Article
Rethinking Eucharistic Communion: A Theology of Harmony—A Study of the Lima Document

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Abstract: The mutual reception of the Eucharist is a key issue in contemporary Christian unity. As a landmark document in Christian unity, the Lima document provides a profound exposition of the Eucharist. According to this article, eucharistic communion in the Lima document is expressed in three themes: “Communion with Christ”, “Communion of the Faithful”, and “Meal of the Kingdom”. Within these three themes, there are three groups of relationships: the relationship of mutual participation between the faithful and Christ, and the relationship of “demonstrate” and “effect” between the Eucharist and the oneness of the Church. Moreover, in the connotation of the banquet, there is the relationship of “foretaste” between the Eucharist and the Kingdom of God. Further, in my opinion, the concept of “eucharistic communion” is developed into a “theology of harmony”, namely, “the harmony between heaven and humans”, “the harmony between people and people”, and “the harmony between heaven and earth” in the Lima document.

Keywords: Eucharist; communion; Christian unity; harmony
There has been no deep study on the concept of “eucharistic communion” in the Lima document. For this article, the focus of my study is not on how “eucharistic communion” contributes to the development of dialogue on Christian unity, but on the idea of “eucharistic communion” in the Lima document itself, in order to discover the idea of “eucharistic communion” in depth.

1. The Term “Communion”

The word “communion” is derived from the Greek word “koinonia”. The Eucharist itself is also called Holy Communion, which refers to the sharing of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, as well as the sharing of the body and blood of Christ. According to contemporary Catholic liturgical scholar Raymond Moloney, in the Greek writings of the Apostle Paul, the word “koinonia” means “sharing” (Moloney 1995, p. 195). As “sharing”, communion has two aspects, namely, giving and receiving. In other words, communion is a movement in two directions among persons.

Methodist liturgical scholar Geoffrey Wainwright believes that the “likeness” of humans to God makes human communion with God possible and growing. Moreover, Wainwright sees communion with God as experiencing a taste of God (Wainwright 1980, p. 17). In his account, the taste of God includes the experience of God’s word, of God’s grace, and of God himself. In general, for both Moloney and Wainwright, communion is a dynamic rather than a static expression.

In addition to the study of the Eucharist, communion is also used in the study of ecclesiology or at the intersection of eucharist and ecclesiology. As Wainwright points out, the communion of the Eucharist is the source of the unity of the Church (Wainwright 2003, pp. 143–46). In addition, Tillard, the Catholic scholar, and John D. Zizioulas, the Orthodox scholar, have done significant work on eucharistic ecclesiology.

For example, Zizioulas takes the communion of the Trinity as the original form of the communion of the Church and points out that in the Eucharist, the presence of the Church and the presence of God are united (Zizioulas 1997, pp. 15–16, 20). Again, Tillard holds that the concept of communion offers not only an understanding of God’s Church from the perspective of the presence of grace but also the means itself to achieve the visible unity of the Church. He writes that the ecclesiology of communion (Eucharist) is consistent with scripture as well as the tradition of the Church (Tillard 1992, pp. xi–xii). Based on their research, we can see that there is a very close relationship between the Eucharist and the communion or unity of the Church.

According to Bin You, the Trinity is in the “mutual indwelling” (Chinese: hu yu, 互寓) (You 2021a, pp. 4–5). This new exposition of “communion” continues to be developed in his writings. According to his view, in the “fellowship of the Trinity”, the Trinity is independent and indwells in love within each other; not alone, but sharing into the life; entering into the other, and giving himself to the other. Further, in the “theology of mutual indwelling” of his writing, the “mutual indwelling” relationship between God and human and between person and person, is being reconciled in God’s economy.

Meanwhile, Bin You points out that there is a “mutual birth” (Chinese: hu sheng, 互生) relationship between Christ and the faithful (ibid., pp. 12–14). “Mutual birth” means, on the one hand, that Christ is constantly birthing the faithful and the world by the Church. Humans and the world are being transformed into Christ himself in his economy. On the other hand, the faithful are continually birthing Christ in themselves, namely, living out the life of Christ. This concept of “mutual birth” is closely related to the philosophical idea of “ceaseless producing” (Chinese: sheng sheng, 生生) in the Confucian classic Yi Jing. Hence, these concepts of “mutual indwelling” and “mutual birth” are the development of “communion” in Chinese theology.

In the writings of Bin You, the idea of “communion” continues to be transformed and developed in “The Empathy of the Spirit” (Chinese: Sheng Ling Gan Tong Lun, 圣灵感通论) and “Theology of the Universal Church” (Chinese: Tian Xian Jiao Hui Lun, 天下教会论). In the former, he points out that “there are the empathy between human and God, the em-
pathy between human and human, and the empathy between human and others creatures and all creatures are brothers and sisters in the empathy of the Holy Spirit” (ibid., p. 17). In the latter, he holds that the Church is to “bring the Creator and all the creatures, the transcendent heavens and the people on the earth and all the creatures into the union and the harmony” (ibid., p. 18). This insight into the relationship between heaven and humans, among people, and between heaven and earth will also be reflected in this article.

Returning to the Eucharist text in the Lima document, communion is always discussed in the context of the Eucharist. In this sense, the communion discussed in this article is called “eucharistic communion”. Here, I need to point out that the understanding of eucharistic communion is realized in the special context of the Eucharist. In other words, it is a sacramental understanding. It is called a sacramental understanding because it is relative to Christ’s active presence in the faithful in the universal sense.

First, the concept of “eucharistic communion” means communion with Christ. Second, it refers to the communion of the faithful. Third, as the meal of the Kingdom, the eucharist points to the final Kingdom and the divine rule. Jesus also “had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry”. Hence, this article will examine the “eucharistic communion” in the Lima document following these three themes: “Communion with Christ”, “Communion of the Faithful”, and “Meal of Kingdom”.

2. Communion with Christ

Communion with Christ is the primary content of the eucharistic doctrine of the main traditional denominations. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes, “by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him” and “because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body” (ibid.). In the exposition of the catechism, communion includes two aspects: first, communion with Christ; and second, communion of the faithful.

As Luther argued, to receive the Eucharist is nothing else than to receive the sure sign of fellowship and union with Christ and all the saints. In other words, to receive the bread and wine means to enter into the fellowship of Christ and all the saints. In Calvin’s view, God convinces the faithful of the mystery of Christ’s union with them through visible signs. That is to say, since the union of Christ and the believer is mysterious and invisible, God grants the visible signs to be the symbols of the mystery.

As mentioned above, it is an ecumenical consensus that there is communion with Christ in the Eucharist. Thus, the Lima document also says that the bread and wine in the Eucharist, as sacramental signs, point to communion with Christ’s body and blood. In short, in the Eucharist, the bread and wine are the signs of communion with Christ. For the faithful, receiving the bread and wine means entering into communion with Christ. Furthermore, this liturgy is called a sacrament precisely because the visible things symbolize the invisible divine reality.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes, “the principal effect of receiving the Eucharist (Holy Blood) in the Holy Communion is an intimate union with Jesus Christ”. According to the catechism, when the faithful eat the body and blood of Christ, they enter a special mutual indwelling with Christ, that is, Christ is in the faithful and the faithful is in Christ. From the point of view of communion or mutual indwelling, according to the faithful as members of Christ’s body, the faithful are in Christ. With the bread and wine, which symbolize Christ’s body and blood, entering the faithful, Christ is in the faithful.

As Luther also says, the faithful is very united to Christ in the Eucharist. For the union between the food and the person who eats it is intimate, profound, and inseparable. In this regard, Luther explains graphically that the food enters the body of the person and is finally transformed into a part of his body. In his view, there is nothing else more profound than this union, in which one substance becomes another substance.
In Calvin’s view, this union even means that all things in Christ can be seen to belong to the faithful.\(^\text{18}\) According to Calvin, the life of the faithful cannot be nourished in the Eucharist unless that Christ goes into the faithful and the faithful are renewed by Christ’s body and blood.\(^\text{19}\) Hence, union with Christ’s body and blood is a condition for receiving the blessing of God. In the context of Calvin, this union with Christ refers to communion with Christ in the Eucharist.

For the approach of how to understand the union of Christ’s body and blood with the faithful, there is not only a combination of the spiritual and bodily, such as the views of the Catholic Church and Luther, but also a spiritual understanding, such as Calvin’s.\(^\text{20}\) However, in their view, union with Christ is intimate and profound. At the same time, it is also real, true, living and active. And this union is accomplished in the Eucharist; that is to say, it can be called eucharistic union or sacramental union.

In contrast, the Lima document places communion in the context of God’s economy of grace. Firstly, the Lima document places more emphasis on the active work of God. For example, it is written that in the Eucharist, Christ grants communion with himself.\(^\text{21}\) In the eucharistic prayers, Christ unites the faithful with himself,\(^\text{22}\) so Christ (God) is the source of the communion.

Further, “every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ”.\(^\text{23}\) Communion with Christ is also closely related to the receiving of the grace of salvation, but the document especially highlights that the gift comes from God.

Secondly, the Lima document also focuses on the renewal of the lives of the faithful in the communion. As the Lima document writes, “God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member” (ibid.). As the Lima document also states, “united to our Lord and in communion with all the saints and martyrs, we are renewed in the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ”.\(^\text{24}\) To be precise, Christ renews each member of the body of Christ through the communion of the faithful with himself.

As Luther pointed out, in the Eucharist, the faith of the faithful can be exercised and strengthened.\(^\text{25}\) The faithful in the Eucharist can see and be assured that they have been a part of Christ and also confirm the benefits they receive, namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That is why Luther said that it is necessary and profitable to participate regularly in the sacraments as well as to exercise and strengthen faith in the daily Eucharist. In the opposite direction, the benefits received in the Eucharist again depend on faith.

Moreover, in the view of Calvin, in communion with Christ’s body and blood, the faithful receive the benefits of spiritual nourishment, renewal, strengthening, and joy.\(^\text{26}\) As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* writes, in communion with Christ’s body, Christian spiritual life is preserved, strengthened, and renewed.\(^\text{27}\) Hence, in my opinion, the word “renewed” in the Lima document means that the faithful receive all kinds of spiritual benefits, i.e., spiritual nourishment, strengthening, and joy.

Finally, in the Lima document, “Communion with Christ” points to participation in God’s economy. As the Lima document writes, “this sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him”.\(^\text{28}\) Here, “Communion with Christ” is accompanied by the offering of prayer with Christ (ibid.). In other words, “Communion with Christ” is recognized and confirmed in God’s economy and in the offering of humanity.

Further, in the view of the Lima document, “Communion with Christ” brings with it the fruits of the economy, namely, the transfiguration of the faithful and the acceptance of prayers (ibid.), and as the Lima document writes, “the Church offers its intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest”.\(^\text{29}\) The Lima document points out that these prayers are not only for the faithful themselves or for the Church but also for the world, for all creation.\(^\text{30}\) Communion contains the aspect of economy, that is, participation in God’s work. It is clearly reflected in the intercession of the Eucharist.

This cooperation between heaven and humanity also appears in Luther’s writings on the Eucharist. As Luther points out, communion is a twofold participation.\(^\text{31}\)
positive sense, on the one hand, Christ partakes in the life of the faithful; on the other hand, the faithful partake in Christ and his life. In the sense of the opposite direction, both Christ allows the faithful and the faithful allow Christ to participate in each other’s lives. In this point of view, the word “participate” means to give out, and “allow” means to accept the other person.

In conclusion, this article argues that “Communion with Christ” in the Lima document is the two-way participation. This “two-way” refers to the harmony between God and humans, that is, the work of God and the response of people. To be specific, in this communion, the faithful receive an intimate and deep union with Christ. The life of the faithful is renewed, strengthened, and delighted. The faithful are also involved in God’s economy. Specifically, Christ’s work is highlighted in the communion. Hence, in the Lima document, “Communion with Christ” means “the harmony of heaven and humans”, namely, the union, the blessing, and the singing of heaven and people with each other.

3. Communion of the Faithful

As mentioned above, eucharistic communion is not just communion with Christ but also the communion of the faithful in Christ. In the theme of the communion of the faithful, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “the communion of the saints is the Church”, for the Church is made up of the faithful. As the Lima document points out, the eucharistic communion with Christ is at the same time communion within the body of Christ, which is the Church. Hence, for the subject of this section, the Lima document presents the Eucharist as the communion of the faithful, namely, the communion of the Church.

During the Reformation, Protestant theologians raised a question of “the cup to the layman”. As Luther pointed out, the fullness of the bread and wine as signs indicates the full union and inseparable communion of the saints. To a certain extent, the difference in the Eucharist shows the division of the hierarchy within the Church. However, in the theological sense, the essence of the issue of “the cup to lay people” is the communion in the Eucharist.

Unlike this, for contemporary Christian unity, how to realize eucharistic communion is more complicated. Eucharistic communion is no longer an inner struggle within the Catholic Church during the period of the Reformation, but extends to how Christian communities break down the boundaries of denominations in order to achieve mutual acceptance of the Eucharist. Thus, it is necessary to discern the relationship between the eucharistic communion and the unity of the Church.

Firstly, “the eucharistic communion demonstrates the oneness of the Church” has two implications. On the one hand, the oneness of the Church is preexistent, for the church is called the body of Christ, and there is only one body of Christ from the beginning to the end. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church points out, there is a relationship between the Church and Christ as the body and the head, the bride and the bridegroom. Hence, from the Christological perspective, the Church itself is always one.

On the other hand, the eucharistic communion, as a form of the communion of the Church, presents the oneness of Church, or rather, the celebration of the Eucharist is the very activity of the communion of the Church. In its outward form, the Eucharistic assembly is the gathering of the Church. Hence, “the eucharistic communion demonstrates the oneness of the Church” expresses the identity (common character) between the Eucharist and the Church, namely the assembly itself. In view of the celebration of the liturgy, the consistency of the Eucharist indicates the oneness of the Church. Conversely, the inconsistency of the Eucharist indicates that the Church is in some degree in diversity, or even separation.

Secondly, the Eucharist not only demonstrates the oneness of the Church but also accomplishes the oneness of the Church. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes, “those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church”. According to the encyclical
Ecclesia de Eucharistia of John Paul II, “the Eucharist builds the Church”. In addition, as Catholic scholar Juan Blanco explains, before the Church “makes” the Eucharist, the Eucharist equally “makes” the Church.

Further, the mutual interaction between the Eucharist, which makes the Church, and the Church, which makes the Eucharist, is rooted in the self-offer of Christ on the cross. From the point of view of the body, the bread and wine in the Eucharist and the Church are both called the body of Christ. Without Christ, both the Eucharist and the Church would lose the reality of their existence. Hence, the Passion of Christ is always the central event of the celebration of the Eucharist as well as of the Church. In this way, the Eucharist, Christ, and the Church can be construed in a cycle format, namely, Eucharist → Christ → Church → Eucharist. Christ’s passion is remembered in the Eucharist, which makes the Church; because of Christ’s passion, the Church celebrates the Eucharist to worship Christ.

In the same way, this format can be viewed in terms of the concept of “demonstrate”. The Eucharist is celebrated in the assembly of the Church, to be the memorial of Christ; for the worship of Christ, the Church gathers in the celebration of the Eucharist. From the Christological point of view, the Eucharistic Church in its first meaning is the Church of Christ. From the perspective of the relationship between the liturgy and the Church, this format draws out the identity and causality of “Eucharist–Church”.

Hence, this article proposes a brief format to describe the relationship of “Eucharist–Church”.

Eucharist → Christ → Church → A → A → A ...

This “Eucharist–Church” format is constructed on the center of Christ and the identity and causality of the Eucharist and the Church. It embodies the cycle and the development of the Eucharist and the Church in the mutual interaction.

However, on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church, Geoffrey Wainwright points out that the Eucharist is the “creative” of the unity of the Church (Wainwright 2003, pp. 143–46, 176–77). Wainwright argues that the “creative” value of the Eucharist is more meaningful than the “expressive” value for the unity of the Church (ibid., pp. 146, 177). This article recognizes that in the idea of Wainwright, on the one hand, “expressive” points to the identity of the Eucharist and the Church. On the other hand, “creative” refers to the causality between the Eucharist and the Church.

Furthermore, Wainwright’s exposition in an eschatological approach is more oriented towards the future and consequences of all creatures. Therefore, he believes that the effect of causality is more valuable for the unity of the church. In the opinion of this article, the shortcoming of the single view “creative” is that different understandings of the Eucharist will eventually lead to different beliefs in the Church. The advantage of “expressive” is precisely to find a consensus of faith in the Church. In this sense, “expressive” and “creative”, that is, “identity” and “causality”, complement each other.

Unlike Wainwright, the Lima document balances “identity” with “causality”. As the Lima document writes, “The sharing in one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the oneness of the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places”. In short, the eucharistic communion both demonstrates and effects the oneness of the Church. The Lima document addresses this relationship between the eucharistic communion and the oneness of the Church in terms of both “demonstrate” and “effect”, corresponding to the “expressive” and “creative” as well as “identity” and “causality”.

First of all, the Lima document continues to point out that “It is in the eucharist that the community of God’s people is fully manifested” (ibid.). In this context, the community
of God’s people refers to the entire Church. In other words, the Eucharist is the demonstration of the Church as a whole. Hence, according to the Lima document, “In so far as a church claims to be a manifestation of the whole Church, it will take care to order its own life in ways which take seriously the interests and concerns of other churches” (ibid.). The individual church recognizes itself as a manifestation of the whole Church, which means that it declares itself to be a part of the body of Christ, a member of the whole Church. The life of a church is not just about its own affairs, but about the whole Church.

Secondly, the document states, “eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration” (ibid.). The sacramental nature of the Eucharist is not changed by differences in geography, language, culture, or even denomination. The entirety of the Church is always present in the celebration of every Eucharist in each church. That is to say, through the celebration of the Eucharist, the individual church and the whole church enter into a situation of mutual involvement. Hence, the celebration of the Eucharist effects not only the unity of its own church but also the entirety of the Church.

Finally, the Lima document further extends the concept of “communion” from the relationship between the Church and the Church to the relationship between human and human. As the Lima document points out, “The eucharist embraces all aspects of life”. The Church should not live only in a gaze of its own interests and concerns. The Eucharist leads the Church to enter into the concerns of human life and reflections on the present situation of human survival: in the document, “Solidarity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ and responsible care of Christians for one another and the world find specific expression in the liturgies”. In other words, the celebration of the Eucharist expresses this desire for “the harmony between people and people”.

In conclusion, in the Lima document, the Eucharist “demonstrates” and “effects” the unity of the Church. The word “demonstrate” expresses the identity between the Eucharist and the Church, and the word “effect” refers to the causality between the Eucharist and the Church. An appropriate format to express this relationship is: Eucharist → Church → Eucharist. The Lima document points out that the Eucharist concerns the whole Church. The individual church and the whole Church are mutually included in the Eucharist. The eucharistic communion refers not only to the harmony between the individual church and the whole Church but also to the harmony between people and people.

4. Meal of the Kingdom

Historically, for a long time the Catholic Church did not attach importance to the image of the Eucharist as a feast, but saw it primarily as a sacrifice. For example, the Catechism of the Council of Trent hardly talks about the metaphor of the Eucharist as a banquet. Strictly speaking, the Eucharist is not a normal meal, but a liturgical feast that expresses a special meaning. However, the Eucharist is closely related to the feast. In origin, Jesus instituted the Eucharist in the form of the Passover banquet. In its form, the Eucharist uses the language of the meal, such as eating and drinking, as well as the objects of the meal, such as bread and wine.

After Vatican II, the Catholic catechism considered both the Passover Banquet and the Sacramental Sacrifice as the important themes. As the catechism writes, “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood”. The celebration of the Eucharist contains two aspects: on the one hand, it is the altar of Christ’s Passion; on the other hand, it is the table of Christ.

However, in the Protestant tradition, the meal has been a common term in sacramental theology from the beginning. As Martin Luther argued, “If you will exercise and strengthen this faith, then you will experience what a rich, joyous, and bountiful wedding feast your God has prepared for you upon the alter”. Likewise, Calvin writes, “To this end, therefore, he has, through the hand of his only-begotten Son, given to his church another sacrament, that is, a spiritual banquet, where in Christ attests himself to be the
life-giving bread, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality”. In the mutual approach of Catholicism and Protestantism, the image of the “meal” has become a consensus.

The meal is often associated with the Kingdom of God. Further, this relationship between “heaven” (the Kingdom) and “earth” (the world) is emphasized in the Lima document. First of all, in the metaphor of the meal, the Kingdom of God is divided into two aspects: “already” and “not yet”. As the Lima document writes, “The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it”.

On the one hand, the vision of the divine rule refers to the final Kingdom of God. However, this kingdom is yet to come. On the other hand, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “The Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst”. The “foretaste” indicates that the Kingdom comes into the celebration of the Eucharist and is to be tasted in this same time and space.

In addition, the kingdom is not only promised in the final renewal of creation but is also revealed in the present world through the signs of renewal. Hence, as the document writes, “Signs of this renewal are present in the world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love, and peace”. This renewal is in the harmony of “heaven” and “earth”, that is, the grace of God that comes from heaven and enters this world, and the beauty and good work done by humans in this world. The economy of God is the presence of God’s divine rule, and is also the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The bread and wine are both the signs of the body of Christ and of God’s economy. As the Lima document writes, “the eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses”. In this context, the “new reality” refers to Christ himself. Through the eucharistic feast, the Christ in heaven is now present in this world. In the celebration of the Eucharist, God effectively carries out the economy, and according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “to live in heaven is to be with Christ”. In this sense, the indwelling of Christ in the present age is also the presence of the kingdom.

Hence, the Lima document not only connects the bread and wine on earth with Christ in heaven but also indicates that through the signs of the Eucharist, the Church on earth sees the signs of the grace from God in heaven and comes to give thanks to the economy of God. Hence, according to the Lima document, “The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks to God for these signs and joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ”. In other words, it shows that the signs of the Kingdom are in this world. By offering thanksgiving, these signs of the renewal of the Kingdom are also presented at the eucharistic meal.

In this connection of the Eucharist, the Kingdom of God refers to the place of God’s economy and to the place of Christ. Even, “the Kingdom of God means Christ himself”. These three themes converge in the eucharistic complex. In short, the Kingdom in heaven is present in the Eucharist on earth.

Secondly, in the Lima document, the Eucharist is the food of life for the pilgrims. As Geoffrey Wainwright argues, it is God’s character that the faithful are fed on. Specifically, to “taste” is communion with God; the “food” is the grace of and the Word of God. In comparison, Wainwright speaks of the “food” in a general sense, while the Lima document gives it in a specific and particular context.

This specificity refers to the fact that the “food” in the Lima document is found in the feast of the Eucharist. However, the “food” is not only the Kingdom of God and Christ himself but also the words of God. Further, through the Eucharist, the Church sees God’s economy and can then also “taste” it.

According to Wainwright, if the life in the final Kingdom is to be described in Christological terms, it should have three aspects: the life in Christ, the life with Christ, and
Chacon living in us (Wainwright 2003, pp. 132-33). To eat the body and blood of Christ, or to be in communion with Christ, is also to “taste” the Kingdom. Furthermore, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes, Christ is present in the assembly of faithful “as food from heaven who is giving himself to us”. Hence, in the Lima document, both the Kingdom and Christ can be appropriately called “the food from heaven” to nourish the lives of pilgrims on earth.

Finally, the Lima document contains a vision of the world as “table fellowship”. As the Lima document writes, “Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry”. Further, according to the Lima document, “Christ invited to his feast all for whom he died”. “To the feast of Christ” means that Christ invites all people into his Kingdom. Christ is the “hospitable host”.

As Wainwright points out, by receiving the Word of God, Christians are transformed according to God’s character. In the tasting of the feast, the Christian’s character is changed to become like God’s. According to the Lima document, Christians are transformed into the image of Christ and become the effective witnesses. The “effective witness” means that the Christian is called to be a servant of reconciliation in the world and a witness to the resurrection of Christ. In short, the purpose of this witness is to gather all the people to Christ’s table and to enjoy Christ. Hence, the Church or Christian should continue the “table fellowship”, which was from Christ on earth, together with Christ in heaven.

In conclusion, the Kingdom is present in the world through the celebration of the Eucharist. In the feast, Christ is both the hospitable host and the food. Christians are transformed into the image of Christ to become the servants of reconciliation and the witnesses of love in the world. In this feast, heaven and earth are united. Christians taste the beauty and good of the harmony between heaven and earth and also experience the love of “table fellowship”.

5. Conclusions

In “Communion with Christ”, Christ and the faithful participate with each other. Christ works in the Eucharist and gives the faithful communion with himself. The faithful participate in the life of Christ by participating in God’s economy. This article argues that the mutual participation between Christ and the faithful is a kind of harmony between heaven and humanity.

In “Communion of the Faithful”, this article shows not only that Christ is the center of the Eucharist and the Church but also that there is a relationship of identity and causality between them. The individual church and the whole Church are united in the celebration of the Eucharist.

On the one hand, if “oneness” is from first to last, the “communion” is the way to accomplish this process. On the other hand, from the perspective of reality and symbolism, “communion” should be a symbol of the reality of “oneness”. Further, beginning with the communion of the Church, the Lima document develops the concept of “communion” to the communion of the humans, namely, the harmony among people.
In “Meal of the Kingdom”, the faithful taste the Kingdom and Christ, although the Kingdom, the full communion, has not yet come. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Kingdom is present in the world. By tasting the “food from heaven”, Christians are transformed into the image of Christ and come to reconcile the world as the servants. In the feast, Christ, as the “hospitable host”, invites all the people to the “table fellowship”. The “table fellowship” unites the food from heaven and the Kingdom with the participants and the world on earth. Hence, the Eucharist meal shows the harmony between heaven and earth.

In the Eucharist, God and humans, the church and the Church, the people and people, the heaven and earth are united. The Lima document brings the vision of harmony into the eucharistic communion, namely, the harmony between heaven and humans, the harmony between people and people, and the harmony between heaven and earth. This image of “harmony” is confirmed, influenced, and tasted in the Eucharist. Meanwhile, they are unified in the presentation of the Eucharist. As Paul II wrote in his encyclical, eschatological tensions spur us, “with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God’s plan.”

Further, “harmony” (Chinese: 相和, xiang he) in the context of Chinese culture can express more graphically the concept of “communion”, which should include the meanings of mutuality, participation, peace, and appropriateness. For this “harmony”, God’s work in the world is always in the active position. In other words, God’s work opens the journey of all creation and is also the blessing of the existence of the creature.

According to Chapter Zhong Yong in the Confucian classic Li Ji, “when those feelings have been stirred, and all in their due measure and degree, we call it the State of Harmony”. The interpretation of eucharistic communion in the Lima document can be called a “Theology of Harmony”.

Hence, “Theology of Harmony” shows that the eucharistic liturgy is for the creator and the creation to come into a situation that is very appropriate. In this situation, it is not static, but a living participation in each other’s lives. This interaction of life is embodied through the economy of God and the responses of the humans. The Eucharist is the very example of these instances.

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Notes

1 In 1978, a meeting was held in Bangalore by the Commission of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. The report of the conference considered that for a visible unity of the Church, three basic requirements must be met. “First, a common understanding of the apostolic faith; Second, full mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry; Third, agreement on common ways of teaching and decision-making”. Cf. Minutes (1979, p. 40).

2 In 1982 in Lima, the capital of Peru, the document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry was adopted at a meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. It is also called “the Lima document” or BEM. Cf. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982).


6 Generally, those Christian churches in China that are the members of the China Christian Council (CCC) refer to themselves as post-denominational churches. See Ruokanen et al. (2015, pp. 91, 95).


8 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 2: “in the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself”.

9 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 2, paragraph 19. It says “Although the eucharist is essentially one complete act, it will be considered here under the following aspects: thanks‑giving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, meal of the Kingdom”. “The eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church”.

10 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 22: “The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it”.

11 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 24.


14 Calvin (2006, p. 1361). Chapter XVII—“The Sacred Supper of Christ, and What It Brings to Us”, section 1—“Sign and thing”.

15 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 15: “It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ’s body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion”.


19 ibid., p. 1370. Chapter XVII: “The Sacred Supper of Christ, and What It Brings to Us”, section 10—“The presence of Christ’s body in the Lord’s Supper”.

20 Both the Catholic Church and Luther hold that the whole Christ is present under the appearance of bread and wine, but Calvin emphasizes that Christ is a spiritual presence in the Eucharist and the body of Christ is in the heaven. Hence, in my opinion, for the Catholic Church and Luther, eating Christ is not only spiritual but also with the mouth.

21 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 2.

22 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 4: “Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are transfigured and their prayers accepted”.

23 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 2.

24 ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 11.


According to whom he died”. Lamenting the limited participation, Luther, the cup, namely, the blood of Christ, should be equally given to all the faithful.

In this article, this term “identity” means that the Eucharist and the Church share a common feature. In this form, the assembly is considered their common feature. In the spiritual sense, they both point to “the body of Christ”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2020), Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Article 3—The Sacrament of the Eucharist.


Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 21. The Catechism of the Council of Trent (1982, pp. 213–60). Regarding the exposition of the Eucharist, it only mentions that this sacrament is sometimes called “Supper”.


Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 22.


Catechism of the Catholic Church (2020), Part Four: Christian Prayer, Article 3—The Seven Petitions. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), Eucharist section, paragraph 26: “The eucharist is precious food for missionaries, breed and wine for pilgrims on their apostolic journey”.

Wainwright (1980, p. 17). Wainwright writes that “It is on the will of God, which expresses his character, that the believer feeds”. In his meaning, the enjoyment or the taste of God is experienced the character of God.


ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 26: “As it becomes one people, sharing the meal of the one Lord, the eucharistic assembly must be concerned for gathering also those who are present beyond its visible limits, because Christ invited to his feast all for whom he died”.

Wainwright (1980, pp. 17–18). Wainwright quotes Feuerbach’s words “Man is what he eats” to point out that the human will be transformed into what he has been fed.


ibid., Eucharist section, paragraph 24. In the Lima document, it is written that “Reconciled in the eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection”.

Legge (1885, pp. 300–1): “Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and heaven and earth would have their (right) places, (and do their proper work), and all things will be nourished (and flourish)”. Hence, in my opinion, “harmony” points to the right way of the people’s life.

References

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