In the Eucharist the baptized celebrate the fact of having been incorporated into *one* body.

c) The food we receive from God reminds us of our obligation to feed others. The Eucharist is an experience of ***sharing*** God's basic gifts for life on this planet. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is relevant in this connection (Luke 16,19-31). Walls prevent the rich man from seeing Lazarus' misery. The Eucharist is meant to break down these walls.

d) Much can be learned from the way Jesus behaved at the meals he shared during his life time. Meals must express true communion and sharing. They are inclusive. The last will be the first. The poor have privileged seats. Jesus uses meals as a 'missionary' opportunity by including

strangers and people of diverse and conflicting backgrounds. This means that the Eucharist should not be designed as the feast of a closed circle but on the contrary an occasion to welcome strangers. What does this have to say about our capacity to be fully ecumenical?

e) For Jews bread and wine were basic food. The Eucharist is a ***frugal meal***. It teaches us to be content with the gifts God's creation provides for life. It is a symbol of the virtue of sufficiency and the rejection of unnecessary waste. It is an inspiration for responsible life style choices and patterns of consumption.

f) The Eucharist invites reflection on the ***food economy***. How did bread and wine get to the offering stage of the liturgy? What exactly is being offered? Whose lives have already been touched and involved in the human processes of production, distribution, marketing and consumption of these and other products? The Eucharist can serve as a paradigm to interpret and to deal with the 'toil and suffering' of work and everyday life. Bread and wine are fruits of the earth transformed into food and drink. How responsible are our farming and eating practices toward the earth and its myriad of creatures today?

g) The Eucharist can also serve as a key to understanding the ***'groaning of creation'***. Food is indispensable for life. To serve as food wheat and grapes had to be transformed into bread and wine. But wheat and grapes loose their fertility in the process. They die to serve life. Our own life depends on the sacrifice of other life. Bread and wine point to Jesus Christ, the seed which falls into the ground to bring forth new and eternal life. In the Eucharistic meal we celebrate both the sacrifice and the new life. It is an invitation to respect the integrity of life and to avoid any action likely to exacerbate the groaning of creation.

The celebration of the Eucharist provides ways of connecting the life of the Church with the ecological issues that are of great urgency in today's world, locally as well as globally. The rich meaning of the Eucharist gives new relevance to questions such as these: How do we understand and live out the implications of the Eucharist for our daily lives, attitudes and behaviours

– not just in terms of inner spirituality but in relation to life style choices and political priorities? How do they relate to the way individuals and families shop, prepare and share daily and special meals? To what extent does our participation in the Eucharist spill over into the way we live our lives in the 'liturgy of life'?

The Eucharistic meal represents a call to address today's ecological issues. What do we know of the organisations involved in analysis and action? Who in your congregation can share their experience and wisdom? What are they contributing to the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities? How does the Eucharist fit into this larger picture and how does this larger picture focus itself in the Eucharist? And as you consider these connections, how does regular participation in the Eucharist inspire and challenge the course society is today committed to?

4. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

In 1982, almost 25 years ago, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches adopted at its meeting in Lima three statements of convergence on Baptism, the Eucharist and the Ministry. They were widely distributed and discussed in the churches.

Re-reading the text on the Eucharist today, we are surprised to find how little attention is paid to the theme of creation and new creation.

a) The section on "The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father" (§§ 3-4) briefly mentions 'creation' but without elaborating the point. "The Eucharist is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything accomplished *in creation,* redemption and sanctification ... it is the *berakah* by which the church expresses its thankfulness for all God's benefits." A little later bread and wine are described as fruits of the earth and of human labour which are presented to the Father in praise and thanksgiving, and the paragraph concludes: "The Eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit."

b) The section on the "Eucharist as Anamnesis or Memorial of Christ" speaks of Christ present in the anamnesis "with all that he has accomplished for us and *for all creation* (§ 5)."

c) The section on the "Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit" introduces for the first time a Trinitarian reflection. Without further explanation the text says: "Yet, it is the Father who is primary origin and final fulfilment of the Eucharistic event (§ 14)." The focus of the section is on the Holy Spirit sent by the Father in order that the Eucharistic event may be a reality.

d) The most explicit reference can be found in the section "The Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom" : "The world to which renewal is promised is present in the whole Eucharistic celebration. The world is present in the thanksgiving to the Father *where the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation,* in the memorial of Christ where the Church ... prays for the world; in the prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit where the Church asks for sanctification and *new creation* (§ 23)." But even here the terms remain unexplained. What is meant by 'world'? To what extent the whole of creation is included in the 'kingdom'?

The opening sentence of § 20 states: "The Eucharist embraces all aspects of life." The statement is further developed in a lengthy paragraph. It speaks of reconciliation and sharing, and appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. It rejects all kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom. But no mention is made of our responsibility towards God's gifts in creation. Attention exclusively focuses on human relations.

Obviously, the authors of the three texts were not yet aware of the environmental crisis. The damage done to God's creation was for them no 'aspect of life'. The situation has radically changed. In our view it would be worthwhile to re-visit the text on the Eucharist in the perspective of the theme creation and new creation.

Some responses to BEM underlined the need for expanding the reflection on the Eucharist. In its pastoral letter on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of

Creation the Dutch Council of Churches, for instance, referred to BEM and said: The sacraments confirm the Christian in a commitment to the life and welfare of Creation ... It is through Christ's presence that bread and wine, the gifts of Creation, affected by our violence, our injustice and pollution, become signs of a new creation and a renewed humanity in which we are allowed to share, *Een verband voor het Leven,* Amersfoort 1988.

Bread and Wine – Signs of God's Creation and New Creation

Lukas Vischer

1. Introduction

Bread and wine are the signs through which Christ's work of redemption are made present in the worship of the Church. How did it happen that these two ‚elements' have become signs of salvation for Christians? Bread and wine are goods of the earth. In the New Testament we are told that Jesus took bread and wine to refer to his own person and invited the disciples to use these signs ‚in memory of him'. The bread he broke recalls his suffering. The chalice he passed around is ‚the new covenant in his blood'. Through the words of the institution bread and wine have been given a new meaning. But does this mean that they have lost their original meaning as goods of the earth? Both in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition bread and wine have a rich symbolic meaning. They point to God's goodness and promise. To what extent is this meaning still present when Jesus uses them as bearers of a new message?

Why bread and wine? Exegetes often refer to the fact that bread and wine are basic food and therefore apt to express God's care for the people. Some liturgies describe bread and wine through the phrase ‚fruit of the earth and human work'; they emphasize in this way that they are not ‚spontaneous' fruits of creation but transformed by human effort. But do such formulas really catch the essential? The question finds little attention in Christian circles. Generally, the interest goes in another direction – in what way is Christ, his body and his blood, present today in the celebration of the Eucharist? But the question of the original meaning of bread and wine is not irrelevant. To understand the significance of the Eucharist and to give it its appropriate liturgical expression, it is important to be aware of the symbolical meaning which was attached to bread and wine at the time of Jesus and early Christianity.

2. Passover and other meals

The synoptic Gospels concur in reporting that Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples and instituted in the framework of this celebration a new meal. Paul recalls the words of the institution in the First Epistle to the Corinthians without mentioning explicitly the Passover meal. According to Paul the meal was instituted on the night ‚when he was betrayed'. In the Fourth Gospel the report on the institution is missing. But many passages make clear that the author of the Gospel presupposes the celebration of the Eucharist in the churches. „I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats from this bread, he will live for ever; and the bred which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." And even more explicitly: "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, you have no life in you (6,51-53). " How are these references to be understood?

In the first place we have to ask how the relationship between the Passover and the Eucharist is to be seen. The Synoptic gospels clearly indicate that Jesus celebrated before his death with his disciples the Passover meal. It is not quite clear on which day the meal was held. But there is evidently a close link between the Passover and the Eucharist. Jesus' death on the cross has placed the Passover in a new light. Jesus himself is the true Passover lamb. The fact that Jesus had celebrated the Passover immediately before his death suggests this interpretation. Paul presupposes it already as self-evident. "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened; for Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor 5,7-8)." And the Fourth Gospel shares the same notion: "Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1,29)." But has the Eucharist its exclusive roots in the Passover? Or have other references played a role? In other words: Do the words of interpretation exclusively refer to bread and wine as they were used at the Passover meal or have other meanings and traditions contributed to give the Eucharist its shape?

There can hardly be any doubt that other aspects need to be taken into account. It is striking that the interpretation given by Jesus refers to elements

which were used at the Passover meal but is not confined to it. Compared to the Passover meal the Eucharist is a new concept. Jesus makes no explicit mention of the centre of the meal - the lamb sacrificed. True, he gives orders to prepare the meal according to the traditional instructions. But when he comes to the interpretation of the meal, he no longer speaks of the lamb. Two other elements of the meal, bread and wine, are used to 'institute' the memory of the salvation he has brought.

The last meal is not the only meal Jesus celebrated. Table fellowship plays a central role both in his life and in his preaching. He is known not to fast but to eat and drink with people. „For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say ,he has a demon', the son of man came eating and drinking and the say: he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matth 11,18)." He sits at table with his disciples and in his teaching and his parables festive meals and references to food play an important role. All four gospels report the miraculous feeding of a big crowd. And, according to Jewish tradition, prayers of thanksgiving were offered both at the beginning and the end of these meals A prayer of thanksgiving is explicitly mentioned in the story of the feeding of the five thousand. "And taking the five loafs and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loafs and gave them to the disciples to set them before the people (Mark 6,41; Matthew 14,19; Luke 9, 16; John 6,11)." And also in the story of the disciples of Emmaus the decisive moment is Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving and the breaking of the bread. „He took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened (Lk 24,30-31)." Jesus depicts God's coming kingdom as a table fellowship: "And they will come from east and west, and from north and south and sit at table in the kingdom of God (Lk 13, 29)."

Much can be said therefore for the thesis that the Eucharist is to be understood, at least in part, as the prolongation of this meal tradition. The Passover meal was the last meal in a chain of meals Jesus had celebrated with the disciples. Because it was the last meal it had a particular significance. But in the interpretation Jesus gives the earlier table fellowship is present. The choice of bread and wine was already established. As on earlier occasions bread was broken and wine was served, Jesus points also

at the last meal to these two elements and gives them a new meaning. Jesus has instituted a meal which takes its point of departure from bread and wine as they were traditionally blessed and used at Jewish meals. And the early Church has further developed this interpretation. The fact that the celebration was not held once a year but on the occasion of every gathering and could simply be called "the breaking of the bread" (Acts 2, 42), shows to what extent the Eucharist was independent from the tradition of the Passover meal.

And also the formulations of the interpretation make this evident. Jesus does not make use exclusively of images connected with the Passover. True, there is a connection between the slaughtered lamb and body and blood. From the act of breaking the connection can be established to Jesus own broken body. But the reference to God's covenant in connection with the chalice does not necessarily belong to the Passover. Because neither the feast of the unleavened bread nor the Passover were the occasion to celebrate the memory of God's covenant. Jesus' words of interpretation are based on a broader tradition of concepts.

But was the feast of the ,unleavened bread' not an integral part of the Passover? We know little about the original meaning of this feast. In a very early period already it was connected with the memory of the exodus from Egypt. The Israelites, we are told, on the day of their departure took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their mantles on their shoulders (Ex 12, 34)." Whatever the original explanation, the feast of the unleavened bread was celebrated in the weak preceding the Passover. "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, and so until the twenty-first day of the month at evening (Ex 12, 15, 18)." In the context of the feast, leaven carried a negative meaning. "For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for if any one eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened (Ex 12, 19-20)." This negative connotation is echoed in the New Testament. Jesus warns against the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod (Mark 8,15). A small amount of malice ruins the whole. The same image occurs

in Paul's exhortation which has already been mentioned. „Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened (I Cor 5,7)." But it is worth noting that the feast of the unleavened bread does not seem to serve as an interpretative element of the Eucharist. The fact that the bread of the Passover was unleavened was at least in early times of no relevance. The interpretation simply speaks of bread and does not emphasize that it was unleavened bread. And the early Church seems to have used normal bread. The famous eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* obviously refers to normal bread. "As much as this bread was once scattered over the hills, but is now has become one, your Church may be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom (Didache 9,4)."

In the light of these considerations the conclusion can be drawn that the meaning of the Eucharist, the new meal instituted by Jesus, can and must not *exclusively* be derived from the Passover. The meaning of bread and wine in a wider context needs to be taken into account. What was the meaning of bread and wine in the Jewish tradition? What significance did they have in the preaching of Jesus and witness of the New Testament?

3. Bread

„You made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law through Moses your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought forth water from the rock for their thirst and you told them to go in to possess the land which you had sworn to give them." With these words the book of Nehemiah (9, 14-15) recalls the gift of the *manna* in the wilderness. During forty years God sustained the people through this miraculous gift. „At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord, your God (Ex 16,11)." At day-break the Israelites find, indeed, "something fine, flakelike, fine as hoarfrost on the ground". They are instructed to collect not more than was needed for one day. Only before the Sabbath they are to gather the double quantity. The Israelites did not know the food. "Now the house of Israel called its name *manna*; it was like coriander seed, white and the taste was like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16,31)."

The recollection of the *manna* recurs in many Biblical passages. The *manna* was the proof of God's faithfulness. "He let you hunger and fed you with *manna* which you did not know, nor did your fathers know (Deut 8, 3)." And at the same time the *manna* puts the faith of the people to the test. God sustains the people from day to day. The people does obey the instruction but makes soon the experience that the *manna* cannot be kept. The *manna* is therefore the sign of undivided dependence on God. Jesus implicitly refers to the *manna* in the Our Father. "Give us today our daily bread (Matth 6,11)." The parable of the rich farmer points in the same direction (Lk 12,16). The accumulation of stock in ever greater barns is folly. The decisive point is to be "rich towards God". Bread is God's gift, not human capital.

In later Judaism the idea and expectation developed that the *manna* miracle will be repeated in the messianic age. "Today you will find no *manna* on the ground ... Rabbi Eliazar ben Chasama (around 110) said: In this world you will find no *manna,* but you will find it in the coming world (Mekilta Exodus 16,25)." Or: „Zabdai ben Levi has said: For whom the *manna* is being prepared today? For the righteous in the other world. Who believes will be found worthy of eating it; who does not believe, will not see the delight of the rivers, the stream like rivers of honey and milk (Tanchuma, Beshallach 21,66)." And quite explicitly: "Like the first redeemer brought the *manna* down from heaven (Ex. 16,4: Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you), also the last redeemer will bring down *manna* from heaven (Psalm 72,16: Bread of grain will lie on the earth) ... (Strack-Billerbeck on John 6,31, II, 481)." As much as God sustained Israel in the wilderness, will he also take care of his people in the fulfilment of time. When Jesus breaks bread and gets it distributed to the crowd, when the bread is multiplied in a miraculous way, this expectation provides the background. The feeding of the five thousand is a messianic meal. And the coming kingdom will make manifest God's undivided love. „To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden *manna,* and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it (Rev 2,17)."

According to the witness of the Bible, the supply of the *manna* ceased at the moment when the people took possession of the land. From now on the

food came from the soil which God had attributed to the people. The *manna* had been, so to say, the anticipation of the promised land. Now the promise had become reality and God supplies the people with food from the land. „And on the morrow of the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened bread and parched grain. And the manna *ceased* on the morrow, when they ate of the produce of the land; and the people of Israel had *manna* no more, but ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josuah 5, 11-12)."

Bread stands for the fertility of the land. The land produces grain. The supply with bread is possible because God allows the people to cultivate land. Both grain and wine are mentioned as signs of God's care. Grain is often enumerated together with other gifts of the earth, especially wine and oil. In the blessing Isaac conveys to Jacob we read: „May God give of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine (Gen 27,28)." And later: „With grain and wine I have sustained him (Gen 27,37)." Or: „He will love you , bless you and multiply you, he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which he swore to your father to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples (Deut 7,13)." Abundance of grain is closely connected with the promise of the land. As God makes the earth to bear fruits he confirms the gift of the land. The gift is, however, not guaranteed. It can be lost. „The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies ... it shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed, who also shall not leave you grain, wine or oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish (Deut 28,49-51)." God's gracious action includes the fertility of the land and thus the growth of grain, wine and oil: „And in that day, says the Lord, I will answer the heavens and they will answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow him for myself in the land, and I will have pity on 'Not pitied' and I will say to ,Not my people': you are my people, and he shall say: You are my God (Hos 2,21-23)." And is it, in reverse, unintended that in the book of Revelation the God's basic gifts are spared in the first round of destruction? "Do not harm oil and wine (6,6)."

Because grain and bread are so closely connected with God's promise and love, they also appear in Jewish legislation. The first-fruits of the harvest are reserved for God. They are offered to God as a reminder that the land ultimately belongs to him. „Three times a year you shall keep a feast for me. You shall keep the feast of the unleavened bread ...You shall keep the feast of the harvest, of the first fruits of your labour, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the feast of the ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labour (Ex 23,14-16)."

Of particular importance in our context is the Jewish custom to bless God at all meals and in particular at festive meals. These prayers all explicitly refer to the land and the earth.

The guest blesses God for the gift which are offered to him. "Blessed be God who creates the fruit of the vine ... Blessed be you, Jahwe, who creates the fruit of the earth ... Blessed be you, Jahwe, our God, through whose word all things have come into being (cf. Strack-Billerbeck 4/2, 616)." And at the end of the meal the following prayer is offered: „Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the universe. You feed the whole world with your goodness, with grace, with loving kindness and tender mercy. You give food to all flesh. For your loving kindness endures forever. Through your great goodness food has never failed us. May it not fail us forever and ever, for your great name's sake: for you nourish and sustain all beings, and do good to all, and you provide food for all your creatures. Blessed are you Lord for giving food to all. We thank you, Lord our God, for giving as a heritage to our fathers a desirable good and ample land, and bringing us forth from the land of Egypt and delivering us from the house of bondage. We thank you for your covenant which you have sealed in our flesh (through circumcision), your Torah which you have taught us, your statutes which you have made known to us, the life and grace and loving kindness which you have bestowed upon us ... Blessed be your name from the mouth of all living forever and ever as it is written: When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise Jahwe, your God, for the good land which he has given you. ... Have mercy Lord, our God, on Israel your people, on Jerusalem, your city, on Zion the abiding place of your glory, on the kingdom of the house of David you are anointed and on the great and holy house that was called by your

name. Our God, our Father feed us nourish us, sustain, support and relieve us. And speedily, Lord our God, grant us relief from all our troubles ... (Strack-Billerbeck, 4/2, 631; the text which is here reproduced is taken from today's sources. According to Strack-Billerbeck it corresponds, especially in the first parts, to old traditions, cf. 4/2, 628)."

And each meal was at the same an opportunity to recall God's promises *as a community,* to experience communion here and now and to celebrate the future communion in the age of redemption.

The ‚institution' of the Eucharist, as we find it in the three synoptic Gospels and with Paul, is missing in John's Gospel. But the celebration of the Eucharist is, at we have seen, present throughout the Gospel. This is particularly manifest in the long chapter on the ‚Bread of life' (John 6). That this discourse refers to the Eucharist is made evident through the fact that Jesus, though dealing with the theme of bread, suddenly includes also the second element of the Eucharist. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son and drink his blood, you have no life in you, he who eats my flesh and drinks my flesh, has eternal life (6, 53-54)."

The chapter consists of several sections. The point of departure is the story of the feeding of the five thousand. After the event the disciples withdraw and cross the lake. They are caught in a storm and are frightened. Jesus joins them walking over the waters and restores their courage. On the following day, the crowd follows Jesus crossing the lake from the other shore. Jesus speaks to them. They have come, he explains, because they have eaten their fill from the loaves. But the deepest meaning of the miracle he has performed is to point to God, the giver of all gifts. Also the *manna* which the father received in the wilderness was not given by Moses but by God himself. And then he comes to the decisive point: The bread God gives today, is Jesus himself. "I am the bread of life (6, 35)." He is the bread which came down from heaven (6,41). The communion with him brings eternal life. "For this is the will of my Father that every one who sees the son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (6, 40)." The claim provokes opposition. How can he, a human being, the son of Joseph, claim to have come down from heaven? Jesus

answers by referring to the promise of the new covenant in the book of Jeremiah (31, 33-34). His claim, he points out, can only be understood by those God himself leads to believe. And against the background of this reference he repeats his central affirmation: „Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life (6,47-48)." The *manna* was ephemeral food. The bread from heaven will last forever. The opposition is not silenced by these explanations. The Jews, we are told, disputed among themselves. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And even the disciples find it difficult to accept Jesus' claim (6, 60-61). Jesus answers them by making clear that bread and wine refer to flesh and blood, in other words that they are the signs of his suffering, his death and his sacrifice for humankind. What matters is to grasp in these signs the spirit and the life. His answer culminates in the sentence: „It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail, the words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life (6, 63)."

The composition of the chapter is significant. The discourse starts from the feeding of the five thousand, a concrete meal with concrete bread and leads to a reflection on the deeper meaning of the Eucharist. Jesus shows what ultimately matters in the Eucharist – the communion with Christ who on the ground of his suffering is capable of granting eternal life. Three themes of the Jewish tradition determine the flow of the discourse: the Passover, the gift of the *manna* and the covenant announced by Jeremiah.

In our context it is important to underline that the discourse is not placed in the framework of the last meal with the disciples but starts from the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus brings healing (6,2). He stills hunger. He celebrates a 'Eucharist' which bestows life. „Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them (6, 11)." The text explicitly states that the miraculous feeding took place at the time of the annual Passover. "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand (6, 4)." The reference is meant to underline that the miracle of the feeding for eternal life has its ultimate ground in Jesus sacrifice. Already at the very beginning of the Gospel Jesus had been designated as the lamb of God taking away the sins of the world (John 1, 29). But the Passover motive is certainly not the only motive of the discourse. The Eucharist is understood as the renewal of the

manna miracle which the fathers experienced in the wilderness. It seals the new covenant through which the spirit opens the horizon of the eternal life.

4. Wine

Wine plays an important role in the Biblical tradition. Wine alleviates the curse of the soil God issued after the fall of Adam and Eve. "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life (Gen 3,17)." Later we hear that Lamech named his son Noah saying: ‚Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands (Gen 5, 29)." The nature of the relief is not spelt out. But we learn in another passage that Noah „ the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard (Gen 9,20)." The idea is obviously that the relief came to the human race through wine.

Wine is a source of joy. It is connected with feasts, festive mood and singing. "Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine. Their children shall see it and rejoice; their hearts shall exult in the Lord (Zach 10, 7)." The lover can say: „Your love is sweeter than wine (Song of Songs 1, 4)." Even the following affirmation can be found : „The wine which cheers *gods* and men (Judges 9, 13)." God's care and proximity finds expression in the phrase ‚my cup overflows' (Psalm 23,5)." In reverse it is a sign of God's anger and judgment when wine is lacking. "Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and a few men are left. The wine mourns, and the vine languishes, all the merry hearted sigh ... No more do they drink wine with singing, strong drink is bitter to those who drink it (Is 24, 6-9)."

But above all wine is connected with the promise of the land. Israel is led into land in which vine is growing. The story of the emissaries into Canaan illustrates this. They are sent to examine the quality of the land which the people is to occupy, "whether the land is rich or poor and whether there is wood in it or not". „And they came to the valley of Eshkol and cut down

from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them ... That place was called the valley of Eshkol because of the cluster the men of Israel had cut down from there (Num 13, 24-25)." Together with grain and oil wine is the essence of God's gifts. Again and again grain and wine are mentioned as the two fundamental gifts the land produces. "Plenty of grain and wine (Gen 27,28)." „You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound (Psalm 4,7)." „You cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine (Psalm 104,15)."

The quality of the promised land finds expression in the fact that the Israelites possess vines. Under Solomon peace prevailed so that „Judah and Israel dwelt in safety from Dan even to Beer-sheba, everyman under his vine and under his fig tree (I Kings 4, 25)." For Naboth the vineyard which he inherited is sacred. "The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers (I Kings 21,3)." And the vine is used as an image for Israel herself who received the promise of the land. „You brought a vine out of Egypt, you drove out the nations and planted it, you cleared the ground for it, it took deep root and filled the land (Psalm 80, 8-10)." „Israel is a luxurious vine that yields its fruit (Hos 10,1, cf also Ez 19,10)." But precisely this image also makes clear that Israel cannot unconditionally count on the gift of the land. "Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed (in the LXX *ampelos alethinen*, true or authentic vine); how have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine (Jer 2, 21)."

Israel is obliged not to loose sight of the giver of the land. Israel must not attribute the fertility of the ground to any other source than Jahwe himself. „And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine and the oil, and lavished upon her silver and gold which they used for Baal (Hos 2,8)." What God gives to the people remains ultimately his property even after having been given. Like from grain and oil, tithes are also to be offered from wine (Deut 14,23; 18,4), and the sacrifice of the animals was accompanied by a drink offering. "Their drink offering shall be half a *hin* of wine for a bull, a third of a *hin* for a ram, and a fourth of a *hin* for a lamb (Num 28,14; Ex 29,40; Num 15,2-15)."

But wine is also dangerous. Noah makes this experience. „And he drank from the wine and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent (Gen 9,21)." And drunkenness causes calamities. Having become drunk, Lot conceives with his daughters two sons, Moab and Ben-Ammi, the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gen 19, 30). Wine consumed in excess obscures the mind (Hos 4,11). Again and again we find warnings against the temptation of the wine " „Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? .. Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine, those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly, at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder (Prov 23, 29-31)." Drinking-bouts are a sign of falling off from God. „Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening till wine inflames them. They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord or see the work of his hands (Is 5,11-12; 28,7)." Wine can therefore become a symbol for God's judgment. God leads those whom he makes to fall into drunkenness. „For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he will pour a draught from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs (Psalm 75,8)." „Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, making all the earth drunken (Jer 51,7)." Wine can, as the Book of Revelation says, become the expression of God's fury.

It is therefore not surprising that there is in the Old Testament also a tradition viewing wine with great reserve. A special case are the Rechabites, a tribe which refused to engage in the cultivation of the land. „We will drink no wine, for Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, you shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons for ever; you shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed, you shall not plant or have any vineyard, but you shall live in tents all your days that you may live many days in the land in which you sojourn (Jer 35, 6-7)." Their negative attitude shows to what extent for Israel as a whole wine was connected with God's gift of the land. The rejection of wine could, however, also have other reasons. Wine is an intoxicating drink was obviously not compatible with the service in the temple. „And the Lord spoke to Aaron saying: Drink no wine nor strong

drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die (Lev 10,8-9; Num 6,20)." Above all mention needs to be made here of the law concerning the Nazirites. "When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grape wine, not even the seeds or the skins (Num 6, 2-4)." To glorify God and to be fully in his service, they had to refrain from any consumption of wine and strong drinks. Such vows could be made for a limited time but could also extend to the whole life. Both Simson (Judges 13) and Samuel (I Kings 1) were offered to God for the duration of their life. And Israel had to respect this special status of dedication. Those who were offered to God were considered to be chosen and called by God. To make a Nazirite drink wine, was as unacceptable as silencing a prophet (Amos 2,12).

John the Baptist did not eat and drink (Matth 11,18), we are explicitly told that „he did not eat bread and drink wine" (Lk 7, 33). Whatever this information says about his spiritual origins and connections, it makes clear that he lived a life of radical simplicity. His asceticism was so rigorous that his critics could declare that he was possessed by a demon. For our purpose it is particularly important to underline that Jesus differed from John the Baptist in this respect. "The son of man came eating and drinking," Jesus declares. Jesus participates in feasts. He accepts the invitation of publicans and sinners. His acceptance of God's gifts goes so far that he can be reproached of gluttony (Lk 7,33-34). The tradition that wine cheers the heart of people, has a clear place in his life.

Wine even becomes a sign of the coming kingdom. "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God (Mark 14,25; Matth 26,29; Lk 22,18)." His death puts an end to the fellowship with the disciples. His body is broken, his blood shed. He will die alone on the cross. But the communion will be restored. The new covenant will be established. He will again sit at table not only with his disciples but with the countless people who will enter the kingdom of God.

John's Gospel speaks not only explicitly about the bread of the Eucharist but also of the wine. And the significance wine had in the Jewish tradition becomes very clear. Jesus participates in the wedding of Cana (John 2). Wine is short of supply. Jesus transforms water into wine. The intention of the story is clear. Jesus brings to Israel and the whole world life created by God. He is the centre and the mediator of eternal life. He brings to fulfilment what is contained in the Jewish tradition. A wedding of a higher order will be celebrated. And even clearer is the connection in the discourse about the vine and the branches (John 15). "I am the vine (John 15,1)." The image has its roots in the Old Testament. As we have seen, Israel, the centre of the nations, is called the vine. It is the focus of a wider communion. If the discourse on the bread explained the participation in Christ and through him the gift of eternal life, attention now concentrates on the communion arising from the meal. Jesus is the vine, the disciples the branches which receive their life from the vine. The father causes the branches to bear fruits. He removes the dead wood and purifies the fruit bearing branches so that they bear even more fruits. The image of the vine was apparently common in early Christianity. It recurs in the eucharistic prayer of the Didache. „As far as the Eucharist is concerned, give thanks in these words, first over the chalice: We thank you, o Father, for the holy vine of David, your servant, whom you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant. To you be glory forever (Didache 9,1)."

5. Creation and new creation

What can we learn from this survey? Three considerations may point to possible conclusions:

1. In the Biblical tradition a rich palette of meanings is connected with bread and wine. In choosing these two signs Jesus links up with this tradition. What bread and wine express in the Biblical tradition is present when the disciples and the first Christian community break the bread from house to house. True, Jesus leads at the same time beyond this tradition. He gives bread and wine a new significance. They are now signs of his love, suffering and sacrifice. Paul recalls this fundamental meaning with vigour. " For as often as you eat this bread

and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (I Cor 11,25)." But this does not mean that the meaning of bread and wine in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition has been lost. It remains relevant as the background and has in a variety of ways entered and determined the discourse on the Eucharist. In the liturgical texts of the Christian Church the awareness of these images has not fully been preserved. As all attention concentrated on the 'institution' of the Eucharist ‚on the night in which he was betrayed', other meanings and images connected with bread and wine could no longer be brought to bear. To the extent as the Church moved away from the Jewish tradition, the issue of the relationship on the one hand of bread and body and on the other of wine and blood began to occupy the centre stage. The signs were understood as the *materia* or the elements of the new message, and the question of the degree of their transformation became all important. While bread and wine remain unchanged in appearance, they have been changed in ‚substance'. But bread and wine are more than mere 'elements'. In reality the Eucharist is more than a new interpretation of the Passover. It is the prolongation of a long history of images and meanings. The Passover, the last meal Jesus celebrated with his disciples, is a decisive stage in this process. It is important to let the language which is inherent in bread and wine speak. In great freedom, the New Testament has made ample use of this language.

2. Through bread and wine God's promise to Israel is present in the Eucharist. The two elements recall the exodus from Egypt, the journey through the wilderness, the miraculous daily feeding with the *manna*, but above all the promise of the land Bread and wine point to God's faithfulness and care. They recall both his gift and our fundamental dependence of his gift. To call human beings God's creatures is in fact too abstract. Man is *adam*, an earthbound being, created out of earth and dependent on the fertility of the earth. No human being is capable of being alive without earth. And God gives to his people a piece of land and makes sure that it can live from it. Jesus praises God who does not neglect even the smallest of his creatures and provides his people with the *manna*. He feeds the crowd which follows him.

3. Jesus celebrates the arrival of God's kingdom. The promise of a new creation is about to become reality. The messianic period has begun. The *manna* is again distributed. The new covenant becomes reality. The new creation is close. The proclamation meets with resistance, even provokes it. For the kingdom to come, Jesus must accept the road to suffering. He dies on the cross. The last meal with his disciples makes this clear: The way to the new creation leads through his sacrifice. His death is the door to life. And the disciples experience the validity of this promise by the new encounter with him. They not only meet the risen Lord but he shares again with them the meal. The meal in the night when he was betrayed was in fact not the last meal. Jesus continues the table fellowship with them. The kingdom has not yet come in fullness. Like their master, the disciples are led through times of suffering. The time on earth with its darkness cannot be denied. Paul warns the Corinthians against an enthusiasm which does not take seriously our life in the present age. As long as we live on earth we are called to proclaim the death of our Lord. But we celebrate the meal in the faith and the hope that he is about to create new things. His creation is not lost. Bread and wine, the essence of God's gift of creation, proclaim now in a new way the goal which God pursues from the beginning of the world. Every celebration of the Eucharist is the praise of God, the creator of new things.

O Lebensbrot, das ewig stillt,	O bread of life, food forever,
o Freudenwein, der überquillt,	o wine of joy which overflows,
wir jauchzen deinem Namen.	we praise your name.
Der Himmel du und Erde hast	You, who hold in your hand
in Händen, heilger, höchster Gast:	both heaven and earth,
	holy, highest host,
Ja komm, Herr Jesu, Amen	yes come, Lord Jesus, Amen

(Heinrich Vogel 1902-1989)

The Eucharist and the Creation – an Orthodox View

Tamara Grdzelidze

The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom read out every year during the Paschal Matins in the Orthodox Church invites all the faithful to share the joy of the resurrected Christ:

> "Enter ye all into the joy of your Lord; receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival! You sober and you heedless, honour the day! Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast you all lavishly. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away. Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive you all the riches of loving-kindness."

The foremost meaning of this message is that through the resurrection the path of the salvation is open to all and the means of doing so in the church during the Paschal celebration is partaking the body and blood of Christ. Do not go hungry, enjoy the riches of the divine grace: to be hungry and to be fed is a prominent image in the life of Christians which suggests the imperishable food leading to eternal life.

This paper will provide an exposition of the theme of the Creation in the Eucharistic prayers and the patristic commentaries on them in the Orthodox tradition. The Eucharistic prayers of the liturgies of the Eastern Church tradition are based on the knowledge that God is the creator and loves His Creation, that through Christ's redemptive life the Creation is being reconciled with the Creator; that the Creation is to be renewed through the efforts of the creatures and a new Creation is to be inaugurated. The priestly destiny of the Son of God shows how intimate God is with his Creation. Christ's redemptive life is vital to the Creation and for the making of a new Creation. The underlying message in this discourse indicates that the eucharistic theology is concerned about the environment from where it receives the