

**THE EUCHARIST IN PAULINE THOUGHT:
BEYOND *ANAMNESIS* TO *KOINONIA***

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

my wife, *Martha*,

in appreciation of our stay together

in love for 25 years now.

PREFACE

The Eucharist, popularly called the Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper, is a core and central Christian rite instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ shortly before His death to be observed continually in memory of Him and as a factor of uniting Christians, the beneficiaries of the "new covenant" in His blood. But it is observed that, contrary to being a vital tool for promoting unity in the Body of Christ, the Church, individual Church approach to it has caused division and discrimination. For instance, the Church is not unanimous as to who administers it, qualification for receiving it, the frequency of observance, the nature of Christ's presence and the effects on the communicants. It is against this background that this thesis contends that, in addition to observing it in memory of Jesus' loving and sacrificial death, the Eucharist is also intended for regular fellowship among Christians in order to promote their unity.

Chapter one serves as a general introduction to the study where the statement of the problem, the purpose of study, scope and limitations, methodology and significance of the study are highlighted. Chapter two reviews related literatures with particular reference to names and meanings of the Eucharist, a survey of history of its observance and its relationship or similarities to the Passover. Chapter three examines the Eucharist in Paul's traditions leading to the exegesis of I

Corinthians 11:17-34. However, before doing the exegesis of the text, there is a discussion on who Paul is and his contact with Corinth. What makes that exercise necessary is to enable us establish what gave Paul the right to speak to the Corinthian Christians. The exegesis of the text is taken in three phases: the abuse of the Eucharist (vs. 17-22), correcting the abuse (vs. 23-26) and recommending right spirit for observing the Eucharist (vs. 27-34). In all, we presented Paul as leading the Corinthians to avoid using the Eucharist as a divisive factor. Chapter four deals with the Eucharist in the four Gospel traditions. It will be observed that, even though there are narrative variations among these traditions, they essentially agree on the both *anamnesis* and *koinonia* intents of the Eucharist.

Chapter five focuses on the theology of the Eucharist as a *koinonia*. After exploring the concepts of a covenant both in the Old and New Testaments, we could see that when Jesus says, “this cup is a new covenant in my blood” as in Luke 22:20, He means partaking the Eucharistic elements signifies a bond between Him and Christians as well as among Christians. So, at the celebration of the Eucharist, Christians show-case their covenant relationship with Christ and with one another. The chapter highlights the Eucharist as a covenant meal in memory of Christ but for fellowship and unity of Christians.

Chapter six contains the summary and conclusion of the study. The obvious fact in our conclusion is the pertinent call

on the modern Church to use the celebration/observance of the Eucharist as a factor to promote Christian unity. It is therefore recommended that our Eucharistic service be an “open” one where all Christians are welcome.

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ABSTRACT

One of Jesus' earnest desires for His followers as reflected in His intercessory prayer in John 17 is the unity of Christians. He prayed: "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one" (v 11, NRSV). Further in verses 20-21 He said: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one" (NRSV). Also, the preaching and practices of the early Christians were geared toward keeping the unity of Christians (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; Eph 4:1-4; Philip 2:2-3). Significantly, Jesus instituted the Eucharist at a Jewish Passover Feast, a feast that unites all the Jews in celebration of their miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In Paul's understanding, the Eucharist is not just a memorial meal, but also a fellowship meal that unites Christians (I Cor. 10:16, 17); and therefore, it amounts to a great abuse if used as occasion for dividing the Church (I Cor. 11:18, 20-22). Unfortunately, a cursory observation of the contemporary Church practices reveals that the mode of observing the Eucharist today is too "closed" to allow promotion of unity among Christians. It is against this background that this thesis examines Paul's main Eucharistic text of I Cor. 11: 17-34 and argues that the Eucharist goes beyond a mere memorial service just marking Jesus' death to a holy meal that strengthens the bond of unity among Christians. It is a communion for union. The thesis therefore calls for a paradigm shift from *anamnesis* concept to *koinónia* intent of the Eucharist.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Problem

The Eucharist, in the words of Erickson (1985; 1108), is a rite which Christ Himself established for the Church to practice as a commemoration of His death. Unlike baptism which is an initiatory rite, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper, is a continuing rite of the Church. It is interesting to know that almost every brand of Christianity practices it. Every church denomination upholds its importance in the worship life of its congregation. It ought to be a common factor uniting all branches of the Christian faith. However, contrary to this expectation, historically as well as in our contemporary time, its interpretation and practice have tended to divide the Christendom. Consequently, diverse traditions relating to its observance have emerged. In fact, a critical examination of the understanding of the value and purpose of the Eucharist as believed, taught and practiced by church denominations today, shows that their points of disagreement outweigh those of agreement.

Contrary to being a vital tool for promoting unity in the Body of Christ, individual approaches to it have caused division.

The Christendom is not unanimous as to who qualifies to administer it, or receive it, the frequency of observance, the nature of the elements and its effects on the communicants. Even some denominations administer exclusively to their members even when those denied are as spiritual as their members in a mixed congregation, and are communicants in full standing from their churches. In the same vein, some denominations within the Christendom have introduced stringent conditions that exclude most believers from partaking in the Lord's Supper, thus widening the gap of fellowship.

The summary of these observations is that the Christendom, by precept and practice, appears to undermine the Eucharist as a unifying factor within the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is more or less a will and the last wish of Jesus: "This do in remembrance of me", he said (Lk. 22:19). This pronouncement has over the centuries nourished the faith of Christians, binding them in same love and hope. By the practice of breaking the "bread" and drinking the "wine", the Church focuses on Calvary and there sees the blood of "the Lamb of God" shed for the salvation of humanity.

One of the fundamental and eternal truths Jesus stood for is the unity of believers. He prayed: "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11). It then becomes a great embarrassment

to Him if the holy meal He Himself established becomes a tool of division among His followers. Kee and Yong (1969:377) observe that as in the earlier period, the primary meaning of the meal was Christ's presence in the midst of those who ate, and the hope it brought for his final coming. Similarly, Stewart (1977: 168) remarks that the Church, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, has always found not only a memorial, but also a presence. The implication of these observations is that the presence of Christ as truly acknowledged in the observance of the sacrament of the Eucharist ought to be a unifying factor instead of a divisive factor. Even though Erickson (1985:1108), admits that virtually every branch of Christianity practices it, and that it is also a common factor uniting almost all segments of Christianity, he however laments that historically and as well as the present time, it has actually kept various Christian groups apart; and so it is a factor which unites and divides Christendom. This, of course, must be admitted, as allowing "fresh water" and "salt water" flow from the same spring" (Jam. 3:11).

It is against this background that this thesis seeks to advocate for the observance of the Eucharist as a religious meal that goes beyond a memorial service of commemorating the death of Jesus to a meal that strengthens the bond of unity among Christians. It is in the light of this that this thesis seeks

to study Paul's teaching on this continuing rite of the Church as contained in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 with the view to showing that the Eucharist, in its original intention and tradition, is a rite which its observance is beyond a mere memorial (a historical reflection) to a fellowship (koinónia), a communion for union, that is, it is unity based to the core.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The early Christian worship most likely had at its centre the observance of the Eucharist. In other words, it occupied a central place in the worship of the early Church. Thus, we read: "They (early believers) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, *to the breaking of bread* and to prayer" (Acts 2:42. Emphasis mine). It is no exaggeration when Stewart (1995;166) describes it as "the great Christian sacrament of all ages". But the impression Apostle Paul gives us in 1 Cor. 11:17 ff shows something went wrong along the line. When he states,

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you...when you come together it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk (1 Cor.11:17-21, NIV).

This introductory remarks of Paul when he addressed the abuse and desecration of the Lord's Supper as being observed in the Corinthian Church leaves much to be desired. Paul here identifies an open case of division even at the Lord's Table. The surprise and worry is that what ought to have united them is being used as a cause of segregation and disunity. Hence Paul sees no ground for praise for them.

It can also be observed that the contemporary Christendom may not be faring better. For instance, Erickson (1985:1108) observed that in some cases the subject of the spiritual value or practical value of the Lord's Supper has become lost in the dispute over theoretical issues. He goes further to show that points of disagreement centre around the issues of the presence of Christ, the efficacy of the rite, who qualifies to administer it, the appropriate recipients, the elements used and time of observance. Those thorny issues are those of philosophical and theological debates but the implication is that one's theological persuasion determines the practice and since there is no unanimity in theological and biblical interpretation, it leads to diversity of practice which edges out others whose theological position differs.

The purposes of this study, therefore, are:

1. To establish the fact that the original intention of the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus is for fellowship which by design promotes unity among the Body of Christ; the Church.
2. To challenge the contemporary Christendom to see the observance of the Eucharist as a factor for unity.
3. To show that the Eucharist is a covenant by which participants are bonded to Christ and to one another.
4. To show how Paul's thought or teachings on the sacrament advocated for unity, love, communion, brotherhood and corporate witness to Christ's atoning death.

1.3 Research Methodology

It should be borne in mind that the thrust of this research work is to bring to the fore-front Pauline thought on the Eucharist as a unifying factor among Christians based on his teaching on this subject matter in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The task then requires the student to seek to understand the context and content of the text under study. One needs to get into the author's original thought first before being able to interpret and apply the message of the passage to the contemporary Christendom.

Therefore, the research methodology for this work hinges on historical and descriptive approach since literature sources are used in gathering information leading to achieving our objectives. The sources of information for the work include books, journals, Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries and the Bible text itself. These exegetical and expositional tools are considered necessary in enabling us achieve the objectives of this research work.

Also, the researcher's participant observation based on his many years of teaching and pastoral experiences provide a subsidiary methodological approach.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible is used for all quotations, except otherwise stated.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of Study

The study focuses on Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) as reflected in his first letter to the Corinthian church. Though other Gospel traditions are referred to, it is for the purpose of elucidating the historical background of its institution and the mandate for its continuous observance. To be sure, the Matthean, Markan, Lukan and Johannine traditions of the Holy Communion are mentioned in passing in this work, but they do not form the core points of exposition.

Also Paul has a lot to teach on many Christian doctrines such as faith, salvation, sin, gifts, tongues, love, marriage, the Church, Second Advent, rapture, resurrection, discipline, etc, some of which are even present in the 1 Corinthian *corpus*, but they do not form any essential point of discussion in this work. The text of 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34 is really the text of thesis.

It needs to be remarked at this point that scarcity of books and articles of African authors on this subject matter constitutes a major limitation on the study. In fact, the UNN library leaves much to be desired in this connection. However, internet technology has helped to cushion the limitation.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The outstanding sacraments of Christian rites that the early Christian community embraced vigorously were water baptism and the Eucharist. Of the two, the latter became part of regular worship in view of its continuous nature. Unlike the Eucharist, baptism was and still is, a once-and-for-all rite performed on the believer; no cause for its repetition on the same believer. But the Eucharistic mandate gives room for a continuous observance. And so, the early Christian community after Pentecost, incorporated the celebration of the Eucharist into their regular meetings. Luke reports in Acts 2:42, that the

early converts to Christianity after their baptism “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”. He further adds in verse 46 that they even “broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts”. This report gives us the picture of an atmosphere of love and unity enhanced and facilitated by the observance of the Eucharist.

Even though two meals are combined at this time-‘Love Feast’ and the Eucharist, Scroggie (1970:73) reports that early in the second century the *agape* (love feast) and the Lord’s Supper were separated, and the latter became more and more a distinct sacred ordinance. Right from the Day of Pentecost, “the celebration of the Supper was part of a common daily meal, the regular substantial meal of the day, which was held in the evening after sunset” (Scroggie, 1970:73). Going by date of writing, “Paul was the first New Testament writer to make specific mention of the Eucharist” (Onwu, 2002:226). The situation was no longer business as usual. He got a picture of abuse, profanity and desecration and disunity. A situation in which religious and social elements were lumped together.

Scroggie (1970:73-74) captures the mood this way:

The rich brought their luxurious provisions, and greedily devoured them, without waiting for anyone; while the poor, hungry-eyed Lazaruses – half-starved

slaves, who had no contribution of their own to bring – watch them with hate and envy as they sat famishing and unrelieved by their full-fed brethren. Worse still, there were those who drank until they became drunk. ...what was designed to be a sacred fellowship had become a senseless orgy, and, in consequence, judgment was visited on them.

It is therefore glaringly clear that the Corinthian Church missed the point of using the Eucharist as a platform for Christian unity and purity. As Onwu (2002:226) observes, the celebration of the Eucharist within the Corinthian community presents a shameful picture of social inequality. It is a case of the rich discriminating against the poor. Whereas the early Church sought to bridge the gap of inequality (Acts 2:44-45), the Corinthian Church widened the gap.

The question is: has the modern Christendom, the contemporary Christianity, overcome the temptation of the Corinthian Church? Is the Church still not using the Eucharist as the vehicle of discrimination and disunity? Certainly, a cursory observation of the administration of the Eucharist will reveal that the observance of the Eucharist as a vehicle of fellowship, communion and union among the Christians remains elusive. Some Christians are denied observing the Lord's Supper on the basis of whether they are baptized or not; others because they do not belong to the same denomination.

In the light of the above observation, the significance of this study lies in showing that the Eucharist ought to unite Christians of all persuasions in fellowship (*koinónia*) rather than tearing them apart. It needs to be seen beyond mere commemoration of Christ's death (remembrance) to a factor that fosters unity; a loving participation and sharing that portrays unity among believers irrespective of denomination. As Erickson (1985:1111) states:

In addition to having a correct understanding of what Christ has accomplished and a vital relationship with him, communicants must get along with one another...Disregard for fellow Christians and for the Church is a contradiction of the Lord's Supper. So the Lord's Supper is as much a symbol of the present vital fellowship of believers with the Lord and with one another as it is a symbol of the past death of Jesus.

So, this study is significant as it shows that the necessary import of the Eucharist is Christian unity made possible by the spirit of sharing, *koinónia*, that permeates Eucharistic celebration. It is a great weakness on the part of the Church to allow the mode and manner of administering the Eucharist to divide the "Body of Christ". This study contends that Christian unity constitutes the original import and intent of the institution of the Eucharist.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Eucharist: is another word used for the Holy Communion or the Lord Supper.

Koinónia: is the Greek word for fellowship or sharing.

Anamnesis: is the Greek word for remembrance, memorial or recollection of an event.

Covenant: is an agreement between two or more parties binding them together for some mutual benefits.

Sacrament: means a Christian rite established to be observed continually, such as baptism and Holy Communion.

Rite: means a solemn religious ceremony or actions usually carried out in the same way, e.g. baptism, ordination, marriage, burial etc.

Ordinance: refers to an established, well ordered religious practice observed as expressions of faith or a means of communicating grace.

Didache: is a term used for the Teaching of the Apostles compiled in the early second century A.D.

Exegesis: is an act of giving a detailed explanation of a Bible text; an exposition of a Bible passage.

Communicant: is a word used for Christians who partake of the Holy Communion.

Communion Elements: refer to the bread and wine as used in the Holy Communion to represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Abuse: means misuse of something; wrong use.

Agape: a kind of love-feast (potluck) or meal practiced by the early church prefacing the Holy Communion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to review available literatures on the Eucharist. In doing this, emphasis shall be placed on the meaning and names of the Eucharist, the Passover as an antecedent of the Eucharist, and the historical development of its observance.

2.2 Names and Meanings of the Eucharist

Various names have been given to the Eucharist depending on the emphasis placed on the interpretation and presentation of this sacrament by individual Church groups. In the writings of Paul, four names used to refer to the Eucharist are identifiable either by allusion or direct reference. These are: “the festival” (1 Cor.5:8), “the cup of the Lord” and “the Table of the Lord” (1 Cor. 10:21); “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). Also in 1 Cor. 11:26-27, he referred to the elements separately as “the bread” and “the cup” or “the cup of the Lord”.

Wallace (1978: 244-5) reports that ‘the breaking of bread’ has since after Pentecost been called the Eucharist, Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion and has been celebrated in wide variety of ways and with widely differing interpretations, but has

never been neglected. Berkhof (1984:647) also identifies four biblical names for the Eucharist, namely, the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20), the Table of the Lord (I Cor. 10:21), Breaking of bread (Acts 2:42) and the Eucharist (I Cor. 10:16; 11:24). According to Berkhof, the Lord's Supper is "the most common name among the Protestants" (646).

Stendahl (1984:182) and Hargreaves (1991:151) agree that other names used by the Church for the Eucharist include: Holy Communion, or simply Communion, the Last Supper, the Mass, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacrament of the Altar. In addition, Oyedepo (2002:6) termed it "the Miracle Meal".

In the opinion of Erickson (1985:1108), the Eucharist refers to a rite which Christ Himself established for the Church to practice as a commemoration of His death. Erickson goes further to say that the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial and propitiatory character as an offering to the Father on our behalf (1123). The *Wikipedia* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>) explains the meaning of the Eucharist as follows:

The Eucharist, also called Holy Communion, Sacrament of the Table, the Blessed Sacrament, or the Lord's Supper and other names, is a Christian sacrament or ordinance, generally considered to be a commemoration of the Last Supper, the final meal that Jesus Christ shared with his disciples before his arrest and eventual crucifixion.

It goes further to state that the term “Eucharist” may refer not only to the rite but also to the bread and wine used in the rites and in that case, communicants can speak of “receiving the Eucharist” as well as “celebrating the Eucharist” (P.1). In terms of theology, Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>) presents the following summary of beliefs:

- i) Many Christian denominations classify the Eucharist as a sacrament but some protestants prefer to call it an *ordinance*, viewing it not as a specific channel of divine grace but as an expression of faith and of obedience to Christ.
- ii) The Catholic Church teaches that when the bread and wine are consecrated in the Eucharist, they cease to be bread and wine, and become instead the “most precious Body and Blood of Christ.” The empirical appearances are not changed, but the reality is. The Catholic Church also believes that Christ’s body and blood can no longer be separated: where one is the other must be. So, the communicant who receives either one receives Christ, whole and entire.
- iii) The Anglican celebrates the Eucharist as the “Principal Service”, in which wine along with wafers or bread are used. Celebration varies from daily to weekly.

- iv) The Lutheran Churches observe the Eucharist weekly using leavened or unleavened bread, administering the wine via a common cup. Also, some congregations celebrate it in formal rites similar to the Roman Catholic and “high” Anglican services. Examining and absolving communicants are necessary.
- v) Reformed/Presbyterian Churches administer it in various ways. While it is generally observed on every Lord’s Day, some serve it the first Sunday of the month. Bread without any rising agents (leaven or yeast) are recommended, i.e. “bread common to the culture”. The wine served might be “true alcoholic red wine or grape juice from either chalice or from individual cups”. They prefer to distribute the elements to the members through the presbyters (elders) instead of the individuals coming forward to receive it. It is believed Christ is spiritually present in the bread and wine. To them, communion is open to all baptized members.
- vi) The United Methodist celebrates the Eucharist every Sunday, but some also observe it first Sunday of each month or even quarterly. Grape juice is preferred to wine. Communicants receive the elements standing, kneeling or seated. The United Methodist practices “open Communion” in which “all who intend to live Christian life,

together with their children” are invited to partake. Thus, undergoing baptism is not a prerequisite.

- vii) The Baptists place emphasis on unleavened bread and grape juice as approved elements. Baptists generally do not hold Communion as sacramental; rather it is considered to be an act of remembrance of Christ’s atonement, and a time of renewal of personal commitment.
- viii) The Mennonites have foot washing as part of communion service. There are two parts: *Communion* which is only the serving of the Lord’s Supper, and the *Communion meal* in which members renew their covenant with God and with one another.

2.3 Explanation of the Names

It is interesting to note that each of these names emphasizes some significant truth about the Eucharist. In the first place, the term “Eucharist” is coined from the Greek word, *εὐχαρίστια* (*eucharistia*) meaning “giving of thanks” (Unger, 1978; 327). This name reflects the fact that Jesus gave thanks to God for the communion elements before passing them to His disciples (Mt.26:26-27; Mk.14:22-23; Lk.22:18:19; 1 Cor.11:23-24). It is also believed too that the term *Eucharist* is used for the Lord’s Supper because of the hymns and psalm which accompanied it

(Mt.26:30). Also, the Church sees it that the occasion provides a forum for thanksgiving to God for His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor.10:30). Thus, the service of the Eucharist is, in a way, a sacrifice or an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The term “Lord’s Supper”, *κυριακον δειφον* (*kuriakon deíphon*) literally means a meal belonging to the Lord. It connotes the meal established by our Lord Jesus Christ in memory of Himself. “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor.11:24), or according to Luke 22:19: “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me”. The Greek word translated “remembrance” is *ἀναμνηδῖς*, which also means “in memory of” or “recollection” (Bromiley, 1985:56). So, the celebration of the Eucharist is meant to remind believers of Christ’s love and atoning death for the salvation of humanity. The Lord’s Supper is indeed the Lord’s last wish. Consequently, the Church is enjoined to “proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor.11:26). Also the Lord’s Supper is used because it was instituted at supper time. This designation is synonymous to the Lord’s Table or the Cup of the Lord in 1 Cor.10:21.

The name “Holy Communion” or “Communion”, is the translation of the Greek word *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*), fellowship or participation. Bromiley, 1985:449, says that the fellowship or

the Lord's Supper is important as an enhanced expression of fellowship with Christ. He goes further to say that fellowship with Christ means fellowship with other Christians in a partnership of faith and services and that *koinónia* in 1 John, for example, is a favourite term for "the living bond that unites Christians".

The term "Mass" or "the Sacrifice of the Mass" or "the Sacrament of Altar" pictures the Eucharist as a sacrifice. According to Erickson (1985:1123), the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial and propitiatory character as an offering to the Father on our behalf. Similarly, Douglas & Tenny (1987:601) say that in the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ anticipates "to offer himself to God as a sacrifice for sin so that a new relationship could be created by God between himself and the redeemed community of believers".

Finally, Oyedepo (2002:14) calls the Lord's Supper "The Miracle Meal" because of his understanding of its therapeutic or healing value. He strongly believes that "this meal is designed for strength, health and longevity". He insists that if one takes it with the correct spiritual perspective then he or she should "expect to be strong, healthy and to fulfill the number of your days". In fact, Oyedepo (2002:13-14) personally admits:

“when God opened my eyes to the flesh and blood of Jesus, I was so taken with it that I took it virtually everyday. It answered to me in detail. All the weakness and sickness in me died and life became increasingly more buoyant”.

From the above discussion on the other names of Eucharist, it can be seen that each name reflects certain truth or truths about the sacred meal. It is the Lord's Supper because it was instituted at the evening meal. It is the Lord's Table because it is Jesus (the Lord) Himself who established it and in His memory. It is Holy Communion because it is a sacred, religious meal for the common sharing, participation of all Christians. It is the Eucharist because the Lord Jesus gave thanks for the elements (bread and cup) before passing them to His disciples, and also at its every observance Christians cannot but appreciate God for His love in Jesus for their salvation; a thanksgiving to God for His salvation in Jesus Christ. The term Mass stresses the celebration of Christ's sacrificial death which provides forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God.

2.4 Historical Perspective of Observance

The Bible records that the Eucharist was established by Jesus while observing the Passover for the last time on earth with His disciples before His death (see Mt.26:26-29; Mk.14:22-25; Lk.22:9, 1Cor.11:24-26). But the actual service of the

Eucharist began in the Church after the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost Day (Acts 2:42). It is most likely that the early Christians observed it daily (Acts 2:42, 46). It appears that in the course of time, it became a Sunday, Sunday (weekly) affair as can be gleaned from Acts 20:7 indicating that it was accepted as an integral part of the weekly Christian worship service at that time. Enns (1989:354) in his own contribution says the early Church met for breaking of bread which consisted of eating a fellowship meal called the love feast, which was followed by the Lord's Supper.

Unger, (1978: 666) reports that before the Corinthian Church abused the Communion, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was taken "in connection with the *agape* or Love Feast, to indicate that its purpose was the expression of brotherly love", Beckwith (1988:236) observes that the Eucharist, for a time, continued to be part of a larger meal called the *agape* (love feast) and provided by the wealthier Christians for the benefit of the poor (*cf. 1 Cor. 11:20-22*). The love feast involved individual members bringing along their ordinary meal to share with others in the recognition of the fact that theirs was a community of love and fellowship. But abuse soon set in. The situation Paul reproved in 1 Cor.11:20-22 suggests that each person ate of that food which he brought without sharing with others, and also

that private meals were elevated above the Lord's Supper. Unger (1978: 666) reports that:

There was not a proper waiting for the distribution of the elements by a Church officer, and there seems to be no evidence that a priestly consecration and distribution of the bread and wine were regarded as necessary to the validity of the sacrament.

Perhaps this laxity was informed by lack of a fixed order for the observance of this holy ordinance. Douglas (1977: 751) also reports that at Corinth there were two parts of the "cultic observance": a common meal, taken for the purpose of nourishment, followed by a "solemn rite of the Eucharist".

Also, Douglas & Tenny (1987: 601) reveal that at first the Lord's Supper "was a part of a larger meal, but being a special part, it could be separated. It became the second half of the Sunday worship of the local Church..."

It can then be seen that the Eucharist was, from the earliest stage, associated with a love meal or social meal that Christians had shared together from the beginning, and yet occupied a central place throughout the post-apostolic age. It was a unifying factor before the abuse set in.

Beckwith (1988:236-8) believes *agape* and Eucharist were separated early second century A.D. Also Kee and Young (1969:377) are of the opinion that the separation of the love feast from the Eucharist probably took place gradually in different

Churches during the late first and early second century A.D. They opined that the separation was informed by the growth in size of the Church. They wrote:

As the Churches grew in size, it must have been more and more difficult to manage a social meal in somebody's home. But the Church continued to observe the Eucharist, which enabled Christians to go on celebrating the presence of the Lord in a common meal.

Also, Kee and Young (1969:377) report that by the end of the first century A.D. liturgies for the Eucharist were being developed. Citing from the *Didache*, they said Christians are instructed to “come together on the Lord’s Day, break bread, and hold the Eucharist after confessing your transgressions”. This shows that confessing of sins as a prerequisite for celebrating the Eucharist was becoming a prominent feature then. Furthermore, the authors cited words that are repeated both for the cup and the bread. Concerning the cup, the following words are repeated: “We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child; to thee be glory forever”. And for the bread it goes like this:

We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so, let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever (Kee and Young, 1969:380).

The essence of these citations is to show how at this time the Eucharist was receiving gradually a more elaborate liturgical coating, irrespective of variations from Church to Church. No doubt, the increasing tendency toward the more liturgical type of service resulted from the gradually passing away of the charismatic ministry of the Apostles and the ascendancy of the bishops and Presbyters whose offices were enhanced partly because of the battle against false teachings. Kee and Young (1969: 380-381) reports in this regard that Ignatius (A.D. 50-110) in his letters, “repeatedly insists that the Eucharist can be held only where bishops, presbyters, and deacons are present”. This instruction, it is claimed, is based on Ignatius’ awareness that “in some Churches members were partaking of the Eucharist isolated from the main body of Christians and under unauthorized ministers”. The danger he sensed here is that once the rite ceased to be shared by all Christians, the unity of the believing community would be jeopardized. The message underscored, therefore, is that the Eucharist is the Eucharist when it is shared by the whole Church under its recognized authorities. In the Eucharist, just as in worship, Christians know themselves to be one in spirit.

Another significant point of historical review is on the relationship of Christ to the element at the time of observance. The Church has not been unanimous on the manner of Christ's presence during the sacrament of the Eucharist. According to Erickson (1985:1113), the issue pertains to whether and in what sense the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the elements used. It centres around the interpretation given to Jesus' statements, "This is my body" and "This is my blood". Erickson says there are three interpretations which are theologically coined "transubstantiation", "consubstantiation" and "symbolic representation". The first stands for the Roman Catholic view which says that "as the administering priest consecrated the elements, an actual meta-physical change takes place" and the substance of the bread and wine changed into Christ's flesh and blood respectively (Erickson, 1985:1115). The second view stands for Luther's reinterpretation of the Catholic view. It maintains that Christ's body and blood are physically present in the elements. In other words, Christ body and blood are present "with in and under" the bread and wine, instead of replacing them (Beckwith, 1988:236-8). The third, describes Zwingli position that the elements are mere symbols of Christ's body and blood. A subsidiary view closed to Zwingli position is what Erickson (1985:1119) calls the "Reformed" view which says

that Christ's presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic and not physical.

It is not the intent of this work to resolve this issue. The significance or relevance of this review here is to buttress another point of divisive factor introduced into what ought to have united the Church. For as has earlier been pointed out, history as well as contemporary practice, widens the gap of Christian unity when it comes to the precept and practice of the Eucharist.

2.5 The Antecedent of the Eucharist

The Jewish Passover provides the religious background to the institution and religious significance of the Eucharist (Ex. 12:1-14; 13:7-9). It was during the customary Passover Feast that the Eucharist was established (Mt.26:17-20, 26-30; Mk.14:12-26; Lk.22:14-20). Stendahl's (1984:183) feeling that the relation of the meal (the Eucharist) to the Jewish Passover "is not essential to the understanding of the Eucharist" is not acceptable. On the contrary, Martin's (1977: 749) observation in this regard provides a helpful insight. He says, there were Passover ideas on the Lord's mind when He sat down with the disciples. In fact, he affirms: "the Jewish Passover, based on Exodus 12, and interpreted in the *Haggadah* for the Passover...

provides the indispensable key to an understanding of the meal and also the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the early Church."

It is significant to note also Paul's statements in 1 Cor.5:7. He writes: "Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our *Paschal Lamb*, Christ has been sacrificed (emphasis mine)." The context of this verse indicates Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian Church for condoning or tolerating sexual immorality. In recommending the need to discipline this "brother", and also showing them the need to "celebrate the festival" (the Lord's Supper) with pure, sincere and true heart, he made this profound statement of seeing Christ as our Passover Lamb. The word translated "Paschal" is the Greek *παῖχα* (*paska*) rendered "Passover". Here Paul sees the Jewish lamb prefiguring Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The blood of the Passover Lamb applied to the door posts and lintels saved Israel's firstborn children from death. It needs to be recalled too that the Passover feast itself commemorates Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In the same way, Paul sees Christ's death as a means of the Christians' (the new Israel) deliverance from sin. Paul means to say Christ has taken the place of the Passover Lamb, and as the Jews, when their paschal lamb was slain, were required to put away all leaven from themselves, so also, we, whose paschal Lamb in the person of

Jesus Christ has been killed, should put away all sin from our hearts and Christian assemblies. Thus, Paul's use of *leaven*, *paschal* and *festival* provides, in his mind, the link between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Eucharist.

According to Drane (1987:32), at the great annual Passover festival, the worshippers ate a fellowship meal dressed ready to go on a journey, just as the slaves in Egypt had done at the time of the exodus. In the same manner, the Eucharist is a fellowship meal, hence Paul speaks of celebrating the festival, not with the old yeast, but with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor.5:8). Berkhof (1984:644) observes that the New Testament ascribes to the Passover a typical significance and thus saw in it not only a reminder of the deliverance from Egypt, but also a sign and seal of the deliverance from the bondage of sin and of communion with God in the promised Messiah. In other words, just as the Jews see in the Passover, God's deliverance from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, so Christians see in the Eucharist the sacrificial and atoning death of Christ to purchase them from the bondage to sin and Satan.

It is therefore instructive to note that it is no mere coincidence that Jesus chose to inaugurate the Holy Communion at the Passover. Douglas & Tenny (1986: 1149) suggest that Paul's "paschal lamb" in 1 Cor.5:7 becomes

meaningful if the crucifixion of Jesus took place on the eve of the Passover as indicated in John 19:14, since this will mean that Jesus was on the cross at the very time the Passover lambs were being slaughtered. So Paul's analogy is thereby reinforced. Christ has become our paschal lamb for by His blood all sins are purged away. The Jewish Passover commemorates Israel's supernatural deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. In the same way, the Lord's Supper commemorated the death of God's only begotten Son to deliver humanity from satanic bondage on earth and in hell.

Furthermore, even though Stendahl (1984:183) would allege that the Eucharist can be celebrated with or without conscious attention to the Jewish Passover, he admits that the Sacred meal has something to do with Jesus as the Messianic figure. He says "its character of an eschatological meal is expressed and understood in relation to Jesus Christ". As such, he does not hesitate to describe the Eucharist as the "Messianic banquet". To him, this Messianic banquet is a banquet for the brotherhood. This observation is of importance to this study as it apparently supports the thesis that the Eucharist is a meal that facilitates Christian unity both in its contemporary ecclesiastical observance and eschatological expectation. So, it can be safely observed that the Eucharistic meal is taken in

remembrance of Christ's atoning death by which comes redemption and in expectation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God in its fullness. We conclude by saying that whereas the Passover is a memorial feast to keep afresh the miraculous deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, the Eucharist goes a step further to celebrate a new covenant with eternal redemption in mind.

It is necessary at this juncture to recall Luke's account to the effect that Jesus said the Passover also awaits a fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. "He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God'" (Lk.22:15-16). To Jesus, this Passover is the last to be celebrated with His disciples before He dies. Though the moment presents Jesus with the gloomy hours of death ahead, He did not fail to remind his followers of a glorious day ahead. Jesus' words, no doubt, convey His deep teaching and the enormous importance of what is about to take place. This meal is a turning point in which two expectations are woven together: to take the Passover meal with them for the last time in His earthly life and to celebrate it with them again in the heavenly Kingdom. Believers in this age are required to observe the Eucharist until He comes (1 Cor.11:26).

This verse in Luke reechoes our position that the Passover provides the necessary coincidence for the inauguration of the Eucharist. Significantly too, both the Passover and the Lord's Supper anticipate a future consummation. Yet their similarities are glaringly clear. Just as the people of Israel associated their deliverance from Egyptian slavery with eating the paschal meal, so also Christ's people are to tie Jesus' redemptive death to the celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXEGESIS OF PAULINE EUCHARISTIC TEXT

3.1 The Eucharist in Pauline Thought – An Overview

Though this chapter will focus on Paul's teaching on the Eucharist in 1Corinthians 11:17-34, this section will only give an overview of Paul's position on the Eucharist. Paul's letter to the Corinthian Church gives us a feel of his understanding of the Eucharist, especially first Corinthians. Right from 1Corinthians 5:6-8, he begins to intimate his readers with the peculiarity of the Eucharist. He sees in Christ the "Passover Lamb" whose death has inaugurated a "festival" to be celebrated without "the old yeast" of malice and evil "but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (v.8). The "old yeast" stands for vice and sin. Paul picks this figure from the Jewish practice of putting away leaven at the celebration of the Passover (Ex.12:15). The Greek word *κακίας*, translated "malice" here can also mean malignity, wickedness or evil, (Perchbacher, 1990:216). Paul, therefore, means, that as the Jews were required to put away leaven at the Passover, so also Christians should put away sin from their hearts at Holy Communion and always.

We can see then that in Pauline understanding, the Eucharist has replaced the Jewish Passover but the spirit of

purity behind the latter continues. All wickedness must be put away by those who had been saved by the sacrifice of their *παῖδα*, Jesus Christ. Later, he advances this thought in 1 Corinthians 11 by calling on members to be careful in observing it “unworthily”, (v.27).

Furthermore, in 1Corinthians 10:16-17, Paul also expands the inner meaning of the Eucharist as a Communion, *κοινωνία*. The *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* translated the *koinonia* as “partnership” or “participation”. To Paul, the Lord’s Table provides an occasion of fostering oneness; a commonness arising from the communion with the Lord and consequently with one another. He writes:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1Cor.10:16-17).

Note that Paul believes that the fact that “one bread” is used symbolizes the unity among believers that the Eucharist is intended to foster. The logical implication of Paul’s *koinonia*-concept of the Eucharist is that, when, by precept or practice, the Church uses it as a divisive factor, an error has set in. As Weil (2007:356) remarks, true fellowship is the outcome of Christian love. To him, fellowship is also a sharing of our lives

with others. Therefore, where there is true fellowship, unity results. “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor.10:17).

Nwaoru (2008:87) shares this understanding when he says that already Christians are conferred the grace of unity and charity by virtue of the Sacrament they receive. According to him, “the celebration of the Eucharist presupposes such unity; for it is the sacrament of unity par excellence”. He also observes that even though this unity has not been easily achievable right from the beginning of the Church, the Eucharist in view of its unifying power, has always meant bringing persons together, overcoming barriers and leading to a new unity in the Lord. Nwaoru (2008:88) sums up: “Therefore, our Eucharistic celebration and worship must synchronize with and reflect the great values of this sacrament”.

No wonder, Paul has to reprimand the Corinthian Church:

Now in the following instruction I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For to begin with, when you come together as a Church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent, I believe it (1 Cor.11:17-18).

Paul senses a real danger here, which is that, if the rite stopped being taken together by Christians, the unity of the Church is threatened. Meanwhile, he feels the Eucharist is a mutually participatory meal. But now he perceives a breakdown of the

community: indeed, segregation between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. Such discriminative tendency arising from a meal of unity is awkward to Paul. Frowning at this he says:

When you come together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ...Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! (1 Cor.11:20, 21, 22).

Furthermore, Paul located in the Eucharist an *anamnesis*, a memorial, a remembrance. Both in the bread-word and the cup-word Paul reflects this: “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me” and, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you do drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor.11:24-25). Only Luke, among the Gospel writers, has this memorial connotation in the Eucharist. So in Lukan and Pauline traditions, the Lord's Supper commemorated the death of Jesus Christ. To him the inner meaning of the Eucharist is identification with Jesus in his death; an atoning and sacrificial death. The breaking of bread recalls the broken body of Jesus, while the wine symbolizes his blood and a life offered to God for the redemption of humanity, for life is in the blood (Gen.9:4; Lev.17:11). The reference to the covenant recalls Judaism in Paul's thinking, since throughout the history of God's dealing with Israel, a covenant with God was

always ratified by the offering of a sacrifice. So, Jesus gave his life as the sacrifice to inaugurate the new covenant which brings into existence the new people of God, the Church.

Another area in which we can appreciate Paul's thought on the Eucharist is that he promotes the significance of it by anchoring it on the *evangelical* relevance of Christ's death. In view of the redeeming purpose of His death, the Eucharistic meal has the intent and the objective of proclaiming "his death until he comes" (1 Cor.11:26). The phrase "until he comes" also gives the hope or creates the awareness in the celebrants of Christ's *parousia*. Just as Christ gives the hope of a Messianic fellowship in the kingdom of God, Paul's teaching also reminds believers that Christ will return. Therefore, the Eucharist enables communicants to keep the hope of Christ's return perpetually alive. Here then, Paul leads us to locate the *eschatological* import of the Eucharist as well. "Each of us proclaims the Lord's death and confesses that we belong to Him whenever we break the bread and drink from the cup" and also have at the back of our mind His imminent return (Harlow, 1982:77). It is a meal which, while celebrated now points toward the future. This eschatological aspect of the Eucharist is attested to in all the accounts of its institution.

In summary, Paul's Eucharist tradition stresses:

1. the sacredness of the rite as it is to be observed with sincerity, truth and worthily, hence self-examination is necessary. There is the need to approach the Table with reverence and self-examination;
2. the significance of the Eucharist in God's redeeming purpose as it is a proclamation of His death until He comes;
3. the communion/fellowship which discovers therein the unity of Christians as they share in one loaf as one body of Christ;
4. the eschatological overtone of the sacrament of the Eucharist since it causes believers to look forward to Christ's advent in glory;
5. the memorial significance of it: "Do this in remembrance of me".

3.2 The Man Paul

Apostle Paul, probably born in the first decade of the Christian era (Bruce, 1989:37), is an outstanding character in the New Testament history and theology. He can rightly be described as a prominent author, missionary, church founder and teacher who gives Christianity its basic doctrines. Akangbe

(2008:1) citing Carson, et al (1992) says that in the early church's history and on the pages of the New Testament, Paul towers so much prominently that he has been regarded as the second founder of Christianity rather than just its chief exponent and interpreter. There are two basic canonical sources that provide us information on the person and works of Paul: the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul himself.

Luke quoted Paul twice as having claimed to be born in Tarsus: "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city..." Acts 21:39; and in Acts 23:3 where he says, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia..." From these verses we learn about Paul's place of birth as well as his tribe. Earlier, Luke also reports that the Lord introduced Paul to Ananias as "a man of Tarsus named Saul" (Acts 9:10-11). It was the same city he was taken to when persecution was mounting against him at Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:30) and from there Barnabas later fetched him and brought him to Antioch, where the duo were commissioned to the missionary work (Acts 11:25; 13:1-3). Paul equally claims Tarsus is a great city. He underscores the importance of this city because it is the capital of Cilicia. According to Bruce (1989:33), "part of Western Cilicia became a Roman Province in 102 B.C., and after Pompey's brilliant victory over the pirates in 67 B.C., the whole of Cilicia

was reduced to provincial status, with Tarsus as its capital". Drane (1986:247) reports that Tarsus was a university town and centre of government and trade, hence Paul's pride of it. Bruce (1989:33) however, noted that for the whole of Paul's life time, the area of Cilicia in which his native city stood was part of the united province of Syria-Celicia (cf. Gal. 1:21).

Paul, though a strict and pure Jew, also claims Roman Citizenship. On two occasions (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29) he uses this status in his favour against his opponents. In fact, in the latter case, and in contradiction to the Tribune's assertion that his own Roman citizenship cost him a large sum of money, Paul says, "But I was born a citizen". This implies that "Paul's parents were good Jews, as well as being Roman citizens", (Drane, 1986:247). If Paul was born a Roman citizen, it then means his father must have been a Roman citizen before him.

But the question is: how did a Jewish family of Tarsus acquire this status? The answer to this question is not readily available. Bruce (1989:37) presumes that Paul's father, and even his grandfather, had rendered some outstanding service to the Roman cause. According to him, Roman citizen was originally confined to freeborn natives of the city of Rome, but as Roman control of Italy and the Mediterranean lands extended, the citizenship was conferred on a number of other people who

were not Roman by birth, including certain selected provincials. The best we can say is that Paul's father or grandfather might have gained this status by the latter provision, and if so, it becomes natural for Paul to be a Roman citizen. He was born into a family which possessed this citizenship.

Pertaining to Paul's physical appearance, we know little or nothing. Though he talks of a "thorn in my flesh" (II Cor. 12:7-9), no one knows for sure what this means, although some guess it could be eye ailment in view of his statement to the Galatians that they could have "torn out" their eyes and given to him, (Gal. 4:12-15). But Blair (1994:113) cites an extra-canonical source which describes Paul as "a man of little stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked".

We do not have much information about the parents and size of Paul's family, but Acts 23:16 indicates he has a sister whose son leaked the plot of some men to kill Paul. Also, Acts 23:6 suggests that his parents belonged to the Pharisees class. Pauline Jewish origin is unequivocal. He writes in Philippians 3:4-6:

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, A Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Also, in Romans 11:1, he affirms his Jewishness thus: “I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin”.

It is obvious from the above passages that Paul leaves his readers in no doubt that he is “a Hebrew of Hebrews”. This means that he is born, reared and taught within Hebrew parenthood. That is, neither of his parents were Proselyte Jews. He is not of a mixed blood. Or as Akangbe (2008:5,19) puts it, “he is a Jew to the core...” and “there is no admixture of blood running through his veins”. The credentials to substantiate his Jewishness are circumcision in strict compliance to the provision of the Law, ability to trace his ancestral lineage, academic excellence in Mosaic law, and his religious zeal to defend his fathers’ faith. Luke also reports that Paul’s flawless oral Hebrew communication baffled his audience (Acts 21:40; 22:2). Paul also re-echoed his own religious zeal thus: “I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my

ancestors” (Gal. 1:14). He sees the entire Israelite race as “my own people, my kindred according to the flesh”, (Rom. 9:3).

One other thing we know of Paul is that he is well educated. This ought to be so because “no Pharisee parent could afford to let his son lag behind in terms of legal education” (Akange, 2008:5). Paul received the best kind of education every Jewish parent could give his child. Paul testifies to his good education in Jerusalem thus: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today” (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was both a leading Pharisee and highly reputable scholar of the law in Jerusalem in Paul’s days (Akangbe, 2008:6). Festus, being amazed of Paul’s eloquence at his defence exclaimed, “Too much learning is driving you insane!” (Acts 26:24). No doubt, Jerusalem strongly influenced Paul’s educational preparation.

Paul’s “conversion” and call are interwoven. Luke introduces Paul (then Saul) to us first in Acts 7:58 as a young man at whose feet the killers of Stephen laid their coats. This greatly suggests that Paul supports what is being done to Stephen. We further learn of him as a great persecutor of the Church: “But Saul was ravaging the Church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed

them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Thus, he was “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...” (9:1). It was in fulfillment of this misdirected religious zeal that Paul got permission from the high priest to extend this havoc to Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2).

However, on the road to Damascus a dramatic turn of event occurred which changed Paul’s goal for life. This sudden, unusual and dramatic experience marks both Paul’s conversion and a call to the missionary work. To Paul, even though his apostolic call experience and time differ from those of the Twelve, his commission is just as valid and authentic as their own (I Cor. 12:11,12). He has equally seen the Lord (I Cor. 15:8) and His grace upon him proves this. Thus, he attests, “For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them...” (I Cor. 15:9-10; cf. II Cor. 11:5-6). The man who “was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence” (I Tim. 1:13), has now, by God’s mercy and grace, been “appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher” of the gospel (II Tim. 1:11). It is in the zeal and commitment with which Paul fulfilled his commission that his contribution to the expansion and theology

of Christianity is highly appreciated. His personal sacrifice for the success of the ministry is unparalleled (see Acts 20:24; 33 - 35; I Cor. 9:1 - 23; II Thess. 3:6-8).

The man, Paul, is by trade, a tent-maker (Acts 18:3), and he supported himself and others by this trade while in ministry (Acts 20:34). His education as well as his occupation are no deterrents to fulfilling his ministry. Rather, they are great assets that facilitated the work of evangelization. Half of the NT books came from his hand. Blair (1994:119) opines that Paul receives more attention as compared to his fellow workers not only because he was an outstanding leader but also because he was a letter-writer.

In summary then, Paul is a man of many credentials: apostle, teacher, writer, missionary, church leader and an evangelist per excellence. Bruce (1989:15) believes that he cannot think of any other writer, ancient or modern, whose study is so richly rewarding as Paul's. He feels this is so because of

The several aspects of his many-faceted character: the attractive warmth of his personality, his intellectual stature, the exhilarating release effected by his gospel of redeeming grace, the dynamism with which he propagated that gospel throughout the world, devoting himself single-mindedly to fulfilling the commission entrusted to him on the Damascus road...labouring more abundantly than all his fellow apostles.

Blair (1994:113) is of the opinion that five major influences helped shape the Paul we meet in the New Testament. These are: “Pharisaic Judaism, Hellenism, the revelation of Jesus Christ, Christian teaching and tradition, and his experience as missionary and apostle”. Thus, “of all the New Testament authors, Paul is the one who has stamped his own personality most unmistakably on his writings” (Bruce, 1989:15).

Students of Paul and his writings missed one important thing about his life: the facts of his death. It is very unfortunate that we do not really have direct information regarding the death of Paul. Acts ends abruptly with Paul in prison without even telling us the outcome of his case. The Pastorals only indicate how Paul anticipates his death (II Tim 4:6-8). However, tradition has it that Paul was martyred in Rome during the Neronian Persecution against the Christians (Blair, 1994:120). Nevertheless, his life, works and writings remain invaluable assets to the Christian faith.

3.3 Paul’s Contact with Corinth

The record of Paul’s first contact with the city of Corinth is preserved in Acts 18:1-7. This happened during his second missionary Journey. The city of Corinth is said to be an ancient Greek city that had been rebuilt as a Roman colony in 46BC

(Drane, 1986:302). It was a prosperous trade centre. According to McCain (1996:200), Corinth was about 64 kilometres west of Athens and was the capital of the province of Achaia with the population of 500,000 people. Corinth, though a rich city because of its commercial advantage, had a name for sexual immorality to the extent that the name “Corinthian” became synonymous to sexual immorality (McCain, ditto).

The city is also religiously polytheistic. It is reported by McCain (ditto) that on the highest hill of the city stood the temple of the Greek goddess *Aphrodite*, the goddess of love whose worshippers practiced religious prostitution.

It was this city Paul visited with the gospel of salvation. Luke reports in Acts 18:11 that Paul stayed in this city for one and a half years. It was there the couple, Aquila and Priscilla, met him and worked together with him as co-tentmakers. Paul’s first approach was to preach to the Jews using their synagogue, but when they would not accept him, he dramatically shook off his clothes saying “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6). Using Titus Justus’ house as his base of operations, he made converts and eventually planted the Corinthian Church (Acts 18:7-8). Upon divine assurance, Paul stayed labouring in the city for 18 months (Acts 18:9-11). In spite of the concerted effort

of the Jews to have Gallio condemned him of some crime, Paul was freed and eventually left the city unharmed (Acts 18:12-18). The labour, therefore, makes Paul the pioneer Apostle-missionary to the Corinthian Church.

In the course of time, the Corinthian Church, in spite of its spiritual gifts, (1:4-7) became buffeted with problems. Harlow (1982:9) labeled it “the imperfect church”. While Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (cf. I Cor. 16:5-9), he wrote the canonical I Corinthians about A.D 55, addressing a lot of problems in the Church: divisions (chs.1-3), sexual immorality (ch.5), Lawsuits (6:1-8), marriage (ch.7), meat offered to idols (ch.8,10), women conduct in public worship (ch.11:2-16), abuse of the Lord’s Supper (ch.11:17-34), confusion over speaking in tongues (ch.12-13) and confusion on the nature of resurrection (ch.15). In view of these diverse problems upsetting the Church of Corinth, Paul sees it as his fatherly responsibility to offer solutions to these problems. Paul gets to know of these problems partly by report from others (1:11) and partly by questions raised by Corinthian Christians themselves in writing (7:1; 8:1; 12:1).

3.4 The Context of Pauline Eucharistic Teaching

As has earlier been indicated, Paul wrote first Corinthians majorly to correct the ills going on in the Church there. In chapter 10, he concludes his teaching on “food sacrificed to idols” which he actually began in chapter 8:1-13. This matter borders mainly on Christian testimony and he warns against causing a brother to sin because of what one eats. To him, what matters most is the salvation of others and not the selfish satisfaction of one’s self. He insists that individual liberty or freedom should not be allowed to serve as a “stumbling block” to the weak in faith (8:8,13). He concludes by saying: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God” (10:31-32).

In chapter 11 of I Corinthians, Paul deals with the subject matter of public worship, precisely the right attitude or conduct in public worship. In fact, from chapter 11 to 14, Paul deals, one after the other, with issues relating to public worship: veiling of women (11:2-16), the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34) and exercise of spiritual gifts (chs.12–14). Immediately preceding the teaching on the Eucharist is that of veiling of women in public worship (11:2-16). Paul’s position here is that women should wear head covering in public worship. His reasoning is not based on

subjection on the ground of inequality or inferiority but on the natural order of creation and in relation to Christ and God. It is not our concern here to join the debate on how to interpret Paul in the light of western and African cultures, but suffice it to say here that Paul reminds us that God is a God of order, therefore, Christian men and women should conduct themselves in respectful, decent and orderly manner in worship. Their equality in redemptive benefits and mutual interdependence does not obliterate their gender distinction. It is also important and very much in order, that in public worship a woman be recognized as a woman and a man as a man.

3.5 The Exegesis of Paul's Eucharistic Text : 1Cor.11:17-34

Having addressed the veiling of women in public worship, Paul now turns to handle the abuse of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthian Church. Before we proceed, it is instructive to note how Paul brings the subject matter of the Eucharist into the context of public worship. This underscores the point that the early Church viewed the Holy Communion as central to the worship life of the Church. It is important to reproduce our chosen text as follows in the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Holy Bible:

GREEK	ENGLISH (NRSV)
1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Tou/to de. paragge, llwn ouvk evpainw/ o[ti ouvk eivj to. krei/sson avlla. eivj to. h-sson sune, rcesqeÅ	17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.
18 prw/ton me.n ga.r sunercome, nwn u`mw/n evn evkklhsi, a avkou, w	18 For, to begin with, when you come together as church, I hear there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.
sci, smata evn u`mi/n u`pa, rcein kai. me, roj ti pisteu, wÅ	19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine.
19 dei/ ga.r kai. ai`re, sei j evn u`mi/n ei=nai(i[na Îkai. Ð oi` do, kimoi faneroi.	20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper.
ge, nwntai evn u`mi/nÅ</p> <p>20 Sunercome, nwn ou=n u`mw/n evpi. to. auvto. ouvk e;stin kuriako.n dei/pnon fagei/n\	21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk.
21 e[kastoj ga.r to. i;dion dei/pnon prolamba, nei evn tw/ fagei/n(kai. o]j me.n peina/ o]j de. mequ, eiÅ	22 What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!
22 mh. ga.r oivki, aj ouvk e;cete eivj to. evsqi, ein kai. pi, neinÈ h' th/j evkklhsi, aj tou/ qeou/ katafronei/te(kai.	23 For I receive from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread,
kataiscu, nete tou. j mh. e;contajÈ ti, ei;pw u`mi/nÈ evpaine, sw u`ma/jÈ evn tou, tw ouvk evpainw/Å	24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me".

23 VEGw. ga.r pare,labon avpo. tou/ kuri,ou(o] kai. pare,dwka u`mi/n( o[ti o` ku,rioj VIhsou/j evn th/ nukti. h- paredi,deto e;laben a;rton 24 kai. euvcaristh,saj e;klasen kai. ei=pen\ tou/to, mou, evstin to. sw/ma to. u`pe.r u`mw/n\ tou/to poiei/te eivj th.n evmh.n avna,mnhsinÅ 25 w`sau,twj kai. to. poth,rion meta. to. deipnh/sai le,gwn\ tou/to to. poth,rion h` kainh. diaqh,kh evsti.n evn tw/ evmw/ ai[mati\ tou/to poiei/te(o`sa,kij eva.n pi,nhte(eivj th.n evmh.n avna,mnhsinÅ	25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me". 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we
26 o`sa,kij ga.r eva.n evsqi,hte to.n a;rton tou/ton kai. to. poth,rion pi,nhte(to.n qa,naton tou/ kuri,ou katagge,llete a;cri ou-e;lqh Å	would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
27 {Wste o]j a'n evsqi,h to.n a;rton h' pi,nh to. poth,rion tou/ kuri,ou avnaxi,wj(e;nocoj e;stai tou/ sw,matoj kai. tou/ ai[matoj tou/ kuri,ouÅ	33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

28 dokimaze,tw de. a;nqrwpoj e`auto.n kai. ou[twj evk tou/ a;rtou evsqie,tw kai. evk tou/ pothri,ou pine,tw\</p> <p>29 o` ga.r evsqi,wn kai. pi,nwn kri,ma e`autw/  evsqi,ei kai. pi,nei mh. diakri,nwn to. sw/maÅ</p> <p>30 dia. tou/to evn u`mi/n polloi. avsqenei/j kai. a;rrwstoi kai. koimw/ntai i`kanoi,Å</p> <p>31 eiv de. e`autou.j diekri,nomen(ouvk a'n evkrino,meqa\ 32 krino,menoi de. u`po. Îtou/Ð kuri,ou paideuo,meqa( i[na mh. su.n tw/  ko,smw  katakriqw/menÅ   33 {Wste( avdelfoi, mou( sunerco,menoi eivj to. fagei/n avllh,louj evkde,cesqeÅ   34 ei; tij peina/ ( evn oi;kw  evsqie,tw( i[na mh. eivj kri,ma sune,rchsqeÅ ta. de. loipa. w`j a'n e;lqw diata,xomaiÅ	
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For our exegetical purpose, the above passage shall be subdivided as follows:

1. The Abuse of the Eucharist, vs 17-22;

2. The Eucharist in correct perspective, vs. 23 – 26; and
3. The right spirit of the Eucharist, vs. 27-34.

3.5.1 The Abuse of the Eucharist, vs. 17 – 22.

This section gives us a glimpse of what the celebration of the Eucharist has degenerated into in the Corinthian church. The situation is so terrible that Paul has no words of praise for them: “Now in the following instructions I do not commend you” (v. 17a). This stands in sharp contrast to verse 2 where he commends them for remembering and maintaining the “traditions” just as he handed over to them. But in this matter of observance of the Eucharist, they have derailed and therefore not worthy of praise but of blame. The issue has to do with their “coming together” which is “not for the better but for the worse” (v 17). Apparently, coming together here suggests assembling for public worship which is dotted by some irregularities. Under that situation, he cannot praise a gathering whose intent runs counter to Christian principles. As Barrett (1987:261) puts it, their “public gathering results in evil rather than good”. In other words, their gathering does not promote the over-all good of the Christian community in Corinth.

Paul goes on in verse 18 to show why their manner of assembly is not praise worthy. “For, to begin with, when you

come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you". The Phrase, "to begin with", is the NRSV's translation is *Protopon* which also can be rendered "firstly". Though Paul really does not continue the count, v. 34 implies there are other issues demanding attention, though not as urgent as the matter of "divisions" he is addressing now. The Greek word, *σχίσματα* (*Schismata*) means divisions in the sense of factions. Paul has earlier referred to this divisive tendencies in 1: 10 and chapter 3. But the division here is more of class distinction on social grounds than the hero worship of chapter 3 which is most likely on theological grounds. The assembly falls short of the mark because it is being rent apart by factions.

Note that Paul says "I hear..." it is not likely that the Corinthian Christians specifically wrote to Paul as in other matters (cf. 7:1; 8:1; 12:1). Paul's source of information could be "the Chloe's people (1:11) or some recent visitors to Paul from Corinth (16:17). Paul seems to express reservation about this information: "to some extent I believe it" (V. 18). On one hand, he cannot believe it because he didn't expect it, but on the other hand, he believes it because his informants are credible people. Fee (1987:537) says by "To some extent, I believe it", Paul means that he really does believe it but also acknowledges that his

informants are scarcely disinterested observers. Paul's comments in verse 10 present some surprises to the reader as he seems to endorse "factions" as a necessary evil among Christians. He says, "Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine" (v. 19). The Greek word here is *heresis* from which we have the English word, heresies. But the fact that Paul uses them interchangeably here suggests that not "sect" in the sense of error in teaching is in view here. Schism, split, discord or alienation is what Paul has in mind here.

But what does Paul mean by consenting that it is inevitable? How can Paul who argued so strongly against divisions (see 1:10-17; 3:1-23) now appears to affirm its necessity?

Fee (1987: 537) believes Paul may have added this theological exception as a further justification for his believing in them. In Paul's thinking, although factions are unedifying, they help to distinguish the genuine from the fake. By it those who behave in a truly Christian manner may stand out from those who do not. Readers of Paul are, however, cautioned against using this verse to endorse divisions among Christians. For, as Barrett (1987:262) observes, "divisions may be inevitable, but it is not edifying, or to the credit of the Church in which it takes

place". It is only providence who uses it "so that those who act worthy of God's approval might be evident" (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994:639). Divisions bring to light those who have God's approval, that is, "those who passed the test" (Carson, et al (1994:1179).

The second reason why Paul has no words of praise for the Corinthian church is that their conduct at the celebration of the Eucharist is not acceptable. He writes: "When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper" (v. 20). The phrase "when you come together" reechoes verses 17 and 18 where same phrase has been used by Paul. We come across the same phrase again in verse 33. So, this repetition stresses the church context of the passage. It is not political or social gathering that is in focus. The word "church" is Greek, *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklesia*). According to Barrett (1987:261), in non-biblical Greek, *ekklesia* "denotes the citizen body of a town assembled for deliberative or executive purpose" but in the New Testament Greek, however, it carries the idea of "God's people as assembled". In other word, the assembly of God's people. This justifies Paul's qualification when he says, "when you come together as a church" in v. 18.

Paul's real concern is that even though they come together as an assembly of God, what they gather for is not what they really do. "It is not really to eat the Lord's Supper", he says. The Lord's Supper, *κυριακου δειπνου*, seems to have come to be the New Testament designation for this meal, apart from "Breaking of Bread" accustomed to by the early Christians. Paul here infers that the disorders existing among them defeats the true purpose of the Eucharist which is mutual fellowship to strengthen their bond of unity. What they do, no longer expresses the unity it intends to portray. Their attitude undermines the spiritual meaning and value of the "Lord's Supper". Since what they do is not consistent with the accepted practice, it is not the "Lord's Supper" they eat. But it ought to be the Lord's Supper because He instituted it for His own remembrance. *Kuriakon* (also *kyriakon*), "pertaining to the Lord", stresses the fact that the meal belongs to the Lord; it is consecrated by the Lord and for the Lord; meaning it is all in honour of Him, it is in memory of the Lord, under the authority of the Lord. If it is so, to treat it otherwise is an abnormality. It is uniquely his own.

The next verse (21) clearly spells out why Paul discredits the Corinthians' kind of the Lord's Supper: "For when the time

comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (v. 21). This is the crux of the matter: a gross abuse of the Eucharist. There is a lot in this verse that speaks of the manner and character of the Holy Communion in Corinth. Chafin (1985:136) has observed that since the Holy Communion in the Church today is usually in the context of a worship service in the sanctuary, it is hard for us to visualise the circumstance to which Paul was addressing himself. He further gives us the following information on this matter:

The early church had developed a very lovely tradition in connection with the observance of the Lord’s Supper. They had a meal that was called a Love Feast to which each member brought what he or she was able to share. The resources were then pooled, and the whole church sat down to a common meal which provided a beautiful picture of the *oneness* they shared in Christ. It was a way of creating and developing real *Christian fellowship* in the Church. Then, in connection with the meal, the Lord’s Supper was celebrated. This has certain naturalness to it since Christ had instituted the practice at the close of the Jewish Passover meal.

In the same vein, Morris (1983:158) reports that at Corinth the Holy Communion was a meal to which each of the participants brought food. He further says, “For a time there was in the early church in association with the Holy Communion a meal called the *agape* or love-feast (2Pet. 2:13; Jude 12). But

at Corinth what took place was a travesty of love". The import of the foregoing citations is to elucidate the practice of the Eucharist in the Church of Corinth. A common meal precedes the Eucharist; the former setting the stage for the latter. But the spirit of the love feast becomes violated as time went on as each put his provisions in front of him and proceeded to consume it. So, we get a picture of "undignified scramble" (Morris, 1983:158) and impatience, thus the rich went home drunk and the poor hungry. This draws a clear line of demarcation between the drunken rich (usually the masters) and the hungry poor (usually found among the slaves). Wealth and position become instruments of divisions in the Church and thereby does not create a loving, united atmosphere for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is on this unhealthy situation that Paul bluntly says, "in this matter I do not commend you" (v. 22).

To press this matter home, Paul reels out series of rhetorical questions: 'what! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you?' (V.22). As Wilson (1978:161) observes, the loveless abuse of the love feast in Corinth is a "blatant denial of the fellowship which the common meal is intended to express, for when each selfishly ate his own supper, it becomes morally

impossible to eat the Lord's Supper. Home is a place to satisfy one's hunger and thirst not the Church. To allow social status or appetite to divide the Church is a great mockery (contempt) of the unity of the Body of Christ. Paul's rhetorical questions are meant to make the Corinthian Christians realize their guilt for this disgraceful conduct. According to Carson, et al (1994:1179), the first (question) is whether those who eat and drink so much have no houses to feast; the second is whether they despise the Church and the third is whether their intention to humiliate (shame) the "have-nots".

In concluding this section we need to remark that we have carefully followed Paul to see how the Corinthians do not deserve his praise (v. 17, 22) on how they observe the Eucharist. Essentially, he spots factions/divisions in the manner the rite is handled. The love feast is monopolized; they eat their "own supper" not "the Lord's Supper". Some had more than enough while others were deprived. There is clear distinction between the rich and the poor as there is no sharing of food as the custom of *agape* demands. The meal meant for distribution is kept for personal consumption.

Impatience and gluttony overshadowed love and unity. Even among other religions, the practice of common feasting is known and respected. For Baker and Kehlenberger (1994:639)

state that the Christian common meal (agape feast) apparently followed the pattern of public sacred feasting among the Jews and Greeks in which the food was brought together for all to share, with the rich bringing more and the poor less. But the picture we get among the Corinthian Christians is that the food is distributed, if at all, inequitably as the rich took the bigger share and become gluttons, while the poor remained hungry and humiliated. And so, Paul cannot praise them because their corporate worship and common meal is marred by divisions, discrimination and class distinction. He cannot praise actions which ruin Christian life and witness.

In fact, the core holy meal (Eucharist) has been abandoned for a social meal. The disorders existing among them defeat the true purpose of the Holy Communion. It is no longer expressing the unity it intends to show. Modern Christians who use the Eucharist as occasion to discriminate against other Christians simply because the latter are not from their Church denomination must not lose sight of Paul's position (no commendation) toward the Corinthians. Will Christ approve of most of our Eucharistic celebrations today? Even within Nigerian cultures, eating meal with other people is a sign of friendship and fellowship. The Church that worships and serves the same Lord stands the chance to do more. The purpose of the

Lord's Supper is not to eat to one's fill but to remember and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes, and also to showcase Christian unity in Christ. Paul is mainly concerned with Christians being truly together at the common table in love and unity. Modern Church leaders must take clue from Paul.

3.5.2 Correcting the Abuse (ICor. 11:23-26)

In view of the deplorable degree of personal greed and humiliation exemplified by the Corinthian Christians and to check the evil and bring them to the proper mode of observation, Paul reminds them of the simplicity and solemnity of Jesus' action for the institution of the Eucharist. In order to put things in the correct perspective, Paul recounts the institution of the Eucharist to remind the Corinthian Christians of the circumstance and purpose of its establishment. He feels he needs to recall the words and acts of Jesus on that solemn occasion as embedded in the passion narratives. As has earlier been noted, we have here the first written account of the origin of the Lord's Supper, preceding in time, the writing of the Gospels several years later (Chafin, 1985:139). Paul feels compelled to remind the Corinthians of the significance of the Eucharist by repeating the actual words of institution. According to Carson, et al (1994:1179), Paul does this in order to contrast Jesus'

selfless giving of his life on their behalf with their self-centred actions which create divisiveness in His Body, the Church.

Paul begins by this claim: “For I receive from the Lord what I also handed on to you....” (v.23). The question is how did Paul “receive” this? Was it by revelation or oral transmission? *Barker & Kohlenberger* (1994:369) state that Paul most likely means he received the Lord’s word of institution of the Supper through its being passed on by others, just as he then passed them on to the Corinthians, i.e. through a process of repetition. This agrees with the view earlier expressed by Guthrie (1979:1066) that “received” and “delivered” (*Paralambano* and *Paradidomi*) “are terms often applied to oral Christian teaching (I Cor.11: 2; 15:3)”. In a similar vein, *Bruce* (1986:1372) observes that the word *Paralambano* and *Paradidomi* “are not words used for receiving and communicating a direct revelation but for transmission in a chain from one to another”. Though *Morris* (1983:159) would agree that “received” and “delivered” are almost technical terms for receiving and passing on the Christian traditions, he argues that the emphatic ego (I) at the beginning of the verse stands against this position. He contends that there seems no reason why Paul should say, “I received of the Lord,” if he means, “I received from other men a tradition deriving ultimately from the Lord”. According to *Morris*, there are several references to

revelations made directly to Paul (Acts 18: 9; 22: 18; 23: 11; 27: 23-25; Gal. 1: 12; 2: 2; 2Cor. 12: 7), and so it seems this is another such case. Morris' conclusion is not readily acceptable because the issue at stake concerns event rooted in the life history of Jesus. And as Barrett (1987:265) observes, it is certain that the account of what Jesus had said and done were passed from one to another in the primitive Church and it is from such accounts that the Gospels grew. It is most likely that the Church had started observing the Eucharist before Paul got converted. He therefore met a tradition which he received and passed on accordingly to the Corinthians. He then means what he received had indeed come from the Lord "in the sense that Jesus himself is the ultimate source of the tradition" (Fee, 1957:548). The facts of its institution in the Upper Room by Jesus were readily available to Paul through oral tradition. What they know about the Lord's Supper has been properly communicated to them; so, they have no excuse. Also, it reminds them that this rite carries divine authority. It can therefore be said that Paul means he had received the account as a part of the Church's tradition and had passed it along to them faithfully. But the Corinthians' misunderstanding calls for his reminding them afresh since theirs does not reflect the original intention.

It is very instructive to note Paul's points of reminder here. It is first rooted in history: "the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took a loaf of bread" (v. 23). Secondly, it was Jesus Himself who performed the acts of institution. So, it is his own initiative; it is **His** Supper. The Eucharist is meant to symbolically recount the words and actions of the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed. The occasion for Jesus was a time of sadness and pity more so as his close associate perfected the betrayal. This understanding ought to have emphasized to the Corinthians the solemnity of the circumstance leading to the institutions of the holy meal.

Verse 24 reads: "and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said," This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me". Note that Paul uses *ευχαριστησας* (having given thanks), while Matthew and Mark use "bless", though they have "giving thanks" in the cup-word. Luke agrees with Paul in using "giving thanks". In the Jewish thought, there is no significant difference between "giving thanks" for a meal or "blessing" a meal. Both suggest a prayer of thanks which normally begins with "Blessed art thou, o Lord" (Morris, 1983: 160). It is said that the ordinary Jewish meal began with the head of the house giving the traditional blessing over bread,

breaking it, and giving it to those at table with him (Fee, 1987: 549-550). Here Jesus plays that role as He inaugurates the Eucharist. Jesus' action in "breaking" the bread symbolically look forward to His body about to be "broken" on the cross as the ultimate/supreme sacrifice for the world's sins.

In Jesus' mind, he identifies the bread with His body: "This is my body that is for you" (v.24). Though Paul does not use the phrase "Take, eat", it is implied by "do this" in the next phrase. To Jesus, "this is my body" simply can be understood as "This means my body". In other words, "this loaf of bread I am giving you stands in the representative capacity of my body", Jesus seems to say. In our understanding, to equate this with his real body as in the doctrines of "transubstantiation" and "consubstantiation" is not the intention of Jesus nor the understanding of the disciples. We should see the identification of the bread with the body as a "Semitic imagery" by which Jesus means it signifies or represents his body which is about to be given over in death. Fee's observation is noteworthy here. He says, "it lies quite beyond both Jesus' intent and the framework within which he and the disciples lived to imagine that some actual change took place, or was intended to take place, in the bread itself (Fee, 1987:550). We need to be satisfied with the understanding that Jesus is reinterpreting the Pascal Lamb to be

Himself in the light of the new rite He is establishing for Christians as a perpetual ordinance in His memorial and for fellowship of His followers.

Thus, Jesus does not hesitate to say: “Do this in remembrance of me” (v.24). The *anamnesis* import of the Eucharist is therefore obvious. It is a meal to aid the recalling and the bearing in mind of Jesus. That the Eucharist is first a memorial, commemorative and remembrance meal is undeniable. But what exactly does Jesus want Christians to remember about Him when they observe the Eucharist? At the surface and bearing in mind the occasion at which the Lord’s Supper was inaugurated, our obvious answer is that by breaking and receiving the bread, we recall Christ’s substitutionary death for us. The Passover meal that preceded the Lord’s Supper looked back in Israel history to the event by which God delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. In like manner, the Lord’s Supper at the time of its inauguration, looked forward to an event of deliverance for all mankind to be accomplished through Christ’s death on the cross. Christ, by His death, has affected a deliverance similar to the one the Passover commemorated. So, at the Eucharist, Christians, first and foremost, recalls the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for their salvation. However, this “remembrance” goes beyond His death to

everything about Himself – his love, life, teachings, purpose and mission into the world, his resurrection and the hope it brings to Christians, and the unity He expects His followers to exhibit in the world.

Jesus also reinterprets the cup to be “the new covenant in my blood” (v.25). They were also to drink the cup in remembrance of the new covenant which Jesus ratified by His blood (Eph. 2:13). At the institution of the Eucharist Jesus unequivocally announces that He enters into a new relationship with those for whom He is to die on the cross. So, the Eucharist celebrates the new covenant in the blood of Christ. We must see this covenant as a unilateral disposition of God in favour of man rather than a mutual agreement between two equal parties. It can be seen here that Jesus makes the Mosaic covenant “old” in view of its repeated sacrifices and makes His own death the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of a “new covenant” (Jer. 31:31-34). The first covenant became ‘old’ because it rested on the repeated offerings which could not take away sins, whereas the second covenant remains ‘new’ because its gracious provisions have been forever secured by Christ’s final atonement for the sins of His people (Heb.9:18-, 10:14). The Holy Communion, therefore, brings into the minds of Christians the price once-for-all paid by Christ to ransom them from their

slavery to sin. Crudem (1994:989) puts it this way: “when the bread is broken it symbolizes the breaking of Christ’s body, and when the cup is poured out it symbolizes the pouring out of Christ’s blood for us”.

However, the sacrament of the Eucharist does not only recall what was achieved by Christ’s death, but also looks forward to His return in glory. We see this in Paul’s own exposition of the significance of the Lord’s Table: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (v.26). Paul now moves from the solemnity of the occasion to the responsibility connected to the ordinance. Having shown the Corinthian Church what Jesus has said and done, Paul now offers additional reason for repeating the tradition. Since the bread and the cup of this meal together signify the death of the Lord, its perpetual observance is a means of proclaiming Christ’s death. The Greek, *καταγγελλετε* (you proclaim), is in the present simple, implying a habitual action. The Communion ought to create a vivid impression on the minds of Christians the death of Christ. Partaking in the Eucharist is a continual proclamation of the Lord’s death, not as though Christians are mourning, but a declaration of a living hope until He returns.

We need to observe too that, though Jesus does not say exactly how often the Communion is to be observed or the time of the day, the phrase, “as often as you drink it”, suggests periodic observance; and this continues until He comes. In other words, frequent observation is implied. The modern Church needs to be cautioned against the two extremes prevalent today pertaining to its frequency of observance. At one extreme is the danger of commonizing it and at the other is the danger of economizing it. A balance must be maintained that takes care of the solemnity, purity and unity it intends to proclaim.

In summing up the foregoing section, it can be seen that Paul’s way of correcting the abuse of the Eucharist in the Corinthian church is to go back to its inception in order to remind them of its institution, meaning and purpose. In these four verses (vs.23-26), he reminds his readers how it all started and what its original intention was. Paul makes it clear that he had received the account as part of the Church’s tradition and has faithfully passed the same to them. Paul expects them to see it as a historical event rooted in Christ’s gift of himself, and a celebration of a new covenant and a proclamation of His death until He comes. So, when Christians observe the Eucharist, they recall the event on which their corporate existence was

based. The historic meal is an anticipation of the glorious banquet in the Kingdom of God. The Christian Supper is thus founded on the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, an act of deliverance by which sins are forgiven, and a new covenant set up between God and Christians, who, being reconciled to God, were now united among themselves. The cup of wine drunk by all the participants at the Sacred Meal becomes the means by which the new covenant in His blood is entered into. By implication, too, those who entered into a covenant with the Lord naturally enter into a covenant with one another at the same time. Therefore, the Corinthian kind of Holy Communion that causes divisiveness, discrimination and widening the gap of participants is an abnormality.

By repeating the words of institution of the Eucharist to the Corinthians, Paul also wishes to contrast Jesus' selfless offer of his life on their behalf with their selfish actions which create disunity in his Body. Paul uses the generosity of Jesus' action on the cross for them to challenge their own failure to share their own food. By behaving in this selfish way at the very remembrance meal which Christ instituted to recall his love and sacrificial death for Christians, the Corinthians' behaviour is also a betrayal of the One whose Supper they purport to celebrate. In connection with this, Fee (1987:556) rightly

observes that Paul repeats this tradition not because they have forgotten the words, nor because they have abandoned the Supper, but rather because their version of the Supper gives the lie to its original intent. Among other things, Paul's concern is to let the Corinthians see this meal as a means of proclaiming Christ's death (v.26). It points to the death whereby He gave Himself freely for the sake of others. The cup signifies Christ blood poured out in death whereby He ratified the New Covenant between God and Christians.

At the same time, let us not forget that Paul is also conscious of the eschatological setting in which this meal was initially established. That is to say, Christ's death is not the end itself but the beginning of the end. So at this meal, they are to be reminded that there is yet a future for themselves and all the followers of Christ. So, "the Lord's Supper", writes Fee (1987:558), "is not simply a memorial of the Last Supper, nor of Christ's death per se, but it is a constant, repeated reminder... of the efficacy of that death for us". God has created, through Christ's death, a new community of people who bear His name. Therefore, at Communion, we do not concern ourselves with our own needs only but also with the needs of others. The purpose of the Lord's Table is not to eat to one's fill or satisfaction but to remember the Lord's death and proclaim same until He comes.

Underneath this purpose, is their being truly together at the common table, with no class distinction allowed on the basis of the quality and quantity of food to be eaten. The Table is a place to display our unity in Christ.

3.5.3. The Right Spirit of the Eucharist (11:27-34)

Having put the practice of the Eucharist in its historical perspective by recalling the actual words and acts of institution by Jesus, Paul now proceeds to apply his teaching. In this section, Paul majorly focuses on the right spirit or attitude for observing the Eucharist. He goes on to speak of the way in which the service is to be conducted with deep sacred meaning and great reverence.

The conjunction, *ὥστε* in verse 27, emphasizes consequence, hence the NRSV translation, “therefore.” This implies that what Paul is going to say further is based on the preceding statements or understanding he has conveyed to them. One seems to hear him say, “Now that this sacred rite is rooted in the historical events of Jesus’ death, whoever then eat the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.” In other words, it is because of the significance of the Eucharist just outlined (verses 23-26), that Christians must observe the

ordinance with care. The adverb “unworthily” (*ἀναξίως*) means “in an improper manner” (Perschbacher, 1990:24). Also, Barker and Kohlenberger (1994:640) say it can mean coming to Table in an irreverent and sinful way”. In the context of the Corinthian experience, “unworthily” may mean taking it carelessly, with factious spirit, without love or with greed and contempt of others.

The Greek word translated in NRSV as “answerable” actually means “guilty” (*ἐνοχος*), meaning “liable to” or “an offence against” (cf. Matt. 5:21-22; 26:66; Mk 3:29; Jam 2:10). So, “answerable for the body and blood of the Lord”, conveys the idea of being guilty of sinning against the person of the Lord Jesus symbolized in the elements. The Eucharist, therefore, is a solemn rite that demands a reverent approach. To take it carelessly amounts to denying the purpose of Christ’s self-offering. So, we may paraphrase Paul in this verse (27) as saying: ‘if this be the origin and intention of the Eucharist, it follows then that whoever partakes of it in an improper manner is guilty of this body and blood.’ It means not “discerning the body” (v.24) or being thoughtless of others.

To avoid this danger, therefore, he admonishes: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup”

(v.28). This calls for the partakers of the Eucharist to scrutinize their spiritual condition to see if they are properly qualified or not. It means ascertaining one's spiritual or moral condition or putting one's attitude to test if he or she understands the true nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper. It is a call to self-examination that enables one to search and remove things offensive to God and fellow Christians (2Cor. 13:5). Or as Grudem (1994:997) says, it "means that we ought to ask whether our relationships in the body of Christ are in fact reflecting the character of the Lord whom we meet there and whom we represent". It may be observed that moral faultlessness may not be Paul's recommendation here, but a kind of moral scrutiny of the behavior that discerns the sacred nature of the Eucharist and bears in mind the unifying force embedded in it based on love and compassion for one another, especially, the have-nots. To eat and drink with factious greed and lack of love negates the selfless sacrifice of Jesus which the Eucharist signifies.

Paul goes further to state the inherent repercussion of lack of self-examination in verse 29. He states, "for all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves." This sounds very serious. First, what does Paul mean by "without discerning the body"? The Greek words

Paul uses here: *μη διακρινων* (participle from), “not discerning”, according to Perschbacher 1990:93), means to separate in terms of making a distinction or difference (Acts 15:19). Its root is *κρινω* (*krino*), to judge or make a distinction between. Paul uses this term here to mean failure to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary house meals or failing to recognize the Church as the Body of Christ. In that frame of thought then, whoever treats the Lord’s Supper as his own house table applies wrong judgment/understanding to it; and in that bid profanes or disregards the sacredness and corporate nature of the rite.

Paul also says failure to recognize “the body” can involve personal judgment. The “judgment” here is not eternal damnation but a kind of exposure to divine displeasures or chastisement such as bodily ailments, weakness and untimely death as it has indeed happened in the Corinthian Church (v. 30). Those who abuse the Lord’s Table expose themselves to the power of demons, the cause of physical diseases. This implies also on the positive note that when the Holy Communion is taken with the right attitude, it leads to strength and health and longevity of life.

According to Paul, the antidote to divine judgment or chastisement is self-examination. He says: “But if we judged

ourselves, we would not be judged” (v. 31). The observance of the Eucharist in Corinth was so offensive to God that He disciplined some of them with illness and deaths. But they would have avoided this ugly scenario if they had passed “judgment” on their own action. Their wrong attitude to this solemn service resulted in diseases and deaths of members but if they maintained the right attitude toward this rite, they would have escaped such a disastrous end.

However, Paul adds that this “judgment” by the Lord is actually a means of discipline sent from God to bring them back from the wrong way: “But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.” (v.32). From the divine perspective, the goal of discipline is not destructive but remedial and corrective. The Lord disciplines his own people in order to give them opportunity to repent and correct their ways and thereby not be damned with the mass of people who are not Christians (the world).

The world (*kosmos*) means all that is at enmity with God, and destined to be damned. It needs to be remarked, however, that judgment in itself is not absolutely a good thing. Even though God uses it for the Christians’ good, it is better avoided.

Paul’s play on the word “judgment” in this passage should be well noted. He has it as “examine yourselves” in v.28,

“discerning” in v.29; “judgment” in vs. 32, “condemned” and “condemnation” in vs.32,34. In all, its various forms appear eight (8) times from vs 28-34, stressing self-examination, distinguishing the Eucharist from ordinary meal, divine chastisement and eternal damnation respectively.

In verses 33 and 34, Paul gives his final application based on theological understandings he has expounded so far on this subject matter. Paul gives his recommendation on the matter: “So then (arising from his discussion so far) my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.” Note that the NRSV translators added “sisters” to make it gender inclusive. Otherwise, the Greek word is simply, *ἀδελφοί*, brothers. This signifies Paul’s affection for them as members of the family of God. So, when they gather together for the Lord’s Supper, they are to wait for one another and share their meal. This means Paul wants the greedy scramble mentioned in verse 21 to stop. The purpose of the Lord’s Table is not to satisfy physical hunger, therefore, the hungry should eat at home, and that way avoid meeting for “condemnation” (v34). Paul’s instruction to them to eat at home may imply a directive to separate the Love Feast (potluck) from the Eucharist. What is uppermost in Paul’s mind is that those who are so hungry that

they cannot wait for their fellow Christians should satisfy their hunger before leaving home so that decency, reverence, love and harmony or unity should prevail in the assembly. As they wait for each other, eat together, they also show respect for each other. This shows their unity and closes the gap of contempt, discrimination and despising or humiliation of the less privileged members. They should not be driven by hunger to violate the spirit of oneness at Communion Table or fracture the fellowship.

Paul has handled the urgent matters about the abuse of the Eucharist in the Corinthian Church. There are other things supposedly not as urgent that he will give instructions verbally when he sees them (v.34b). This final statement shows that there are other irregularities with the observance of the Lord's Supper in Corinth that required correction but because they are not as serious as those Paul has handled, they can wait until he is present with them.

In concluding this chapter, we affirm that Paul views the Eucharist as central to the worship life of the Church. That he devotes a considerable space to address its abuse in his letter to the Corinthians is a clear attestation to how important he sees this ordinance as an inseparable component part of the worship life of the Church. Our study of Paul's position on this sacred rite reveals that he sees the Eucharist as a unifying factor, hence

he rebukes the Corinthians' divisive tendencies exhibited at its observance, vs. 18-22. This understanding informs his statement earlier in 1Cor.10:16-17: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Also, Paul believes that the Eucharist in its historical enactment and import commemorates the selfless sacrifice of Jesus to produce a united assembly of faith whose members are covenanted to love one another (vs.23-25).

Furthermore, we understand from Paul that the Eucharist has an evangelical import as every instance of observance proclaims the death of Christ for the redemption of mankind, v.26. In addition, Paul views the Eucharist as an appropriate occasion capable of sustaining the eschatological hope of Christians since they know that the terminal point of proclaiming his death is when He comes, v.26. Another teaching Paul gives in relation to the practice of the Eucharist is that wrong attitude in observing it does not only violate its unifying principle, but also leads to ill-health, death, judgment and condemnation, vs.30-34. In Paul's mind, one needs to approach the Lord's Table with self-examination and an attitude that

distinguishes the sacred meal from the household meals (vs.27-29).

Finally, to Paul, the Eucharist is meant for corporate participation. Therefore, all pointers to disunity during observance must be promptly checked. Instead of members coming to grab it individually, Paul says “wait for one another” (v.33). The Holy Communion can only be what Paul says it is, when those who partake in it do so with attitudes and actions that portray the self-giving attitude of Christ, the Lord and the Head of the Church and promote the unity of the Church.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EUCHARIST IN THE GOSPEL TRADITIONS

4.1 Introduction

The institution of the Eucharist is reported in full mainly in the first three Gospels, namely: Mt.26:26-30; Mk.14:22-25; Lk.22:15-20. The Synoptic gospels, first Mark, and then Matthew and Luke depict Jesus as presiding over the Last Supper where references to his body and blood foreshadow his crucifixion. These Eucharistic passages are very fundamental in providing insight into the establishment and intent of the Eucharist. The Gospel of John, though reporting Jesus' allusion to it in 6:53-58 and referring to it in passing in the foot-washing account in chapter 13, does not make any reference to the Eucharistic words (Onwu, 2002:226). Onwu (2002:225) is of the opinion that when it became intuitively clear to Jesus that the end of his life and ministry on earth was in sight, he instituted the Lord's Supper, otherwise referred to as the Eucharist. It should be borne in mind that these Eucharistic passages in the Synoptics, though unanimous in most cases, also have points of difference. Therefore, we shall examine each account one after the other.

4.2 The Markan Account (Mk.14:22-26)

Mark's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper reads thus:

22. while they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them and said, "Take; this is my body" 23. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the wine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God". 26 when they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Mark's account of the inauguration of the Lord's Supper is not essentially different from Matthew's. So, our comments on Matthew's account go for Mark's. Only two points of divergence from Matthew may be pointed out. First, Mark indicated that after the words of institution of the cup, "all of them drank from it" (v.23). This report of the disciples actually drinking from the cup is not explicitly stated in Matthew. Also, Matthew's "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt.26:28) is absent in Mark's account. Why this omission in Mark cannot be discerned, Luke does not have it either. Even Paul in his theological insight and elaborations does not mention that phrase. However, the expression, "which is poured for many" (14:24) implies that the blood of Jesus provides ransom and remission of sins for the believers under the covenant of grace. In that statement, Mark shows that Jesus

thought of his death as a vicarious sacrifice for men. And this understanding echoes Isa.53:11, 12: "... for he shall bear their iniquities... and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors", (KJV). Jesus said something similar to that too in Mark 10:45: "... and to give his life a ransom for many". So, while we may concede that the original form of the cup-word remain unresolved, the fact remains that the idea of a suffering servant in the person of the Lord Jesus, whose suffering and death were for the sake of others, cannot be denied (Onwu, 2002:230).

Before we close our discussion on Mark's tradition, a reflection on Jesus' command, "Take" (Mt. 26:26; Mk.14:22) is imperative. We need to see the sense of salvation as a gift behind that word. Commenting on this, Guthrie (1979:881) says, this "indicated that His death with its benefits was a gift which His disciples must appropriate". The Eucharist, therefore, reminds us of the free offer of salvation through Jesus with its attending nourishment by His word. "For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink". Keener (1993:175), commenting on verse 25, says Jesus' view of abstinence is common in Palestinian Judaism, where someone can vow: "I will not eat any such and such until this happens". Also, Jesus echoes Jewish view of the kingdom as a banquet. Keener (1993:175) further

reports that after the meal, “it was customary to sing psalms from the Hallel, which consisted of Psalms 113-118”.

4.3 The Matthean Account (Mt. 26:26-30)

The Gospel of Matthew indicates that upon the request of the disciples, Jesus directed where they should prepare for the Passover (26:17-19). When they were eating in the evening Jesus disclosed the betrayal plan of Judas to the surprise of other disciples (26:20-25). Then from verses 26-29 Matthew gives account of the institution of the Eucharist. He writes:

26. While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body’. 27. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; 28. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.

We note first that, the institution of the Eucharist happened at the occasion of the Jewish Passover, and thus provides the theological connections of memorial, redemption and deliverance. It is note-worthy to observe that what is peculiar here is Jesus’ Words of institution, otherwise, the thanksgiving, breaking of bread and distribution of elements took place at any formal Jewish meal. Second, we observe that the loaf of bread was “blessed” before giving it out to the

disciples. This stresses the consecration of the element of the Eucharist and so giving it a sacred connotation. However, the Greek word translated “blessing” in NRSV is *εὐλογῆσας* (*eulogésas*), also can mean “to speak well of” or “ascribe praise and glorification” (Perschbacher, 1990:180). Hence giving thanks to God for the bread is implied also. Berkhof (1984:647) opines that the Greek *Eucharistia* (thanksgiving) and *eulogia* (blessing) are in all probability used interchangeably and refer to a blessing and thanksgiving combined. And so, the cup of thanksgiving and blessing (*cf. I Cor. 10:16; 11:24*) is the consecrated cup. Furthermore, Jesus “broke it”, to allow possibility of sharing. Significantly, “to break bread was a common Jewish expression for the sharing of the meal” (Douglas, 1977:750). This suggests that the meal is intended for communal participation and for common or mutual benefit – a fellowship or communion (*koinonia*). Berkhof (1984:648) is of the opinion that Jesus naturally used the unleavened bread, since it was the only kind at hand.

The word of institution “Take, eat; this is my body” has been variously interpreted. Some have taken it that Jesus means the bread is identical with His real body, hence the doctrine of *transubstantiation* as held by the Catholic Church as earlier discussed. However, many Protestant/Pentecostal

Churches have embraced the Zwinglian/Reformed view of bread symbolizing the body of Christ. In this sense, “the bread cannot be identical with His body, but it is an effective sign of it when received in faith” (Guthrie, 1979:847). Jesus might as well mean: “As the bread has just been broken, so will Jesus’ body be broken” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994:120). Or as Onwu (2002:229) puts it, “the bread is the body of Christ in representative form in the sense of sacramental identity”. It is most likely therefore, that the disciples understood Jesus saying, ‘This broken bread shows the manner in which my body will be broken few moments from now’.

The cup Jesus took contains wine, and before giving it to the disciples, he gave thanks. The Greek word here is *eucharistésas* (having given thanks). The thanks and appreciation certainly, were to God for the fruits of the vine out of which comes the wine in the cup. The cup contains the “ordinary wine which was largely used as a beverage in Palestine” (Berkhof, 1984:648). Again, the concept of prayer over the element cannot be separated from the Eucharistic rite as implied by Jesus’ “blessing” the bread and “giving thanks” for the cup. Jesus statement, “Drink from it, all of you”, is followed by theological implications. First, is the concept of covenant associated with the blood. The blood of the covenant suggests a

bond of relationship made possible by the blood of Jesus. The old covenant with the Jews was by blood of sacrificial animals (Ex.24:8). But the New Covenant under the new dispensation is by the blood of God's Son. In other words, it is a covenant sealed and ratified by His blood. Onwu (2002:225) advances this thought by locating the Eucharist in a covenant context. He believes Jesus lived and died to bring human beings into a new relationship with God. He writes: "In the New Testament, God placed humankind into a new bond with Himself through the blood of Christ...By sharing in the 'body' and 'blood' in the sacred meal, participants become covenanted to Christ and to one another" (Onwu, 2002:231-232).

Secondly, there is the theological reason advanced for the "pouring out" of the blood: "For the forgiveness of sins". Only Matthew adds this idea probably as a theological interpretation. Here the purifying and purging effects of the (new) covenant is declared. This is the appointed way by which God will pardon sins. Jesus' blood is efficacious for the pardoning of transgressions. Onwu (2002:231) puts it this way: "The blood which is poured out has an atoning power (Isaiah 53:12) and was, therefore, the life of that by which the Covenant was signed and sealed". At the Eucharist, therefore, the bread (body) symbolically points to Christ's afflictions on the cross; the wine

(blood) reminds the disciples and by extension all Christians, the salvation-effect of that blood that flow from that body. The atoning death of Christ is the basis of forgiveness. The life crucified produces lives forgiven, pardoned and saved.

Finally, Matthew's account of the words of institution of the Eucharist presents an eschatological dimension: "I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (v.29). Another fellowship is anticipated. It is a fellowship that the current one anticipated. The communion starts here on earth but it is fulfilled and consummated in heaven. One guarantees the other. It is very interesting to note that the Jewish Passover prefigures the Christians' Eucharist and the latter anticipates the kingdom feast with the Lord. The Supper looks forward to the Messianic banquet.

4.4 The Lukan Account (Lk.22:14-20)

Luke's Eucharistic text reads as follows:

14 when the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. 15 He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, 16 for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God". 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes". 19 Then

he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me". 20 And he did the same with the cup after Supper, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

The Lukan tradition presents some variations from the traditions of Matthew and Mark. First, it should be observed that while Matthew and Mark report Jesus' revelation of Judas betrayal before the Meal, Luke puts it at the end of the words of institution (22:21-23). Also Luke has two cup-words (Lk.22:17 and 22:20). Another difference to be noticed is that only Luke among the Gospel writers has the words of memorial: "Do this in remembrance of me" (v.19). Furthermore, though Mark and Matthew have the covenant in the blood, Luke qualifies covenant with the word "new": "This cup that is poured out for you is the *new* covenant in my blood" (v.20).

The differences between Luke and other Gospel writers coupled with the differences in Pauline tradition in 1 Corinthians 11, raises the question of what really constitutes the original form of the words of institution. However, these differences may not bother us much considering the fact that the additions or subtractions, as the case may be, do not corrupt neither the text nor the theology of the Eucharist. Also, we may give Luke the benefits of doubt based on the understanding that his work is a

product of a well conducted research (1:1-4). Moreover, the proposition that the saying about the cup existed in developmental form, that is, “This is my blood” as in Matthew and Mark and then later the explanatory phrases, “pour out for many” and “for the forgiveness of sins” were added, can be considered as mere academic guesses. The writer, therefore, admits with Anderson (1967) as cited by Onwu (2002:230) that the difference in primary sources should not be allowed to obscure the highly significant element common to all, namely, the inauguration of a new covenant relationship between God and man.

The Lukan “new covenant” idea may have been informed by Jeremiah’s prediction of a new covenant that God would make with His people (Jer.31:31-34), though the blood factor is not mentioned there. But Jesus knows His blood must be spilled to ratify that covenant. He knows that in Israel covenants were ratified by the blood of sacrifice, for example, God redeemed Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb. His *ἀναμνηδῖς* concept stresses a recollection of the Passover as a memorial feast. In the same manner, God’s love for humanity in Christ Jesus’ loving sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood for the remission of sins, are resounding experiences that He won’t allow human frailty of short memory to forget. The *anamnēsis*

concept of Luke indicates that at the Holy Communion recipients recalls, through the symbolic acts, the sin-bearing sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for humanity's forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). It involves a look back to the historical event of the cross. But, as this thesis continues to contend, let us not limit the Eucharist to a mere memorial meal of historical value without contemporary benefit. It goes beyond a memorial of a dead person to a celebration of love that unites Christians in Holy Communion; a fellowship of those covenanted to God in Christ: a fellowship which transcends the national community of Israel to a universal brotherhood in Christ.

4.5 The Johannine Account (John 6:50-58)

The Gospel of John does not specifically make direct reference to the inauguration of the Eucharist. Therefore, the words of institution are absent in the fourth Gospel. Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>) confirms this by saying that in the gospel of John, the account of the last Supper has no mention of Jesus taking bread and wine and speaking of them as his body and blood; instead it recounts his humble act of washing the disciples' feet, the prophecy of the betrayal, which sets in motion the events that would lead to the cross, and his long discourse in response to some questions posed by his

followers, in which he spoke of the importance of the unity of the disciples with him and with each other. John 13 seems to allude to the last Passover meal Jesus had with his disciples, but the account dwells more on the story of Judas' betrayal and foot-washing by Jesus. Note specifically verse 1: "Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father..." (13:1), and verses 2b & 4: "And during supper, Jesus...got up from the table..." compare Mt.26:19-21; Mk.14:16-18; Lk.22:13-16 which indicate the Passover meal provides the occasion for the institution of the Sacred Meal; the Eucharist. Even the practice of foot-washing as a necessary component of observing Holy Communion is not common in many Churches. The writer only knows of the Church of the Brethren which endorses the practice of foot-washing along with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

However, Jesus' teaching about "eating" His flesh and "drinking" His blood in John 6:50-58, deserves a closer examination. This teaching took place earlier in Jesus' Ministry but appears to anticipate the truth of the Eucharist. It must be pointed out, that scholars are not unanimous as whether this account specifically refers to the Eucharist. For instance, Barnes (1976:297) contends that there is no evidence that Jesus had had any reference to the Lord's Supper since that was not

yet instituted. Similarly, Kent (1982:107) observes that it is not likely that Jesus was referring to the Christian observance of Holy Communion, “for this had not yet been announced, nor is the partaking of the communion symbols a necessity for salvation”. However, Kent agrees that He was referring to the same truths which the Eucharistic elements symbolize. On the other hand, Oyedepo (2002:42) quoted these verses extensively as referring to the bread and wine of the “Miracle Meal”.

Whether Jesus had the Eucharist in mind when He gave this teaching or not, two things must be borne in mind. First, “eat my flesh” and “drink my blood” are certainly not in the literal senses. Second, the truth can adequately apply to the theology of the Eucharist. As Barnes (1976: 297) comments:

Nothing can possibly be more absurd than to suppose that when he instituted the Supper, and gave the bread and wine to his disciples, they literally ate his flesh and drank his blood. ...The plain meaning of the passage is, that by his bloody death – his body and his blood offered in sacrifice for sin – he could procure pardon and life for man; and they who partook of that,... should have eternal life.

The above understanding also agrees with Kent’s (1982: 197-108) who said, “In order to have eternal life, men must become united with Christ so that the merits of his matchless life and atoning death become efficacious to them.” The giving of

his flesh refers to Christ's bodily sacrifice, and his blood pictures the atoning value of his death on man's behalf.

Furthermore, even though the "words of institution" are not obvious in the Gospel of John, Jesus' dramatic act of washing His disciples feet must not be hurriedly brushed aside. Jesus has lessons to teach from that. He said:

So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you (John 13:14-15).

The practice of foot-washing may not be insisted upon among Christians today, but we must not ignore the lesson of selfless and humble service Jesus impressed upon His followers in this story. Also, we see Jesus teaching unconditional love as well.

He clearly says:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35)

Christians cannot really showcase this love if they are divided or discriminate against each other at the celebration of the Eucharist. Love is the binding factor as well as the mark of identity of the Christian faith. A good forum to show this is at our sitting together at Communion Tables. Moreover, it also means that through faith Christians feed spiritually upon Christ.

4.6 Summary

Our examination of the Gospel traditions of the Eucharist, in spite of their variations, reveals that:

1. Jesus intends his disciples to remember Him whenever the Eucharist is observed.
2. Jesus wants his followers to perceive the Eucharist as a covenant they had entered into with Him as well as with one another.
3. To partake of the elements that Christ offers brings one into an abiding relationship with Him.
4. The joint participation of Christians in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist unites them into one body in Christ for mutual love and fellowship.
5. The Eucharist has an eschatological dimension as it prepares us and points to the Messianic banquet in heaven.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EUCHARIST AS KOINONIA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theology of the Eucharist as a *koinonia*. In order to provide the necessary foundation, attempt shall be made to define covenant, highlight its Old Testament and New Testament usages and then show how the Eucharist can be viewed as a covenant. This will be followed by brief discussions on the Eucharist as a memorial and fellowship respectively.

5.2 The Meaning of a Covenant

The word “**covenant**” in the ordinary grammatical sense may mean, a legal agreement or “a binding and solemn agreement to do or keep from doing a specified thing”, (*Neufeldt*, 1988:320). From that meaning, it can be said that a covenant is an agreement between two or more parties which binds them together for some mutual benefits. In this sense, contract, pact, compact, treaty, agreement are all synonyms of covenant. Such agreement usually makes provision for sanctions in the events of non-compliance. Harvey (1960:60) defines covenant as a relationship between two parties in which each party voluntarily agrees to certain conditions of the relationship and gives his or

her words to uphold it. Similarly, Onwu (2002:231), on his own part, sees a covenant as a relationship of mutual friendship into which two people or groups of people enter with mutual pledges of fidelity which eliminates all forms of betrayal and fears. Lasor, et al (1982:144) say a covenant is a means to establish a relationship (not naturally existing), which is sanctioned by an oath sworn in a ceremony of ratification.

It should be noted, however, that the biblical concept of covenant is basically or primarily a relationship between God and man. According to Douglas & Tenny (1987:237), the word “covenant” is a translation of the Hebrew noun *berith* whose verbal root means either “to fetter” or “to eat with”, which would signify mutual obligation. The same source also says it can also mean “to allot”, which signifies a gracious disposition.

Furthermore, it identifies three different types of legal relationships:

1. A two-sided covenant between human parties who both voluntarily accept the terms of the agreement for friendship, marriage or political alliance (*1 Sam.18:3-4; Mal. 2:14 Josh. 9:15; Obad. 7;*
2. A one-sided disposition imposed by a superior party (*Ezek. 17:13-14; Josh. 23:16;* and

3. God's self-imposed obligation for the reconciliation of sinners to Himself (*Gen. 17:7; Deut. 7:6-8; Ex. 19:3-6; Ps. 89:3-4*).

We see in the third type the covenant between God and Israel, and consequently between God and Christians.

In probing the meaning of "covenant" further, Bromiley (1985:160) indicates that the Hebrew term, *berith*, goes beyond the idea of a contract and conveys the idea of binding expression of the divine will. In the New Testament, the Greek word is *διαθήκη* (*diatheke*) which can be variously rendered as "a testamentary disposition, will; a covenant", (Perschbacher, 1990:91-92). See *Heb. 9:16-17; Gal. 3: 15, 17; 4:24; Mt. 26:28*, etc). According to Bromiley, (1985:160), the choice of *diatheke* brings out this element more strongly than *syntheke*. "So that the new covenant in Jer. 31:31ff can be conceived of only as a divine gift of grace, a declaration of God's saving will in relation to which Israel can be only a recipient".

Similarly, Douglas & Tenny (1987:238), affirm that the primary meaning of *diathéké* is a disposition of property by a will. They explain further:

New Testament revelation, however, makes clear the wonderful appropriateness of diatheke, "testament", for describing the instrument of God's redemptive love (see Heb. 9:16-18). Indeed, "will" or "testament", signifies a specific form of covenant, the bequest; and

it well describes God's O.T. berith, because apart from the death of Christ, the O.T. saints "should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40 KJV).

To sum up then, it can be said that, as far as the biblical data are concerned, a covenant provides a descriptive framework for the bond between Yahweh and Israel through Abraham and between God and Christians through Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. It is a term applied to various transactions between God and man, and between man and his fellow human beings. It can be made between individuals or nations. (*Josh. 9:6, 15; 1 Sam. 11:1; Gen. 21:27-30; 1 Sam. 18:3, 4, 20:8*). In a covenant, the parties involved bound themselves to fulfill certain conditions and promised each other some benefits. A breach of covenant is regarded as a terrible sin (*Ezek. 17:12-20*). It has also been observed that God's covenant with man is usually peculiar as He is the initiator who willingly and graciously decides, on promise, to arrange His providences for the good or wellbeing of those who obey the terms of His covenant with them.

5.3 The Old Covenant

Drane (1987:52) observes that covenant in the Old Testament means an agreement in which the freed slaves were reminded of what God had done for them, and they were called in return to promise to fulfill His commands and to be loyal to Him. This observation ignores the fact that the idea of covenant had existed between Noah and Abraham even before Israel's slavery in Egypt. Nevertheless, its appropriateness to the Sinaitic covenant is undeniable. Going by the Old Testament revelation, the first mention of the word "covenant" is in Genesis 6:18, where, even before the flood, God announced to Noah that He will establish His covenant with him: "But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you". Here, God, in His sovereign graciousness declares the security of Noah, his family and other living creatures in the impending flood. Noah's obligation, however, lies in bringing his people and the living creatures in their pairs into the ark to guarantee their safety.

Furthermore, beyond this pre-delluvian covenant, God also entered into covenant with Noah after the flood (*Gen. 9:9-17*). Paramount in this covenant also is its unilateral nature. It is God who graciously assures Noah that He will not bring judgment upon the world in form of the flood again. Also, there

shall be a perpetual reoccurrence of day, night and seasons. God then gives a rainbow as a sign or token of this covenant. It should be carefully observed that this so-called Noahic covenant is purely *unilateral* as it is conceived and established by God Himself. It is also *universal* in scope as it covers Noah and his seed after him as well as living creatures. It is also *unconditional* as no requirement is demanded. Furthermore, the covenant is *eternal*. Finally, it can be seen that it shows what is called “*divine monergism*” as “there is no human contribution to the agency by which the promises are fulfilled” (Guthrie, 1979:265). Even the token of the covenant (rainbow) is not what man can exercise control over.

Another important kind of a covenant in the O.T. is God’s covenant with Abram/Abraham usually labeled the “Abrahamic covenant” initiated in Gen.12:1-3 and reenacted in Gen.15 and 17 respectively. Here again, this covenant is divinely devised and executed. One of the peculiar features of this covenant is that it is only with Abraham and his seed. Though all flesh may be blessed through Abraham, yet it is not a covenant with all flesh as in the case of the post-delluvian covenant with Noah. Also, the benefits of this covenant are conditioned on obedience. One who fails to fulfill the requirement is cut off (*Gen. 17:10-14*). This time around, the sign of the covenant is circumcision – an

ordinance to be observed by men. In this covenant, circumcision signifies purity that ensures communion with God. It is the “reciprocal response” without which communion with God is impossible (Douglas, 1977:266).

Thirdly is the Mosaic covenant or the Sinaitic covenant (*Ex. 19-24*) which actually is God-Israel covenant at Sinai. This covenant was made by God with Israel as a people or nation who had been graciously chosen in love by virtue of their connection with Abraham (*Ex. 19:3-6*). Actually, this covenant is a by-product of the Abrahamic covenant, (*Ex. 2:24; 3:16; 6:4-8*). By it, Israel has been adopted into a filial relation with God, (*Ex. 4:22-23; Deut. 8:5; 14:1; 32:6*). We, therefore see here, too, the sovereign administration of grace which characterizes the earlier covenants. Livingston (1987; 156) remarks that “the treaties, or covenants, between God and Noah, the Patriarchs, and Israel at Sinai are similar in that they were between God and man, God taking the initiatives, and are binding for all ages”. The law, particularly the Ten Commandments, form the terms of this covenant and to which the people entered into a solemn agreement to be obedient (*Ex. 19:3, 5-6; 24:7*).

Their obedience of the commandments of God, draws upon them God’s constant care, protection, provision, security, prosperity, victory and peace. The seal of the Sinaitic covenant

still remains the circumcision. The wellbeing of Israel so depended on this covenant that it was renewed at various points of Israel's later history: *Deut. 29; Josh. 24; 2 Chron. 15, 23, 29, 34; Ezra 10 and Neh. 9, 10*. Obedience and holiness are necessary conditions for appropriating the benefits of this covenant. Israel rises or falls by her attitude to God's law.

The fourth important covenant identifiable in the Old Testament is God's covenant with David which assured the latter of a continual privilege of a leader from his family. This is usually called the "Davidic Covenant". See *II Sam. 7:2-17*. The Davidic Covenant, though in reality an off-shoot of Abrahamic Covenant, specifically granted David's lineage the right of rulership in Israel (*II Sam. 7:12; 22:51*). Thus, the royal seed in David will continue to produce royal seed which ultimately bears reference to the Messianic rule of Christ (*Lk. 1:32-33; Acts 2:30-36; cf. Isa. 42:16; 55:3-4*). It should be noted that Isaiah presents the servant of the Lord Himself to be a covenant of the people. Douglas, (1977:266), explains why this is so:

The Messiah is Himself the covenant because the blessings and provisions of God's covenant with the people of God are to such an extent bound up with the Messiah that He is Himself the embodiment of these blessings and of the presence of the Lord with His people which the covenant ensures.

So, the Davidic Covenant points to the preeminent Child of promise from David's house whose kingdom has no end (See *Isa. 9:6-7; Ps. 2 & 22*).

Our study of the covenant in the Old Testament brings us face to face with the reality of God's gracious act of redemption of humanity, an act which is enshrined in a covenant relationship for its distinction and perpetuity. Bound to the concept of covenant are promises conditioned on trust, obedience and holiness on the part of the human party before enjoying the blessings thereof. Also, relevant to our studies, too, is the fact that O.T. covenants are sealed by signs – rainbow, circumcision, just as the Holy Communion elements – bread and wine – form the sign and seal of the new covenant in His blood. The rainbow reminds God of His promise not to destroy the earth with flood again, and circumcision reminds all the descendants of Abraham of their covenant obligations to God. In the same way, the Eucharistic elements remind believers of their relationship and communion with God as well as their fellowship with one another. It also reminds them of the supreme sacrifice for their salvation paid by His life, a life He symbolizes by the bread and wine which actually speak of His body and blood, the essence of life.

Thus, when Jesus speaks of the wine at the Lord's Supper as "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins", He reechoes and renews the Sinaitic covenant of which Moses ratified by the blood of the oxen saying: "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with these words" (*Ex. 24:8*).

5.4 The New Covenant

By way of analysis, Bromiley, (1985:160) says, of the 33 instances that *diatheke* is mentioned in the New Testament, 9 are in Paul, 17 in Hebrews, 4 in the Synoptics, 2 in Acts and 1 in Revelation. As has earlier been explained, covenant in the New Testament connotes a testament or a will by which God through Jesus bequeathed salvation to Christians. The new covenant is the covenant of grace realized by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. We are made complete by "the blood of the eternal covenant" (*Heb. 13:20-21*). Also, Hebrews 9:26 indicated that "he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself". Thus, we see the new covenant as the consummation and fulfillment of the earlier covenants. The new covenant brings the grace exemplified in the old covenants to its fullest realization. It is "eternal covenant" because Christ's death that mediates this new covenant is once and for all" and there is

none after it. This then implied that, it is the “grand finale” of all the covenants with lasting effects.

However, it needs to be stressed that there is a correlative character between the new and the old covenants. The promissory nature, the grace basis, obedience to God and the faith condition are present in all. It could be observed that just as the Mosaic (Sinaitic) covenant is an addition to and an extension of Abrahamic covenant, so also the new covenant builds upon the God-Israel covenant in the Old Testament. If it is true that the Mosaic covenant supplements the Abrahamic covenant, it is then logical to say that New Covenant fulfills or completes the Mosaic Covenant, all operating on the same principles of promise and faith. It is in the light of this understanding that Paul says: “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise”, *Gal. 3:29*. So, there is a continuity between the Old and the New covenants. And so, Zechariah sees in Jesus birth “...the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days”, (*Lk. 1:72 – 75*).

In the same way, Paul sees in Christ the seed that fulfils the promises made to Abraham or in whom the promises made to Abraham are fulfilled (*Gal. 3:15, 16*). As Douglas (1977:267) puts it:

When our Lord said that His blood was the blood of the covenant shed for the remission of sins and that the cup of the last supper was the new covenant in His blood, ...the new covenant will have to be regarded as referring to the grace secured and the relationship established by the blood which He shed. The covenant is the sum-total of the grace, blessing, truth and relationship comprised in that redemption which was secured by Jesus' blood.

We see, therefore, in the new covenant the finality and effectiveness of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in securing and ensuring the benefits and blessings of the covenant which stands no chance of being voided. Even when Jesus speaks of the Eucharist wine as the “new covenant” in His blood (*Lk. 22:20; I Cor. 11:25*), He does not only emphasize the peculiar role of this covenant, but also the place of blood in ratifying a covenant. The author of Hebrews captures this when he says, “Hence, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood”, (*9:18*). Also in verse 22 of the same chapter, he says, “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” But the scriptural truism under the new covenant also is that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take

away sins” (*Heb. 10:4*). Hence, “it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (*v.10*) and by that single sacrifice, “he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (*v.14*). And “where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (*v.18*).

Interestingly too, the author of Hebrews, citing *Jer. 31:31, 33 – 34*, indicates that this new covenant in the blood of Jesus fulfils Jeremiah’s prediction. This then means that the new covenant is meant to procure a redeemed community for God, guarantee intuitive knowledge of God by the Spirit’s work in them and ensures gracious forgiveness of their sins (see *Heb. 10:15 – 18*). The unilateral nature of the new covenant should also be noted. It is God who is the initiator and executor.

In summary, God’s covenants with people show the sovereign administration of His grace and promise. It can be seen that right from the on-set, His covenants are redemptive in content and intent. The covenants are also correlative and progressive in character leading to their consummation in the new covenant of the blood of Jesus Christ. The over-all promise is “I will be your God, and you shall be my people”. It can therefore be said that the new covenant brings this redemptive relationship to its climax where no further enrichment or updating were necessary. The provisions of the new covenant

are secured by Christ's blood, and so He becomes the mediator as well as the surety of the new covenant. In fact, it is safe to say that the New Covenant (also called the Covenant of Grace) is established by Christ and therefore supersedes the Old Covenant, because through the New, the Old is achieved and fulfilled (*Heb. 10:14, 16 – 18*). As Harvey (1964:61) puts it, "this new covenant, then, both fulfills and yet shatters the old covenant, especially in so far as the latter is identified with external works". But in place of the rainbow and circumcision as signs and seals of the old covenant, we have the bread and the wine of the Eucharist speaking of the body and blood (the life) of Jesus offered to ratify, seal and consummate the New Covenant of grace.

5.5 The Eucharist as a Covenant

A glaring background to the institution of the Eucharist is the approaching death of Jesus Christ. As He sees death confronting Him face to face, He says, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," (*Lk. 22:15*). Seeing that Passover as the last before His death, Jesus sees it as the most appropriate time to establish a **testament** or a **will** for His believers. It is a will He has "written" before His death for His followers to observe as a perpetual ordinance. It is in

consonance with this understanding that Onwu (2002:227) observed that the original context for the institution of the Lord's Supper is that of a life-crisis of Jesus parting with His disciples. So the sense of parting physically with His followers greatly overwhelms Him at this time.

Moreover, Jesus affirms emphatically in the words of institution that "this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (*Lk. 22:20. cf. I Cor. 11:25*). By that statement, one can see Jesus presenting the Eucharist as a covenant to ensure continued relationship between Him and His disciples as well as with one another. In view of the unavailability of His death and to ensure the continuity of their relationship after this inevitable death, Jesus envisages that the Eucharist provides the right avenue for their commitment to this bond as its observance both renews and strengthens its vertical and horizontal bonds. The Master, therefore, wishes to lead his disciples to recognize that "this parting was not the terminus of Jesus' relationship with them, and the Eucharistic institution assumed a covenant dimension in that crisis moment in which a renewed relationship and commitment were envisaged and authenticated" (Onwu, 2002:228).

There can be no doubt that Jesus' suffering and death have the redemptive purpose of procuring a new covenant

relationship between God and man. In other words, Jesus lived and died to bring people into a new relationship with God. Jesus therefore, by establishing the Eucharist, depicts His death as the cost or the price to be paid in order to bring into existence a new covenant community envisaged in *Jeremiah 31:31-34*. Furthermore, Jesus' thought was most likely influenced by the Old Testament practice of Moses who ratified the sinaitic covenant by the sacrificial blood of animals (*Ex. 24, 6, 8*) and therefore sees in similar vein, His blood ratifying and sealing the new covenant; hence, He presents the wine as "the new covenant in my blood" (*Lk. 22:20*) or "my blood of the covenant" (*Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24*). It is significant to note that in the Old Testament concept, blood is life itself (*Lev. 17:11*), therefore, by Jesus' life (blood), this new covenant is signed and sealed. In the New Testament concept, therefore, God draws Christians into a new covenant relationship with Himself via the instrumentality of Christ's blood. Enns (1989:360) sees the institution of the Lord's Supper on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion as a new covenant or testament. According to him, to enact the covenant, death was necessary because death provided forgiveness of sins.

So, locating the covenant idea in the Eucharist simply means that at the observance of this holy meal, Christians become bonded to Christ as well as to one another. Of a truth,

Jesus does not expect the rapport He has established among the disciples to terminate with his departure. And like the last **will** of a dying relation, it ought to be viewed with every seriousness and solemnity. It should be seen to go beyond a memorial feast commemorating His suffering and death to celebrating a new covenant of redemptive bond into which all Christians have entered with Christ and with other fellow Christians. This bond fosters unity rather than disunity, since participating in the Lord's 'body' and 'blood' vividly portrays members as one body in Christ. In essence, whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, Christians showcase mutual love and unity which are also essential elements of any covenant. In fact, it is the strong contention of Onwu (2002:235) that "the problem of genuine unity among the Churches of Christ is the failure to recognize the Eucharist as a covenant with the Lord and with one another", and therefore maintains that "because the covenantal context of the Eucharist has been ignored, the desired unity among Christians has become an illusion". His remedy: "The only cure is to remember that the Eucharist is a covenant, and that the Lord's Table is not the table of any Church. At it, we are all the guests of the Lord," (Onwu, 2002:236).

On his part, Oyedepo (2002:63) also sees the Eucharist as a "covenant toast" for total health of Christians. He writes: "The great prescription of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ is the Great Physician's covenant toast for your total health - spirit,

soul and body". He believes that in the days of the early Christians, "sickness was a stranger in their assembly because they were addicted to partaking of the flesh and the blood of Christ on a daily basis". Oyedepo's teaching does not only agree with the view that the Eucharist is a covenant but also that the Eucharist is a mysterious means of healing for the sick who partakes of it with the correct understanding. If one matches his observation with the negative effects of it for those who took it wrongly in the Church of Corinth and became "weak and ill, and some have died" (*I Cor. 11:30*), then his point is right on course. For if improper observance leads to sickness and death, certainty, it logically follows then that proper observance produces health and life.

Therefore, the Eucharist signifies the new covenant in the blood of Christ for both remission of sins and healing of diseases. His death which communicants use the Eucharist to proclaim until He comes (*I Cor. 11:26*), does not only mediated salvation, but also healing. This thought agrees with His mission into the world: "surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. ...and by His bruises we are healed" (*Isaiah 53:4,5; cf. I Pet. 2:24*). And since this covenant is an eternal covenant in the blood of the living Lord, these benefits do not expire. The Eucharist, therefore, is a covenantal meal with supernatural blessings attached to it for all ages.

5.6 The Eucharist as a Memorial

It is the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians that expressly makes reference to the Eucharist as a memorial. Paul states that when Jesus had taken bread and given thanks, he gave it to his disciples saying:

This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me (I Cor. 11:24, 25).

Furthermore, only Luke in his Gospel attached the *anamnesis* concept to the celebration of the Eucharist. He writes:

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me (Lk. 22:19).

As has earlier been indicated, the Greek word, *anamnēsis*, means remembrance or recollection. Christians are expected to observe the Eucharist as a recollection of Jesus. This means that the Eucharist provides an avenue for Christians to mentally recall the significance of the life and death of Jesus Christ. The memorial significance of the Eucharist goes beyond the pagan “funerary meals in remembrance of a dead person” (Keener, 1993:477). Even though Jesus instituted the Eucharist while anticipating His death, He now lives as a risen Lord. Stedman (1978:3) maintains that when we gather and take the bread of

the Lord's Table, break it and pass it among ourselves, we are reminding ourselves that Jesus is our life; the one by whom we live. The Eucharist is an activity of calling to mind: by sharing and partaking the bread we recall Christ's love, suffering, obedient/humble death, and the living hope provided by His resurrection from the dead.

Furthermore, just as the Passover background commemorates the Jewish deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so also, at the Holy communion, the recipients commemorate the loving and atoning death of Jesus Christ for their redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan. The memorial view of the Eucharist, as claimed by Enns (1989:362), emphasizes that the participants demonstrate faith in the death of Christ through this symbolic activity: the bread symbolizes His body offered in sin-bearing sacrifice and the wine His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Enns goes further to say that the memorial concept of the Eucharist also involves "a looking back to the historical event of the cross and an anticipation of His return in the future". Also, commenting on the commemorative nature of the Lord's Supper, Erickson (1985:1123) says it is in particular a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial and propitiatory character as an offering to the Father on our behalf.

So, the Eucharist has, among other things, the intent to vividly recall and remember in a striking and impressive manner, the memory of the Redeemer. According to Barnes (1976:759), “the Saviour knew how prone men would be to forget him; and he therefore appointed this ordinance as a means by which his memory should be kept up in the world”. Commenting further, Barnes also says the ordinance is rightly observed when it recalls the memory of the saviour; and when its observance is the means of producing a deep, and lively, and vivid impression on the mind, of his death for sin. It is obvious, therefore, that celebrating the Eucharist as a memorial, a recollection or a reminder of Christ’s atoning death for the redemption of humanity, is an overriding motif of the sacred ordinance.

5.7 Eucharist as a Fellowship

Another dimension of the intent of the Eucharist is *koinónia* (fellowship). Paul uses the word *koinónia* in relation to the Lord’s Supper in I Corinthians 10:16. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible translates *koinónia* as “sharing”. The text reads thus:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is not a sharing in the body of Christ?

The King James Version translates the word “*communion*”. Paul uses the same word in 2 Cor. 6:14 where it is translated “Partnership”. Luke also uses *koinonia* in Acts 2:42 but translated there as “fellowship”. Putting these data together one can say that the word *koinonia* carries the ideas of fellowship, partnership, participation, sharing or communion. The *KJV* translation of *koinonia* as “Communion” most likely informs the designation of Eucharist as Holy Communion or simply, Communion.

Right from its inception, the Church has regarded “breaking of bread” as a fellowship or communion of Christians, a community bound in a covenant relationship with Christ and with one another. The early Christians must have learnt from their Jewish background that sharing bread/cup or eating with someone was a sign of friendship (Ngewa, 2003:258). In fact Paul believes that the practice of Christians partaking of the Eucharist together underscores their oneness. He says: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1Cor. 10:17). The Eucharist as a fellowship, therefore, emphasizes the unity and oneness of the Church. Speaking about the importance of the Eucharist, Russel (2001:111) says, “The chief expression of worship for Christians is the Lord’s Supper. It is the central service of the

Church”. Also, Russel says Christian fellowship refers to the close and intimate relationship Christians share both with Jesus Christ and with one another. Emphasizing the need of unity among Christians, Russel 2001:105-67nsays:

Although the Christian life is intensely personal, it is not meant to be solitary. We are not to live our Christian lives in selfish isolation. That is not Christianity. The Christian life is essentially communal and corporate. God’s purpose is not just to save independent souls, but to build a Church to create a community of true believers who are committed to each other as they are to him.

Kustenbauder (2005:2) observes that by sharing the final meal with his disciples, Jesus united them in a covenant relationship with himself and with one another. Therefore, sharing in the sacred meal establishes unity and communion among Christians. Even in African societies, taking a meal together affirms unity and oneness; it strengthens relationships. It is in the light of this understanding that Onwu (1987) cited by Kustenbauder (2005:3) says “participation in the Eucharist makes believers (Christians) not only more committed to their Lord but also more responsible for one another in mutual service, love and unity”. That Eucharist is a communal meal that needs to promote Christian unity is demonstrated by the early Church (Acts 2:41-47), and modern Christians do well to uphold that virtue. Christians’ fellowship at the Lord’s Table

denotes intimacy, love and unity. This makes Paul bother to call the Corinthian Christians to order for using Eucharistic occasions to cause divisions among Christians (ICor. 11:17-19). In the light of the foregoing observations, it is pertinent to encourage Christian Church to use the Eucharist as a means of enhancing unity. Christians from one denomination should be allowed to partake with another. For, as Onwu (1987:57-2) observes: “practices that exclude Christian members of other denominations from partaking in the Eucharist are a serious hindrance to establishing authentic Christian Community”. Such discriminative approach negates the intent of the Eucharist as a fellowship of people who profess the same faith.

5.8 The Challenges to the Church of Today

The modern Church must realize and accept that the Ordinance of the Eucharist is a perpetual rite prescribed by Christ Himself to be observed by His Church. The Church is the Body of Christ; though many, yet one. The Eucharist must be seen in its *koinonia* motif which stresses the fact that Christians belong together. Indeed, they are in communion with each other, and so, as they eat and drink the same symbolic elements, they focus on their common faith in Christ. If that be the case, discriminating against fellow Christians at the Lord’s Table is out of place. The Church of today will do well to heed Paul’s

admonition in Romans 15:7 which says, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God".

The Church needs to bear in mind also that, though a commemorative rite, the Eucharist provides occasion where Christians confess their allegiance to Jesus Christ as well as undertake to strengthen each other's faith. The Eucharist is an ordinance which sharpens and quickens the soul of the communicants. It nourishes the soul, therefore, when one is denied or deprived of it, it amounts to famishing. The death of Christ is a sacrificial one for the benefits of all. Christ's body is broken and his blood shed for many. Every Christian has a covenant right to his/her Lord's Table. The Eucharist signifies the Christians' participation in the crucified Christ, and as they receive and feed upon the elements they symbolically appropriate the benefits of His death. Jesus said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you ... for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink". (John 6:53, 55). This statement of Jesus echoes our position that the Lord's Supper provides nourishment for the soul. Just as the real bread and wine nourish and invigorate the physical life, the Eucharistic elements spiritually energize and strengthen Christian faith.

Furthermore, the Church today should realize that the Eucharist is a renewal of covenant with God (Christ) and with one another. At the Eucharist Christians affirm their covenant

with Jesus Christ and with one another since the Eucharist symbolizes the union of Christians with one another, the modern Church should be careful and guard against rules, doctrines or practices that tend to cause schism among Christians. All denominational walls erected against non-denominational Christians at the celebration of the Eucharist must be pulled down. For, as we have earlier quoted Onwu as saying, “it is the Lord’s table, not the table of any Church”. It should be noted that the examination and scrutiny required for observing the Holy Communion rest in the self, not in the Church leaders or officiating ministers.

The lesson on love which Jesus taught His disciples at the last Passover feast He had with them (John 13) is very significant. The Christian ethics of love should undergird the Church’s attitude on who partakes of the Communion or not. “Love covers a multitude of sins”. This means the practice of love overlooks and tolerates others’ weaknesses with the hope to forgive and win over the weak Christian. Selfishness was one of the abuses of the Lord’s Supper Paul corrected in I Corinthians 11. Grabbing, and exclusively reserving the bread and wine for owns members only violates the law of love. This means that whenever a qualified Christian is denied of partaking the Eucharist because he/she is not a member of a particular Church denomination, his/her feeling is hurt as he/she feels unacceptable and unloved as a fellow Christian.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

This research work is geared toward highlighting Paul's thought on the Eucharist as a unifying factor among Christians. This study is informed by the observation that, though this continuing rite of the church is observed by every brand of Christianity, its interpretation and practice have not been able to adequately showcase the Christian unity. There exists therefore, diverse interpretations and traditions relating to its theology and observance. So, contrary to being a tool for promoting unity in the body of Christ (the Church), the observance of the Eucharist has caused division or disunity. We have noted the various points of disagreement to include: who qualifies to take it, who administers it, when and frequency of observance, the nature of the elements and its effect on the observers, and so on. We had observed that, though the "breaking of bread" greatly promoted unity among the early Christians (Acts 2:42-47), modern Churches can hardly deserve that testimony.

It is against this background that this study contends that the Eucharist goes beyond a memorial rite of Jesus' death to a sacred meal that strengthens the bond of unity among

Christians. The study has as its overall goal to show, based on Paul's teaching, that the Eucharist is a covenant meal by which participants are bonded to Christ and to one another. Thus, the study focuses on Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper as reflected in *ICor. 11:17-34* where Paul rebukes the Corinthian Church's divisive and discriminative tendencies at the Lord's Table.

In the section dealing with the exegesis of Pauline Eucharistic text, we first observed that the fact that Paul discusses the issue of the Holy Communion in the context of public worship strongly suggests that the early Church viewed it as central to the worship life of the Church. We treated the passage, i.e. *ICor. 11:17-34*, in three sub-headings. First, we examined the abuse of the Eucharist as reflected in verses 17-22 of our text. Here Paul begins by saying he has no praise for the Corinthian Church because they derailed from the tradition he duly communicated to them. For, instead of using observance of the rite as a means of promoting unity, they had used it as an occasion for causing division and discrimination. The Corinthian Church established a social meal (love feast), the practice of which undermines the religious integrity, sacredness and oneness which the Communion ought to exhibit. It is upon the basis of these abuses that Paul has no words of

commendation for the Corinthians over their attitude toward the celebration of the Eucharist.

Secondly, Paul attempts to correct the abuse by recalling Jesus' acts and words of institution from verses 23 – 26. This is meant, in our opinion, to remind the Corinthians the circumstance and purpose of its establishment. By doing so, we observed, Paul contrasts Jesus' selfless giving of Himself with their own self-centred actions which created disunity in the Church. However, what they ought to know about the sacred Meal has been properly communicated to them, so, they have no excuse. Moreover Paul seems to say, it is an ordinance established by the Lord for His own remembrance, and therefore, it becomes abnormal for the Corinthians or any church at all, to treat it like individual family meal, or worse still, allowing personal family meal to disrupt the conduct of the Holy Meal. Paul therefore stresses that at the Holy Communion, Christians are not concerned with eating to their full, but sharing and participating on the Lords' Table to remember and proclaim His death as well as display their unity in Christ.

The third part of the passage shows Paul recommending the right spirit or attitude for observing the Eucharist. In other words, how the Communion service ought to be conducted with deep solemnity and great reverence to make it what it really is.

We have seen that Paul cautions the Corinthians against taking the Eucharist in an “unworthy” manner. To Paul, observing the Eucharist in an “unworthy” manner entails taking it with a factious spirit, being contemptuous of other Christians, not discerning or considering it as a holy meal instituted to promote fellowship and unity among Christians, lack of self-scrutiny and impatience to wait for others. It was also pointed out that, according to Paul, observing the Eucharist “unworthily” results in weakness, ailment and death as possible means of chastisement from the Lord. To avoid these ugly and disastrous end, Paul recommends that (a) they should wait for one another at the Table; (b) they should discern both the elements and the Church as the Lord’s holy institution for His own remembrance or redemptive purposes; (c) they should exercise self-examination to avoid damnation with the world; and (d) they should stop humiliating and discriminating against the poor members of the Church.

Thus, the exposition of the chosen text, reveals that Paul sees the Eucharist as central to the worship life of the Church, a unifying factor for Christians and a corporate witness to the selfless sacrifice and atoning death of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. So, at the Eucharist Christians both proclaims Christ and promotes the unity of the Church.

The Eucharist then becomes a **testament** and a **will** by which Christians' bond to Christ as well as to one another are recalled (remembered) at every observance. This is to foster unity and love among the observants. We equally examines the Eucharist as a memorial and fellowship, and then pose challenges to the modern Church as to the right understanding and attitude of observing the Eucharist in love and unity.

6.2 Conclusion

The Eucharist, which we have said is also known as the Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, the Last Supper, the Mass, Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacrament of the Altar, Breaking of Bread or Liturgy, along with baptism are the two significant ordinances within protestant Christianity. The Catholic Church also sees ordination, confirmation, marriage, penance, and extreme unction (anointing the sick) as ordinances in addition to baptism and the Eucharist. The reason all Churches attached so much significance to baptism and the Eucharist, according to MacArthur (1986:1), is that they were both instituted and commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore should not be taken lightly or be ignored. Unlike baptism, however, the Eucharist is an ordinance that is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christians life both as a sign

of continuing in fellowship with Christ and with fellow Christians. It is, in the words of Talbert (1990:78), a Christian meal held for the purpose of focusing on the sacrifice of Christ as the seal of the new covenant and a public proclamation of his death.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the last Passover meal He observed with His disciples. By this Jesus took that Passover meal and transformed it into a meal with another meaning which He instructed his followers to observe in remembrance of His death on their behalf on Calvary. By so doing, Jesus wants Christians to know that Calvary has superseded the exodus from Egypt as the greatest redemptive event in history. The Eucharist is a memorial that Christ Himself instituted to show how He became the ultimate fulfillment of deliverance from sin, Satan and death. The Eucharist, as an ordinance, is also expression of faith and obedience to Christ.

The Church, viewing the Eucharist as the last **will** or **testament** Christ bequeathed to her, has seen the Eucharist as a “central act of Christian worship” (Stedman, 1978:1) and therefore adopted it as a key celebration in the early Church. We have seen that the early Church attached the Eucharist to a common meal (love feast) based on Jewish practice of always associating the Passover with a meal and also by copying from

the Gentiles who included a potluck meal with their religious festivals (MacArthur, 1986:2). But the practice of the early Church in incorporating the Lord's Supper into their fellowship meals, made the "breaking of bread" synonymous to the fellowship meal to the extent that the latter was overshadowing the former. In fact, MacArthur (1986:2) reports that eventually the combination of a fellowship meal and Communion became known as a "love feast" (Jude 12). The author also believes in the course of time, the "love feast" gradually faded away because it was a practice of the culture and not something instituted by Jesus or the Apostles.

So, today, the Lord's Supper is now commonly used in reference to a celebration involving no food other than the sacramental bread and wine.

We have seen that this extremity of over-emphasising the love feast over the Eucharist was the glaring problem of the Corinthian Church. To this problem Paul addressed himself in *1Cor. 11:17-34* where we have seen that he strongly recommended that since the love feast was dividing the Church or undermining the unity of the Church, it should stop. Paul feels eating of personal meals should stop at home, calling on the Corinthians to uphold the spirits of unity, solemnity, purity and fellowship that form the basis of the institution of the

Eucharist by Jesus. From this we see Paul declaring that the Eucharist is not just a memorial meal but an expression of the unity of the Church. Therefore, factions and selfishness corrupts the unity the love feast and Holy Communion intend to promote. After all, Christ's selfless sacrifice that makes them one is what the Eucharist commemorates and immortalizes. Yes, Christians have the obligations to gather at the Lord's Table, but there they come together to worship God as well as celebrate the unity in Christ, who by His death, shatters every social, ethnic, racial and economic walls of hostility (*cf. Eph. 2:14; Gal. 3:28*).

"From Genesis to Revelation", writes Crudem (1994:989), "God's aim has been to bring his people into fellowship with himself, and one of the great joys of experiencing that fellowship is the fact that we can eat and drink in the presence of the Lord". The appropriate place to do this is at the celebration of the Eucharist. Also we have seen that the Eucharist looks forward to a more wonderful and permanent fellowship in God's presence in heaven (*Mt. 26:29; Rev. 19:9*). In this sense, we see that the Eucharist is a gracious privilege of **Commemorating** the death of Christ and **anticipating** both His return and a glorious fellowship of feasting with Him in heaven. It looks back to His death and forward to His return. But for now, the Church will

do well to use the Eucharist as a means to remember Christ, proclaim His death for salvation of humanity and showcase their unity and fellowship (*koinonia*) in Christ. Prior (1985:188) has observed that

those who enter into this personal relationship, this covenant-relationship, with the Lord naturally enter at the same time into a covenant relationship with one another.

The Corinthian Christians were wrong because they were undermining the covenant community established in the “new” covenant of His blood. They were wrong because “the death of Christ is not central, His return is not in focus and love for one another is not the controlling factor” (Prior, 1985:188). There can be no real Christian spirit of fellowship in any meeting which makes a “humbler brother” (or sister) feels sorry, ashamed, ignored or unfulfilled. Paul would not tolerate any act that violates and underrates the spirit of true fellowship and acceptability in the Church. Talbert (1990:78) agrees that Paul sees the meal facilitating fellowship among those who shared the elements.

Our Holy Communion should be an “open Communion” in which every Christian should be allowed to participate along with other Christians whenever and wherever, he/she meets the occasion irrespective of Church affiliation. We are all one in Christ (*Eph. 2:13-14; 4:4-6*).

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